

Excerpt from the ADF&G Staff Comments provided to the Board of Game in March 2024, on Proposals 76-92, related to sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
STAFF COMMENTS
INTERIOR AND EASTERN ARCTIC REGION PROPOSALS
ALASKA BOARD OF GAME MEETING
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA
MARCH 15-22, 2024

This final compilation of staff comments includes changes to previously published comments for Proposals 43-47, 50, 52, 56, 58-62, 109, 153, 158, 168, 170, 181, & 187.



The following staff comments were prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for use at the Alaska Board of Game meeting, March 15-22, 2024 in Fairbanks, Alaska, and are prepared to assist the public and board. The stated staff comments should be considered preliminary and subject to change, if or when new information becomes available. Final department positions will be formulated after review of written and oral testimony presented to the board.

PROPOSAL 76 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the resident winter hunt and the nonresident sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Anthony Marchini

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C winter resident hunt and reopen nonresident sheep hunting with season dates from August 15 – September 10.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The Unit 19C winter hunt was not closed by the board and is currently open from Oct 1 – Apr 30. There currently is no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Open Season	Resident	
Units and Bag Limits	(Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 - Sept. 20	

1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only

Oct. 1 - April 30
(Subsistence hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or

No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted there would be no change to the winter hunt because it was not closed by the board. Nonresidents however would be able to harvest one full curl ram every four years with season dates of Aug 15 – Sept 10. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023, the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with ¾ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests that residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000-2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reopen nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 77 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the Unit 19C youth sheep hunt and the nonresident sheep hunt.

PROPOSED BY: Karen Gordon

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C youth hunt from Aug 1 – 5 and the nonresident hunt from August 10 – September 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no youth hunt or nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 - Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 - April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted youth hunting and nonresident hunting for sheep would be allowed in Unit 19C as it was prior to the passage of Proposal 204 in March 2023. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY)28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests that residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The

board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 78 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the regular fall nonresident sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Spencer Pope, Seth Kroenke, Jeff Rost, Jon Burrows

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C nonresident sheep hunt from August 10 – September 20 with a bag limit of one full curl ram every four years.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1–5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted nonresident hunting for sheep would be allowed in Unit 19C as it was prior to the passage of Proposal 204 in March 2023. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY)28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

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Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The

board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 79 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the regular fall nonresident sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Taiga Resources Conservation

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C nonresident sheep hunt from August 10 – September 20 with a bag limit of 1 full curl ram every 4 years.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted nonresident hunting for sheep would be allowed in Unit 19C as it was prior to the passage of Proposal 204 in March 2023. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

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Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

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Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The

board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 80 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the regular fall nonresident sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Pralle

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C nonresident sheep hunt from August 10 – September 20 with a bag limit of 1 full curl ram every 4 years.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted nonresident hunting for sheep would be allowed in Unit 19C as it was prior to the passage of Proposal 204 in March 2023. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

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Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The

board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 81 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the youth sheep hunt and the fall nonresident sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Wayne Heimer

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C youth hunt from August 1 – 5 and the nonresident hunt from August 10 – September 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no youth hunt or nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season
1 ram with full-curl horn or		

larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted youth hunting and nonresident hunting for sheep would be allowed in Unit 19C as it was prior to the passage of Proposal 204 in March 2023. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents.

Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management

and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 82 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Create a drawing hunt for nonresidents in Unit 19C, and allocate a percentage of the harvest to nonresidents.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a draw hunt for nonresidents in Unit 19C with up to 10 permits issued, or up to 25% of the harvestable surplus. The bag limit would be one full curl ram every four years with season dates from Aug 10 – Sept 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted a drawing hunt would be created for nonresident sheep hunters in Unit 19C. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average

success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time. Adoption of the first option, to have a limited number of permits available, is easily

implemented and preferred by the department if the board intends to adopt the proposal. Adoption of the second option, to provide for permits up to 25% of the harvestable surplus of sheep is quite difficult to implement for multiple reasons including weather precluding the department from completing surveys and the timing of the drawing application period. If the second option is adopted the department may be forced to use outdated survey data which could either negatively impact ram abundance or result in extremely conservative harvest.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 83 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Open an archery only fall sheep hunt for nonresidents in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Mike Harris

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C by archery only with a bag limit of one full curl ram every four years and season dates of August 10 – September 20.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? There is currently no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or		

larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or

No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted an archery only hunt would be created for nonresident sheep hunters in Unit 19C. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board chooses to reintroduce nonresident hunting, they may wish to consider whether this affects their ability to provide reasonable opportunity for subsistence uses. The

board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 84 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Change the sheep bag limit for resident hunters in Unit 19C to one ram every two regulatory years.

