

PROPOSAL 23 – 5 AAC 85.040(a)(1). Hunting seasons and bag limits for goat.

Expand the archery-only registration permit hunt area for goat in Unit 1C as follows:

5 AAC 85.040(a)(1) Seasons and bag limits for goat in Unit 1C: That portion of Unit 1C to include all mainland areas between the south bank of the Mendenhall River and the Mendenhall Glacier and south to the western bank of Taku Inlet and Taku Glacier. 1 goat by permit by bow and arrow only. The taking of nannies with kids is prohibited Aug. 1–Nov. 30.

PROPOSED BY: Jake Abbott

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would increase the size of the RG014 archery hunting area for mountain goats to include all of the mainland south of the Mendenhall River and the Mendenhall Glacier and west of the Taku Inlet and Taku Glacier (Figure 23-1).

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?

5 AAC 85.040(a)(1)

Unit 1(C), that mainland portion draining into the south bank of Little Sheep Creek, Gastineau Channel south of Little Sheep Creek, Stephens Passage, and Taku Inlet between the mouth of Little Sheep Creek and Taku Glacier, including that portion between the south side of Blackerby Ridge and the north side of Salmon Creek Reservoir, above the 1,000 foot contour and east to Observation Peak

1 goat by registration permit only, and by bow and arrow only; the taking of nannies and kids is prohibited. This area is in the Juneau Nonsubsistence Area.

5AAC 92.510(a)(3)(D)

the area of Mt. Bullard bounded by the Mendenhall Glacier, Nugget Creek from its mouth to its confluence with Goat Creek, and a line from the mouth of Goat Creek north to the Mendenhall Glacier is closed to the taking of mountain goat;

5AAC 92.510(a)(3)(F)

Mt. Juneau drainage, bounded by the Glacier Highway, Salmon Creek and its reservoir, a line from the head of the Salmon Creek drainage to the head of Granite Creek, and down Granite Creek and Gold Creek to the Glacier Highway, is closed to the taking of mountain goat;

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? This proposal would increase the area open to archery hunting in registration hunt RG014.

BACKGROUND: The department uses small geographic areas within hunt areas to manage mountain goat harvest in Southeast Alaska. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) are established for each area and are based on the allocation of points determined through aerial surveys (male

goat= 1 point, female goat= 2 points) within each area. GHLs are established by allowing the harvest of 6 points per 100 adult goats seen during aerial surveys. Once the harvest has reached the GHL the hunt is closed by emergency order. The harvest of billies is encouraged to increase opportunity for other hunters and ensure the long-term sustainability of the localized populations.

The proponent of this proposal would like to see additional areas opened to archery hunting for mountain goats in the Juneau area.

The Mt. Bullard Closed Area has been in regulation since the 1962 -63. The history behind this regulation is unknown, but presently the viewing windows of the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor's Center look out onto this mountain, demonstrating its importance as a mountain goat viewing area. Pertaining to Mt. Juneau, the area from Taku Glacier to Eagle Glacier, which includes the area of this proposal was closed to hunting by emergency order in 1981 and a proposal to close the area around Mt. Juneau to goat hunting was adopted by the Board of Game in 1982. These changes were initiated after a hunter legally harvested a goat that many Juneau residents were watching from downtown Juneau. Over the years following these events the management priority for goats near the city has been for goat viewing in part because of increased cruise ship traffic and helicopter flightseeing. After the harvest in 1981 goats were not observed on Mt Juneau and the local chapter of the Audubon Society paid for a reintroduction of 11 goats from Whiting River-Tracy Arm in hopes of reestablishing goats on Mt. Juneau for viewing. Unfortunately, these goats emigrated outside the area, but within a few years goats were observed on Mt. Juneau again. Adoption of the proposal in review would require either the exclusion of Mt. Bullard and Mt. Juneau closed areas or recension of the original regulation.

