

**PROPOSAL 82**

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

**5 AAC 92.530(X). Management areas.**

Establish the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area in Unit 25A, open a new resident and nonresident drawing hunt for sheep within the area, and change the bag limit for the resident registration permit, RS595 as follows;

Establish a new hunt area akin to the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area (State AVSMA) as described in Federal Subsistence Regulations: The Arctic Village Sheep Management Area consists of that portion of Unit 25A north and west of Arctic Village, which is bounded on the east by the East Fork Chandalar River beginning at the confluence of Red Sheep Creek and proceeding southwesterly downstream past Arctic Village to the confluence with Crow Nest Creek, continuing up Crow Nest Creek, through Portage Lake, to its confluence with the Junjik River; then down the Junjik River past Timber Lake and a larger tributary, to a major, unnamed tributary, northwesterly, for approximately six miles where the stream forks into two roughly equal drainages; the boundary follows the easternmost fork, proceeding almost due north to the headwaters and intersects the Continental Divide; the boundary then follows the Continental Divide easterly, through Carter Pass, then easterly and northeasterly approximately 62 miles along the divide to the headwaters of the most northerly tributary of Red Sheep Creek then follows southerly along the divide designating the eastern extreme of the Red Sheep Creek drainage then to the confluence of Red Sheep Creek and the East Fork Chandalar River.

Change the harvest limit for the winter season in the Chandalar River hunt area from three sheep to one ram with full-curl horn or larger by permit. Establish a draw permit hunt for residents and nonresidents within the newly established hunt area, State AVSMA. Proposed harvest limits within the state AVSMA are one ram with full-curl horn or larger every four regulatory years. (See regulatory language below).

Unit 25A – Sheep				
R	East of Middle Fort of Chandalar	One ram with full-curl horn or larger. Youth hunt only.	HT	Aug 1 – Aug 5
R	River, <b><u>excluding the AVSMA</u></b>	One ram with full-curl horn or larger.	HT	Aug 10 – Sept 20
R		[THREE SHEEP] <b><u>One ram with full-curl horn or larger</u></b> by permit.	RS595	Oct 1 – Apr 30
N		One ram with full-curl horn or larger every 4 regulatory years.	HT	Aug 10 – Sept 20
<b>R</b>	<b><u>Arctic Village Sheep Management Area</u></b>	<b><u>One ram with full-curl horn or larger. Youth hunt only.</u></b>	<b><u>HT</u></b>	<b><u>Aug 1 – Aug 5</u></b>
<b>R</b>	<b><u>Management Area</u></b>	<b><u>One ram with full-curl horn or larger every 4 regulatory years by permit.</u></b>	<b><u>DSXXX</u></b>	<b><u>Aug 10 – Sept 20</u></b>

<b><u>R</u></b>	<b><u>One ram with full-curl horn or larger every 4 regulatory years by permit.</u></b>	<b><u>RS595</u></b>	<b><u>Oct 1 – Apr 30</u></b>
<b><u>N</u></b>	<b><u>One ram with full-curl horn or larger every 4 regulatory years by permit.</u></b>	<b><u>DSXXX</u></b>	<b><u>Aug 10 – Sept 20</u></b>

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) would like to address sheep hunting in Unit 25A, specifically in the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area (AVSMA). The Council intends for this proposal to become a joint effort between the State Board of Game, the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) and Arctic Village residents to find a workable solution to a historically contentious issue and build mutual respect between parties. The Council views this as a placeholder proposal and will further discuss this proposal at their fall 2019 meeting and will submit additional comments to the Alaska Board of Game by the February 21, 2020, deadline. Below is a brief history of the AVSMA, including recent events at the 2018 Federal Subsistence Board meeting, which led to the development of this proposal.