PROPOSED BY: Anthony Marchini

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change the Unit 19C resident bag limit for sheep to one full curl ram every two years.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years		No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted residents would only be able to harvest a full curl ram in Unit 19C every other year. The proposal is not clear how this new bag limit would affect the bag limit for the winter hunt.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a 5-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulator year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents

compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If the board adopts this proposal, it will need to determine if the new regulations will continue to provide a reasonable opportunity for subsistence. The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 85 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Create a variable bag limit for resident sheep hunters based on the age of the sheep harvested.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a variable bag limit for resident sheep hunters based on the age of the sheep harvested. It also suggests this same or similar bag limit for nonresidents when the current five-year closure ends.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years		No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted residents would have the following bag limits:

Harvest an 8-year old or older ram and the hunter will be eligible to hunt sheep the next season.

Harvest a 7-year old ram the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep for the next two seasons.

Harvest a 6-year or younger ram and the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep for the next three seasons.

The proposal is not clear how this new bag limit would affect the bag limit for the resident winter hunt. Also, if this structure were applied to nonresidents, this would be a more liberal bag limit than the current statewide bag limit of one full curl ram every 4 years.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023, the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents.

Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a 4-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Creating a multi-tiered bag limit based on age would be difficult to track and enforce. This would create a challenging situation for enforcement of the new bag limit in situations where sheep are difficult to age. If a change is made to the nonresident bag limit, this would place Unit 19C out of alignment with the statewide nonresident bag limit of one full curl sheep every four years.

Creating a multi-tiered bag limit based on the age of sheep harvested is also inconsistent with subsistence harvesting patterns. Subsistence hunters that participate in the winter hunt would be negatively affected by this proposal because by regulation they are required to shoot young rams. Additionally, this tiered bag limit structure potentially penalizes a person who takes a legal ram more than someone who shoots a sublegal ram. There is currently no good mechanism to track hunters from year to year to implement this, and if adopted the department suggests a delayed implementation in order to assess how to successfully implement the new regulations. Finally, the board is in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would result in additional costs for the department if the department were expected to implement a new bag limit based on the age of the ram harvested and maintain a new database to track those hunters from year to year for enforcement purposes.

PROPOSAL 86 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Create a variable bag limit for resident sheep hunters based on the age of the sheep harvested.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a variable bag limit for resident sheep hunters based on the age of the sheep harvested. It also suggests this same or similar bag limit for nonresidents when the current 5-year closure ends.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	

both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or

No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted residents would have the following bag limits:

Harvest a ram 10 years old or older and the hunter will be able to hunt sheep in Alaska the next season.

Harvest of a full curl or larger ram 8 or 9 years old, the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep in Alaska the next season.

Harvest a full curl or larger 7 year old ram, the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep for the next 2 seasons.

Harvest a full curl or larger but 6 year or younger ram, the hunter will be ineligible to hunt sheep for the next 3 seasons.

The proposal is not clear how this new bag limit would affect the bag limit for the resident winter hunt. Also, if this structure were applied to nonresidents this would be a more liberal bag limit than the statewide bag limit of 1 full curl ram every 4 years.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a 5-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a 5-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these

older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. Creating a multi-tiered bag limit based on age would be difficult to track and enforce. This would create a challenging situation for enforcement of the new bag limit in situations where sheep are difficult to age. If a change is made to the nonresident bag limit, this would place Unit 19C out of alignment with the statewide nonresident bag limit of 1 full curl sheep every 4 years. Creating a multi-tiered bag limit based on the age of sheep harvested is inconsistent with subsistence harvesting patterns. Subsistence hunters that participate in the winter hunt would be negatively affected by this proposal because by regulation they are required to shoot young rams. Additionally, this tiered bag limit structure potentially penalizes a person who takes a legal ram more than someone who shoot a sublegal ram. There is currently no good mechanism to track hunters from year to year to implement this, and if adopted the department suggests a delayed implementation in order to assess how to successfully implement the new regulations. Finally, the board is in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would result in additional costs for the department if the department were expected to implement a new bag limit based on the age of the ram harvested and maintain a new database to track those hunters from year to year for enforcement purposes.

