

PROPOSAL 111

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

Create an archery only, registration sheep hunt for residents and nonresidents in Units 7 and 15 Remainder as follows:

Unit 7 and 15 Remainder: 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.

Unit 7 and 15 Remainder: 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.

Aerial scouting is not allowed during this time period.

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 Southcentral. This is a proposal for a resident and nonresident, August 1 – August 5 registration archery season for full curl Dall Sheep in Units 7 and 15 Remainder.

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 bow range of a particular ram and rifle hunters can easily interfere with any chance of a successful bow hunt. 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 bow hunt 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 7 and 15 Remainder 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.

In addition, aerial scouting should not be allowed during this season (or any other time while sheep hunting is allowed).

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

(EG-F22-149)
