

Members of the BOG, ADF&G staff and Mr. Chairman, thank you for your service to the conservation of our wildlife resources, and for the opportunity to address some of the issues before you. My comments are directed toward the proposals regarding sheep in the Talkeetna Mts., 13D and 14A. I have left each of you a copy of my testimony because I am going to be throwing out a lot of numbers that will be impossible to remember in case you think what I have to say has merit and care to review it.

Talkeetna Mts. – From 1983-2010 hunter #'s averaged over 300. 84% were resident hunters, yet in 2010 of 32 rams harvested, residents harvested 13 while non-res harvested 19. In 2011 it was a 20/20 split. Residents were 5% & 8% successful while NR's were 59% & 63% successful. Residents are not nearly as successful as NR because they only average around 5 days in the field and NR have to hire a guide, but even guides are averaging only 60% which is lower than their average statewide, a strong indication of a struggling sheep population. This area needs to be on a permit draw for NR's at a 10% allocation of what ADF&G feels is the harvestable surplus. Resident success rates clearly have demonstrated that allowing them to open hunt will not probably ever cause an over-harvest as long as the legal harvest remains full curl.

13D – From 1983-2010, hunter #'s averaged 190, 44 was the average for Non-residents. Residents were 20% successful on average to NR's 62% success. Prior to going on permit in 2008 NR took approximately 1/3 of the yearly harvest. The last year before permits, 2007, the harvest was half what it normally was. From 2008-2011 71 rams were harvested, 35 by residents and 35 by NR's, while 80% of the hunters were residents. Again residents are not successful enough to over-harvest rams especially when full curl only is the legal bag limit. This justifies keeping NR's on a permit draw and reopening 13D to general hunting for residents.

14A – From 1983-2010, hunter #'s averaged 170 of which NR's averaged only 17 of those hunters. However, prior to going on permit in 2008, from 2004 -2007 NR hunters ranged from 25 to 46 hunters harvesting 88 rams to residents 71. Resident success rate averaged 21%.

I was on the board when 13D and 14A became permit hunt areas. I also hunted 14A extensively and saw it deteriorate because of the access 38 guides had to this small area that had a history of producing potential B&C rams as did 13D even more-so. In 2006 & 2007 one ram each year 40" or better was harvested and in 08 through 2011, zero 40" rams were harvested in 14A.

In Dan Montgomery's proposal his appraisal of full curl vs. any ram is well said. Hunters will take what they can get when allowed to and harvest young rams.

Wayne Heimer clearly demonstrated years ago the importance of harvesting full curl mature rams and leaving younger rams. He pointed out that the breeding rams will often die and should be the target of harvest, leaving younger rams that will winter better than fat depleted older breeding rams and become their replacement in subsequent years. The Chugach Mts. are relatively hard to access and difficult to hunt because of alders and their ruggedness. Hunters paying to be flown in are looking for a trophy- not any ram. Hunters that access roadside areas are likely to take a small ram that is easy just to be successful.

Resident hunter success in 13D & 14A, past and present, clearly indicates they are not a serious threat to sheep hunting in Alaska, especially when only full curls are the legal harvest. Increased guide activity through numbers is the problem I believe and statistics bear this out. Since the Owsichek court ruling in 1988 guide numbers have proliferated and many guides operate on the philosophy of "If they don't take the rams, the other guides will or are!", so they are forced to do the same if they are going to compete. This mentality has little concern for managing for future harvests. As a result, areas are over-harvested and guides apply for new areas because they are no longer restricted to exclusive areas where farming is a good practice.

Our state is clearly in a dilemma over the guide issue and dwindling sheep populations. I know DNR has been working on a new Guide-Lease Program for the past going on 5 years. Guides are never going to agree to limit themselves, because some are going to lose out in the process although everyone knows restrictions of some sort have to occur if sheep numbers and hunting is to improve. I believe that even if the new program is instituted that it will be challenged through litigation and be tied up for possibly 10-20 years, but statistics show that sheep do not have that long to wait. If we continue without addressing the issue on a resource need rather than a hunter/guide issue, I predict that in 10-15 years, the whole state will be forced to go to a draw for both residents and non-residents. I'm saying that it would be wise to go to a draw system now for non-residents and allow general open hunting by residents who are not that successful and I think the resource will recover as bad winters allow. If this is done, the guide issue becomes a non-factor since the number of permits is limited and takes care of itself. This is done in all 10 western states that have sheep currently. NR's are allocated only up to 10% of the permits for Bighorn sheep. Many of the states allow the "Any Ram" harvest which is really not much of an issue for them because of the limited harvest for residents as well as non-residents. But it is not a sound practice where open hunting is allowed. Actually it is not a good practice period if the ultimate concern is the best sheep population possible as I pointed out earlier and substantiated by Geist, Heimer and others. Thanks for your consideration. Are there any questions?