PROPOSAL 87 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Shorten the resident sheep hunting season and reopen a shorter nonresident sheep hunting season after the resident season opens in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Wayne Kubat

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would shorten the Unit 19C resident sheep hunt with new dates of August 15 – September 10 and reopen a nonresident sheep hunt with season dates of August 21 – September 10.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current fall resident season runs from Aug 10 – Sept 20 and there is no nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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Unit 19(C)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season
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1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20
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1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or	No open season
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1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years	No open season
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There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted resident sheep hunting opportunity would be reduced and a nonresident season would be opened with a start date seven days after the opening for residents. It is anticipated that total harvest would be less than it would if both seasons were open for the typical fall season, from August 10 – September 20. Currently there is no nonresident sheep hunting

opportunity in Unit 19C and, if adopted, this proposal will provide some nonresident opportunity.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since

RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. If this proposal is adopted, the board may wish to consider if reasonable opportunity to harvest sheep for subsistence is still being provided. The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 88 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Change all resident sheep hunts in Unit 19C to archery only, and require any future nonresident hunts to be archery only as well.

PROPOSED BY: Paul Forward

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would change resident sheep hunting in Unit 19C to archery only and when the nonresident season reopens it would do so with archery only.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current regulations allow residents in Unit 19C to use a rifle or archery equipment. There is currently no nonresident season for sheep in Unit 19C.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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Unit 19(C)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season
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1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20
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1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or	No open season
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1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years	No open season
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There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for Dall Sheep in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence of 1-5 sheep.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted all hunters would be limited to archery only. This proposal appears to address the fall season, but it is unclear if it is intended to be a requirement for the winter hunt as well. Additionally, this proposal may make it more difficult for hunters who traditionally use rifles to harvest sheep and who do not have access to instructive archery classes. Expected harvest from archery only hunts is quite low.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting season will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 the department observed 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are

not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. The change to methods and means would be a reduction in subsistence opportunity; if the board adopts this proposal, it may wish to determine if a reasonable opportunity for subsistence is still provided . The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 89 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the resident only winter sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Jeff Pralle

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C winter sheep hunt for residents (RS380).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The board did not close the Unit 19C winter sheep hunt for residents, and it is currently open.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years		No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1–5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted there would be no change because the winter hunt RS380 was never closed by the board.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from Aug 10–Sept 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only with a bag limit of one ram with ¾ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken during Oct 1 – Apr 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, however the board may wish to take no action as the RS380 winter hunt was never closed.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 90 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Reopen the resident only winter sheep hunt in Unit 19C.

PROPOSED BY: Spencer Pape

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would reopen the Unit 19C winter sheep hunt for residents (RS380).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The board did not close the Unit 19C winter sheep hunt for residents, and it is currently open.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or

No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1–5 sheep (5 AAC 99.025 (10)).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted there would be no change because the winter hunt RS380 was never closed by the board.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from Aug 10–Sept 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only with a bag limit of one ram with ¾ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken during Oct 1 – Apr 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, however the board may wish to take no action as the RS380 winter hunt was never closed.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 91 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Adopt the management plan recommendations created by the Unit 19C Sheep Working Group.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Professional Hunters Association

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would modify sheep hunting regulations in Unit 19C for all user groups according to the recommendations from the Unit 19C sheep working group, which have not yet been formulated.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 19(C)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or	No open season	
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	
1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only	Oct. 1 – April 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or		No open season
1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years		No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep 5 AAC 99.025 (10).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted the proponent would like to see the recommendations of the Unit 19C sheep working group adopted by the board into regulation. The working group is still in the early stages of development and has not yet created a management plan or any recommendations for the board or the public to consider.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a 5-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a 5-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting will reopen in RY28. At this meeting the board also expressed their desire to establish a working group charged with developing a management plan to address sheep management and allocation in

Unit 19C. The working group is in the early stages of organization, and it is unlikely any recommendations will be in place by the meeting in March.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from Aug 10–Sept 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only with a bag limit of one ram with ¾ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both tips broken during Oct 1 – Apr 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal, and adoption of it as written would result in no changes to regulation so the board may wish to Take No Action on the proposal or delay action until the working group has completed its work.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

PROPOSAL 92 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Close all nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19.

PROPOSED BY: Chris Bouch

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would close all nonresident sheep hunting in Unit 19.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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Unit 19(A), 19(B) and 19(D)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or Aug 1 – Aug 5

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or Aug 10 – Sept 20

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory

years, by youth hunt only; or

Aug 1 – Aug 5

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

Aug 10 – Sept 20

Unit 19(C)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, by youth hunt only; or

No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger; or

Aug. 10 –Sept. 20

1 sheep with 3/4-curl horn or less; the take of rams with both horns broken, lambs, or ewes with lambs, is prohibited; by registration permit only

Oct. 1 – April 30
(Subsistence hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years, by youth hunt only; or

No open season

1 ram with full-curl horn or larger, every 4 regulatory years

No open season

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding in Unit 19 with an Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS) of 1-5 sheep 5 AAC 99.025 (10).

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If this proposal were adopted nonresidents would be unable to hunt sheep in any portion of Unit 19.

