

PROPOSAL 2

5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.

Establish registration archery seasons for Dall sheep in Units 9B, 11, 13, 14A, 14B and 16 as follows:

Regulatory language: (for Units 9B, 11, 13, 14A, 14B and 16)

Resident: One ram, with full curl horn or larger, by bow and arrow only from August 1 - August 5, by registration permit available at <http://adfg.alaska.gov>. Certified bowhunters only.

Nonresident: One ram, with full curl horn or larger, by bow and arrow only, every four regulatory years from August 1 - August 5, by registration permit available at <http://adfg.alaska.gov>. Certified bowhunters only.

*** Optional addition: Any hunter participating in this registration archery hunt may only hunt sheep with bow and arrow during this regulatory year in the unit where they took advantage of the archery season, including during the general season from August 10 - September 21.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There is an increasing interest in bowhunting opportunities for Dall sheep in Alaska but, aside from very low odds draw tags, there are currently no archery seasons or areas for sheep hunting in the Central/Southwest Region. This is a proposal for a resident and nonresident, August 1 – August 5 registration archery season for full curl Dall Sheep in Units 9B, 11, 13, 14A, 14B and 16.

During the regular rifle season, bowhunting is difficult to safely achieve given the overall popularity of sheep hunting and the ability of rifle hunters to take very long shots. Bowhunters often spend many hours to days attempting to get within bowrange of a particular ram and rifle hunters can easily interfere with any chance of a successful bowhunt. In the worst case, it's even possible for rifle hunters to unknowingly shoot over the backs of bowhunters stalking sheep, especially in more popular and easily accessible areas.

In addition, there are many nonresident bowhunters who would welcome an opportunity for a guided bowhunt outside of the regular sheep season. Such a season would provide additional revenue for guiding operations and make Alaska a more competitive and appealing option for nonresidents bowhunters planning to book a sheep hunt.

In the past, early bow seasons were rejected by the Board of Game, in part, because of concern that bowhunters would push sheep out of certain areas just prior to the season. In this proposal the bow season would match the existing youth season, August 1 – August 5, thereby giving the sheep a five-day break from hunting all pressure prior to the general season.

A bowhunting season in Units 9B, 11, 13, 14A, 14B and 16 would provide a wonderful opportunity for bowhunters to spend time safely in the mountains and is very unlikely to impact sheep populations and numbers of legal rams. Over the ten-year period from 2009-2018 bowhunters killed about 1% of legal rams taken in the Alaska's general season. Even in the DS140/141 and DS240/241, which are bowhunting only draw hunts for *any ram* in an easily accessible area, the

success rate over the same ten year period was about two – three rams per year for almost 70 tags awarded each year, and only a small fraction of the rams that were killed in these hunts would be considered legal in a full curl only area.

Combined with a short season that is separated from the general season by five days and a very low projected success rate, there is no downside to allowing bowhunters an opportunity to safely pursue sheep each season in this region. It would simply allow bowhunters a short window each year to pursue sheep in a safer and more enjoyable fashion.

Making this a registration hunt would allow for accurate statistics about harvest and use.

*** Optional: In the interest of fairness and of bowhunters being willing to make sacrifices to gain the privilege of a bowhunting season, this hunt could be combined with a “choose your weapon” condition whereby any bowhunter who takes advantage of this archery season would be restricted to hunting with bow and arrow only during the remainder of the regulatory season for the unit where he or she hunted the special archery season. This should help assuage concerns that bowhunters have an “unfair advantage” of any kind and would demonstrate the commitment of archery hunters. This type of “choose your weapon” regulation has been implemented successfully in other states where it is popular with both bow and rifle hunters. Bowhunters not participating in the registration hunt, who only hunt the current general season (8/10 - 9/21), would not be subject to “choose your weapon” regulation.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

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