In 1991, the FSB established the AVSMA in Unit 25A in response to local hunter (residents of Arctic Village, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Kaktovik, and Chalkyitsik) concerns that sport hunters interfered with sheep hunting by federally qualified subsistence users and because of low sheep densities in the area. Generally, the AVSMA included the area between Crow Nest and Cane Creeks, west of the East Fork Chandalar River to the Continental Divide and is entirely within Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The effect of the AVSMA was a closure to sheep hunting within its boundaries except by federally qualified subsistence users. In 1995, the FSB expanded the northeast portion of the AVSMA to include the entire drainages of Cane Creek and Red Sheep Creek.

In 2006, the FSB approved a special action to open the Red Sheep and Cane Creek drainages within the AVSMA to non-federally qualified users for the 2006/07 regulatory year from August 10 through September 20, 2006 because a survey conducted in June 2006 by ANWR personnel indicated no conservation concerns for the area and that sheep abundance could support increased harvest. In 2007, the FSB permanently lifted the closure under federal regulations from August 10 through September 20. These actions resulted in state regulations once again being applicable in the Cane and Red Sheep Creek drainages of the AVSMA, allowing non-federally qualified users to hunt sheep in this area.

In 2012, the Eastern Interior Council requested that the FSB close Cane Creek and Red Sheep Creek drainages to the harvest of sheep by non-federally qualified users from August 10 through September 20. The Council said the proposal enhanced the ability of the residents of Arctic Village to pursue subsistence opportunities and might reduce incidents of trespass and resource damage. The Council said it was compelled by extensive and detailed public testimony and that subsistence users were concerned that non-federally qualified users were interfering with subsistence hunts. The FSB then re-closed the entire drainages of Cane Creek and Red Sheep Creek, and they have remained closed along with the remainder of the AVSMA.

The FSB considered Proposal WP18-56 to reopen the AVSMA at its April 2018 meeting. FSB members considered deferring the proposal to work with ADF&G on submitting an agenda change request in November 2018 to the Alaska Board of Game to modify the state's hunt structure for sheep in Unit 25A. FSB members expressed concern that current state regulations for sheep in Unit 25A are fairly aggressive (three sheep harvest limit and harvest ticket hunts that do not limit hunter numbers). FSB members considered other options such as a state draw permit hunt that could limit hunter numbers, which could make opening the AVSMA to non-federally qualified users more acceptable to Arctic Village residents and other federally qualified subsistence users.

While the FSB ended up opposing WP18-56 for the continuation of subsistence uses in 2018, the intention of this proposal is to start the process of making state regulations more acceptable to federally qualified subsistence users by averting a large influx of hunters into the AVSMA if the federal closure is lifted in the future. This could facilitate the opening of the AVSMA to all users. The Council believes removing the three sheep harvest limit and establishing a draw hunt would limit the sheep harvest and number of hunters in the AVSMA if the federal closure was lifted.

The Alaska Board of Game has previously addressed this issue by requiring sheep hunters in this area to complete a department approved hunter ethics and orientation course, including land status and trespass information (5 AAC 92.003(i)). This provision has not been implemented; however, because the area has not been open to hunting under state regulations. The Council hopes this proposal will encourage the Alaska Board of Game to develop this hunter ethics and orientation course.

The FSB and ADF&G representatives expressed willingness to work together on this issue at the April 2018 FSB meeting. ADF&G representatives reiterated their willingness to work with the FSB at the Council's 2019 winter meeting. The Council also plans to engage Arctic Village residents to make this a truly cooperative effort.

**Other Alternatives Considered:**

The Council discussed requiring horn destruction to promote subsistence rather than sport/trophy hunting in the area.

The Council discussed and passed a motion to write a letter to Arctic Village to engage residents in the conversation and in developing an acceptable solution. The Council's Chair is considering a visit to Arctic Village to start a dialog with the residents.

The Council formed a working group at its winter 2019 meeting to work on this proposal. The working group discussed removing the youth hunt from the proposed AVSMA regulations as it has potential for abuse and overharvest.

The Council is currently working on a hunter ethics and education initiative, and the working group considered coordinating the AVSMA hunter orientation course with the Council's hunter ethics initiative.

The working group also thought of eliminating the winter hunts completely as no other area in the state has a state winter sheep hunt.

**PROPOSED BY:** Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (EG-F19-139)  
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