

PROPOSAL 14

5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game.

Modify the bag limit for ptarmigan in Unit 18 as follows.

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Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 18	Aug. 10-May 15	Aug. 10-May 15

[50 PER DAY, 100 IN POSSESSION]

15 per day, 30 in possession

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Residents of Unit 18 have reported low rock and willow ptarmigan abundance and poor harvest beginning since 2014. Consecutive wet, cool early summers have likely had a strong negative effect on early chick survival—a phenomenon that has been demonstrated to dramatically affect other Alaskan grouse and ptarmigan populations as well. In addition, consecutive mild and largely snow-free winters have likely increased the effects of predation due to the plumage/landscape color mismatch as well as the inability to effectively thermo-regulate through snow-roosting.

During the 2018 meeting cycle, the Federal Subsistence Board changed the ptarmigan (both rock and willow combined) daily bag limit to 15 ptarmigan per day for Unit 18 (proposal WP18-30) due to local residents concerns about multiple years of low abundance. In addition to the conservation concerns, this proposal also seeks to reduce hunter confusion by aligning the federal and state hunting bag limits for ptarmigan in Unit 18.

Due to the current low abundance, reducing the bag limit would likely have little impact on current hunting opportunity. However, if climatic conditions become more favorable to rock and willow ptarmigan, a lower hunter harvest could protect localized populations for quicker recovery and recolonization.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F19-158)
