

*Note: The Board of Game approved an Agenda Change Request to consider this proposal at the 2012 Interior Region meeting.*

**PROPOSAL 262 - 5 AAC 92.003. Hunter education and orientation requirements.** Require hunter education for sheep hunting in the Red Sheep Creek and Cane Creek area in Unit 25A.

**5 AAC 92.003. Hunter education and orientation requirements**

(a) Beginning August 1, 2002, a person born after January 1, 1986 that is

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**(h) A person hunting within the RED SHEEP CREEK / CANE CREEK PORTION OF ARCTIC VILLAGE SHEEP MANAGEMENT AREA (AVSMA) OF GMU 25A must possess proof of completion of a department-approved hunter ethics and orientation course (to include land status and trespass information) upon hunting in this area.**

**ISSUE:** Following the acceptance of the Agenda Change Request, the Federal Subsistence Board acted to close this area to non-federally qualified hunters.

Longstanding user conflicts between local and non-local users of the Red Sheep and Cane Creek drainages of the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area (AVSMA) in Unit 25A have resulted in repeated requests to close the area to sheep hunting to non-federally qualified subsistence hunters. Currently, proposals to close this area have been submitted to the Federal Subsistence Board and to the State Board of Game (Proposal 178) by the Eastern Interior RAC. Although the Department cannot support a closure under ANILCA as there is no conservation issue the Department has heard overwhelming testimony regarding user conflicts at recent Eastern Interior and North Slope Regional Advisory Council meetings. Conflicts the Department is aware of are primarily centered on trespass and littering on private allotments, and perceptions that non-local hunters using aircraft have displaced sheep from private allotments.

The Department of Fish and Game proposes to require an ethics and orientation class be completed prior to hunting in this area with the goal of minimizing user conflicts and retaining a state general season sheep hunt. This recommendation is the result of a mutually acceptable solution developed between the Department, the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council (EI-RAC), the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG), and the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC). The goals of this proposal would be the following:

- Maintain a state general season sheep hunt in the Red Sheep and Cane Creek drainages of Unit 25A.
- Provide information to users, including notification of land status to minimize user conflicts
- Provide tools to law enforcement officials to cite for trespass and litter
- The Department currently envisions the following:
  - A onetime class modeled after the GMU23 Caribou requirement
  - Class delivered online
  - Required for all hunters
  - A curriculum developed in coordination with multiple entities including state and federal managers, subsistence division, enforcement, tribal, private land owners, users, and members of the affected RACs and ACs

- CATG has agreed to maintain a list of land owners and serve as a published point of contact for the general public to seek permission to use these lands. This solution serves to meet statutory requirements for notification of the public while protecting the privacy of landowners.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?** Ongoing user conflicts are expected to continue or escalate and calls to close the area to hunting will persist even in the absence of conservation concerns. Public trust in both state and federal staff will continue to erode causing negative perceptions. The Federal Subsistence Board recently closed this area for issues absent conservation concerns. This poor precedent erodes public trust in the process. If nothing is done the area is likely to remain closed unnecessarily resulting in lost opportunity.

**WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED?** No change is expected to the quality of resources or products by adoption of this proposal.

**WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT?** Land owners, Alaska residents who intend to exercise their right to access resources by hunting in this area.

**WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?** Unethical hunters who are cited and fined for illegal activity may consider their experience suffering. Ethical hunters will incur a limited burden by taking a one hour one time class.

**OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED?** Do nothing: Solution rejected due to public outcry for resolve. Increase of enforcement efforts without changes to statute: Solution rejected due to expense of enforcement and complications associated with proper notice. Travel for enforcement is extremely expensive in this area. Upon contact by enforcement uncooperative violators may simply be notified of possible violation requiring further follow up. Require a permit to hunt and attach orientation to the permit: Solution rejected as unnecessary and burdensome. Absent conservation concerns, a yearly permit structure proves burdensome for both staff and users. A onetime class may easily be required absent a permit. Close the area to hunting to non-local or non-federally qualified subsistence users: Solution rejected given the absence of a conservation concern to warrant a closure under state or federal statutes or regulations within the jurisdiction of either the Federal Subsistence Board or Alaska Board of Game.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

**LOG NUMBER:** ADFGBOG262

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