BACKGROUND: In March 2023 the board deliberated on Proposal 204 to close all sheep hunting in Unit 19C for a five-year period. The proposal was amended to close only the youth hunt and the nonresident hunt for a five-year period. The youth hunt and nonresident hunting will reopen in regulatory year (RY) 28. The only sheep habitat in Unit 19 is found in Unit 19C, though the rest of Unit 19 is currently open to sheep hunting should a legal sheep end up in the area.

Unit 19C currently has two sheep hunts: a general season for residents with full curl horn restrictions from August 10–September 20; and a winter registration permit hunt (RS380) for residents only, with a bag limit of one ram with ¾ curl horn or smaller, excluding rams with both

tips broken, during October 1 – April 30. While the fall sheep season can provide for subsistence opportunity, the winter registration hunt was structured specifically to provide subsistence opportunity consistent with the pattern of customary and traditional uses.

The first consistent sheep surveys conducted in portions of Unit 19C began in 2010. From 2010 through 2019, sheep abundance has been variable, but relatively stable. During the most recent survey in 2023 we found 62% fewer sheep than the average of all surveys from 2010 – 2019. The most significant declines were in the eastern portion of the unit where there were 90% fewer sheep than the average from 2010 – 2019. These declines were most likely the result of difficult winter conditions associated with heavy snow fall, winter rain events creating ice on snow, and late springs.

Most sheep hunting takes place during the fall general season. During RY13–RY22, residents composed 49% of all sheep hunters in Unit 19C with an average of 84 resident hunters per year. Nonresidents in that same time period composed 51% of sheep hunters with an average of 85 hunters per year. In RY22, the last year open to nonresidents, there were 45 nonresident hunters compared to a high of 107 nonresident hunters in 2018. In RY22 there were 27 resident hunters compared to a high of 107 resident hunters in 2018. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests there were 31 resident hunters.

Over the same 10-year period (RY13–RY22), an average of 85 sheep were harvested per year with nonresidents accounting for 68% of all sheep harvested compared to 32% for residents. Success rates averaged 33% for residents and 68% for nonresidents with an overall average success rate of 50%. In RY22 nonresidents harvested 26 sheep compared to a high of 79 harvested by nonresidents in 2018. In RY22 there were three sheep harvested by residents compared to a high of 46 harvested by residents in RY17. Preliminary data from RY23 suggests residents harvested five sheep.

Total annual sheep harvest in Unit 19C has varied significantly since the 1980s. Total harvest increased from the 1980s through 1990s and peaked at 127 sheep in 1995. Harvest then decreased during the late 1990s and averaged about 65 sheep annually from 2000–2010. Beginning in 2011 harvest steadily increased until RY18, when 118 sheep were harvested. Since RY18, harvest has subsequently decreased, to a low of 29 sheep in RY22. This represents a 40-year low and a 75% decrease in harvest over a four-year period. Although sheep survey data are not available for much of the above period, the cyclical nature of peaks and valleys observed in the harvest data likely reflects similar trends in sheep abundance.

Since the 1980s, residents accounted for about 33% of annual harvest while nonresidents took 67% of the harvest, similar to the most recent 10-year average. The proportion of sheep harvested by residents and nonresidents has remained relatively similar across years despite the fluctuations in total harvest described above.

Dall sheep in this area are managed using the conservative full-curl ram harvest management strategy. The full-curl strategy is conservative because it focuses harvest pressure on: 1) older-aged animals, 2) males-only, and 3) a small segment of the population. Dall sheep rams on average become full-curl at 8 years of age or older, and previous research has shown that these older rams have naturally higher mortality rates than younger aged rams. Therefore, when hunters harvest a full-curl ram, this has a lower impact on the population compared to harvesting a younger ram because there is a higher likelihood the older ram would have died of natural causes. Additionally, limiting harvest to males-only reduces the impact of harvest on the overall population because male survival rates have a lower impact on population growth compared to female survival rates. Finally, the full-curl strategy is extremely conservative because full-curl animals compose a very small proportion of most sheep populations. As a result, the number of animals that are legally available to hunters is a small proportion of the population and this imposes a self-limit on overharvest of the population. Taken collectively, the full-curl harvest strategy limits harvest to only older-aged rams and is thus a conservative, self-limiting strategy that allows for maximum hunter opportunity while simultaneously preventing overharvest and has minimum impacts on population growth.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal as it addresses allocation. Unit 19C, the only portion of Unit 19 with a sheep population, is currently closed to nonresidents but will reopen in RY28. If adopted this proposal would permanently close all of Unit 19 to nonresident sheep hunters. The board is currently in the process of organizing a working group to address sheep management and allocation in Unit 19C and therefore may wish to delay action on sheep proposals at this time.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.
