

PROPOSAL 38 – 5 AAC 92.130. Restrictions to bag limit. Implement a sliding scale bag limit for Dall sheep hunting for residents as follows:

I propose a resident sliding scale harvest based on age of the ram harvested such as: A Resident Ram Harvest Age Index. If a harvested ram is ten years or older, the hunter may hunt sheep the following year. If the ram is nine years old, the hunter cannot hunt sheep the following year (sits out a year). If the ram is eight years old, the hunter cannot hunt sheep for the next two years (seasons). If the ram is seven years old, the hunter cannot hunt sheep for three years. If the ram is six years or younger, the hunter cannot hunt sheep for five years. In each case, age is the criterion for when they may get a tag to hunt sheep again, regardless of whether it is full curl or not. Full curl would still apply for a legal sheep and because of the sliding scale penalizing hunters for taking younger rams even though legal by full curl standards or the eight annuli requirements, hunters would be more selective in order to be able to hunt without a break. This does not directly diminish hunter opportunity, but requires hunters to select towards older rams that are more likely to succumb to winter mortality.

The positives from such a system are: 1. Creates more selectivity, 2. Leaves more sheep on the mountain, 3. Encourages shooting older rams, 4. Strongly discourages shooting of sub-legal and younger rams, 5. Those that choose to harvest a young ram that is legal by full curl standards, shoot knowing that if it has less than ten annuli, they will have to sit out X number of years depending on the age of the ram. This will help towards leaving more mature rams on the mountain and allow some rams that become large at a younger age to possibly survive another year or two. 6. It still allows opportunity based on choice by the hunter and may help with crowding since some will be sitting out for having harvested a younger ram. 7. It could also be managed such that when a hunter harvests a sub-legal ram which is his first ram ever harvested, he could keep the ram provided it was over 7/8 curl and at least seven years of age. This is more lenient than the current regulation, but would only apply for a hunter's first ram. This would cut down on litigation for the state, help keep from having rams left in the field, create better relations with new hunters and at the same time be restrictive since they will have to sit out a number of years based on the ram's age. To further cut down on hunters leaving sheep in the field, convicted offenders of such an offense would receive a lifetime ban on hunting Dall sheep in Alaska.

If this Age Index Harvest Scale seems too harsh, the age side could be slid up one notch to read: If a hunter harvests a nine year or older ram, the hunter would be eligible to hunt sheep the following year, etc., but I personally would prefer the original scale. If this scale approach appears to have merit, relaxing it would be better than discarding it altogether.

Finally, and this has nothing to do with this proposal, but does address nonresidents harvesting fewer rams than they currently harvest, which is 45% some years. It is time that the GCP (Guide Concession Program) be resurrected and supported by such organizations as RHAK (Resident Hunters of Alaska), APHA (Alaska Professional Hunter's Association) and WSF (Wild Sheep Foundation), and get HB 158 passed. This would give the needed control of too many guides in an area and unlimited harvest by nonresidents. I believe the only way to avert going to an all draw for sheep is to go to the age index I am proposing and having a Guide Concession Program. If we do nothing and go to an all-draw for sheep, everyone loses. Nonresidents will go to a

percentage allocation and residents will seldom draw the area they really would like to hunt. We have all been too selfish and the time has come to act responsibly for the sake of the resource and quit being greedy.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The issue is harvesting too many young and marginally legal rams yearly; both resident and nonresident hunters. Our sheep populations are significantly diminished mainly due to changes in weather that causes melting and refreezing icing conditions in the winter. Our harvest levels have steadily fallen to less than 50% of harvests in the late 80s into the early 90s. The fight has become a resident vs. nonresident harvest issue. Neither side seems willing to give to help keep more sheep on the mountain. Since residents comprise 90% of sheep hunters in the field and I believe that most sheep hunters really want a quality older ram, why not raise the standard by which they are harvested; somewhat like is done in many moose areas? Hunters would become more selective.

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(EG-F17-027)