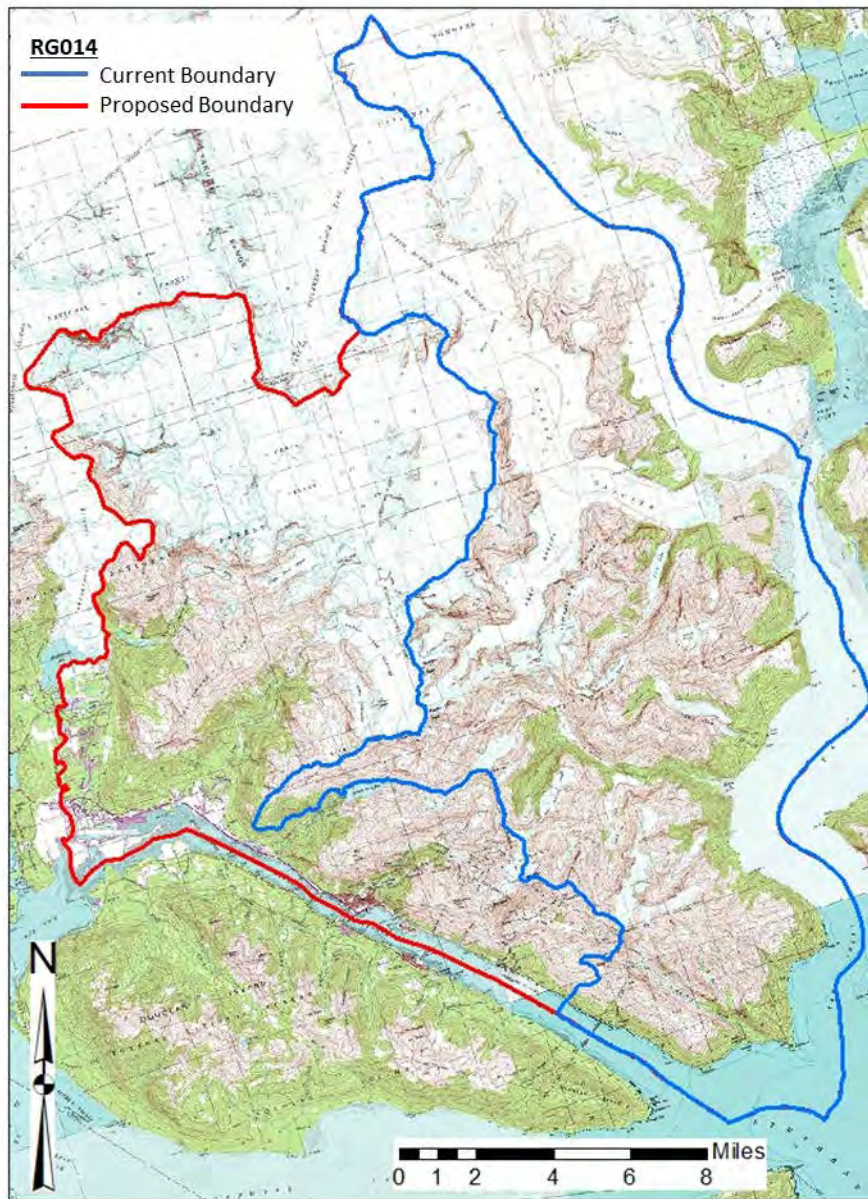


Figure 23-1. The RG014 archery mountain goat hunt area depicting the current and proposed boundaries.

The archery mountain goat hunt RG014 was adopted by proposal during the 2000 Board of Game meeting, and the south side of Blackerby Ridge was added to RG014 hunt area at the 2015 meeting, creating the current boundaries of RG014. The addition of the proposed lands would

add 149 mi² (387.5 km²) to the current 357.0 mi² (924.6 km²) of RG014. Mountain goat research in Southeast Alaska has demonstrated there is very little movement among goats from one area to another. While the goat population around Juneau is managed as one population, the number of goats in any given area varies widely, and as noted above, little movement between groups has been observed in radiocollared animals. Because of access, localized overharvest of goats is a concern and the lack of animals to take the place of those harvested may have compounding effects to future mountain goat numbers in the Unit.

Previous surveys conducted in 2012 and 2014 showed approximately 150 goats in RG014 and almost 200 goats in the area proposed for adding to the unit. A fall 2018 survey resulted in 44 goats in RG014 and 39 goats in the area proposed for adding to the unit, both of which were less than 1/3 of previous counts (Table 23-1). It is important to note survey conditions were poor and the count was at the end of two weeks of the driest and warmest September weather in Juneau history and as a result the survey likely does not reflect the mountain goat population in the area. Surveys are planned for summer 2019 to assess goat numbers in both the existing and proposed hunt area. The allowable harvest will be adjusted based on survey data.

Table 23-1. Aerial mountain goat survey data for the RG014 hunt area, and the area proposed for addition to RG014. The reported numbers are the number of goats observed.

Year	Existing RG014 Hunt Area	Proposed Additional RG014 Area
2012	146	185
2014	236	203
2018	44	39

Harvest in the unit has been consistently low over the years (Table 23-2). Harvest in 2018 looks to be one of the highest, with 5 goats already harvested, including 1 nanny and 1 illegal harvest taken with a rifle.

Table 23-2. Harvest in RG014 for 2014-2017.

Year	Total Permits	Reported	Male Killed	Female Killed	Unknown Killed	Hunted	Did Not Hunt
2014	11	11	1	0	0	5	6
2015	13	13	2	0	0	5	8
2016	33	33	6	1	0	23	10
2017	31	31	3	1	0	17	14

There are several areas around Juneau (e.g., Mount Juneau, Thunder Mountain, and Mount Bullard) where goats can be readily viewed. Ensuring that wildlife viewing opportunities remain available should be considered in determining the hunt boundaries. Other considerations are that

Juneau has a well-developed and maintained trail system that allows recreational user groups to gain easy access to several mountain ranges all around town. This expansion of the hunt boundary would now encompass that trail system, and conflicts among hunters and other outdoor recreationists may occur. These trails, including the tram going up to the alpine at Mount Roberts, have over 200,000 visitors each year and so the public presence of non-hunters is substantial.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **OPPOSED** to this proposal because it has biological concerns for the population in question. Recent aerial surveys have indicated a significant decline in goat numbers in all the hunt areas along the Juneau road system, and these areas are currently closed to hunting. Additional survey data and population monitoring should be collected to determine when mountain goat numbers increase and additional mountain goats can be sustainably harvested.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal is not expected to result in additional costs to the department.

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