Chugach Mountains - GMU 13D (5,745 mi²) Permit Draw Hunts Started 2008

YEAR																	
1967																	
1968																	
1969																	
1970																	
1971																	
1972																	
1973																	
1974																	
1975																	
1976																	
1977																	
1978																	
1979																	
1980																	
1981																	
1982																	
1983		189	59	31%	39	18	26%	53%	152	34	80%						
1984		219	57	26%	35	21	19%	58%	181	36	83%						
1985		200	50	25%	35	15	20%	58%	174	16	87%						
1986		247	88	36%	53	32	27%	73%	193	44	78%						
1987		245	77	31%	51	24	26%	59%	199	41	81%						
1988		232	72	33%	44	26	25%	45%	174	56	75%	6	43.5	7.8	34.9	13.6	---
1989		195	81	42%	38	40	28%	73%	137	55	70%	4	46.0				
1990		204	74	36%	38	32	25%	73%	154	44	75%	8	42.1				
1991		221	70	32%	35	33	22%	53%	157	62	71%	5	42.0	8.7	37.1	13.8	17%
1992		178	44	25%	24	20	17%	51%	138	39	78%	8	42.0				
1993		180	62	34%	40	19	29%	53%	138	36	77%	7	41.25				
1994		249	89	36%	42	41	23%	65%	179	63	71%	7	42.0				
1995		219	81	37%	30	51	20%	74%	150	69	75%	14	41.6	9.0	37.4	13.7	21%
1996		224	62	28%	31	31	19%	56%	167	55	75%	12	42.25				
1997		206	54	26%	21	31	15%	53%	141	59	68%	5	41.75				
1998		229	60	26%	22	36	13%	59%	166	61	72%	10	43.75				
1999		221	61	30%	26	33	21%	52%	155	64	70%	1	42.6				
2000		195	52	27%	22	28	22%	44%	128	63	66%	4	43.0	8.4	37.0	14.0	20%
2001		168	47	28%	23	24	19%	56%	124	43	74%	3	44.0				
2002	1581	188	57	30%	28	28	20%	62%	141	45	75%	2	41.0				
2003		193	73	38%	31	41	23%	77%	136	53	70%	6	42.0				
2004		200	70	35%	31	34	22%	73%	144	51	72%	7	40.6				
2005		176	52	30%	22	29	17%	62%	127	47	72%	7	43.1	8.8	37.5	13.2	---
2006	1415	149	34	23%	15	19	14%	49%	110	39	74%	4	44.75				
2007	1163	186	36	19%	13	22	8%	69%	153	32	82%	4	43.1				
2008	1283	73	7	10%	3	4	5%	50%	63	8	86%	0	---				
2009		60	17	28%	7	10	15%	83%	47	12	78%	1	41.0				
2010		84	20	24%	11	9	15%	100%	75	9	89%	3	42.5	8.5	37.8	13.3	20%
Low		60	7	10%	3	4	8%	44%	47	8	66%	0	41.0	7.8	34.9	13.2	17%
High		249	89	42%	53	51	29%	100%	199	69	89%	14	46.0	9.0	37.8	14.0	21%
Ave.		190	57	29%	29	26	20%	62%	143	44	76%	5.6	42.5	8.5	37.0	13.6	20%
2011		78	27	35%	14	12	23%	74%	60	14	77%	3	42.0				

Chugach Mountains-GMU 14A (6,682 mi²) Permit Draw Hunts Started 2008

YEAR																		
1967																		
1968																		
1969																		
1970																		
1971																		
1972																		
1973																		
1974																		
1975																		
1976																		
1977																		
1978																		
1979																		
1980																		
1981																		
1982																		
1983		144	35	24%	24	11	19%	65%	127	17	88%							
1984		186	43	23%	33	9	19%	64%	170	14	91%							
1985		189	52	28%	43	8	25%	67%	174	12	92%							
1986		221	59	27%	44	13	22%	81%	199	16	90%							
1987		204	50	25%	42	8	22%	67%	189	12	93%							
1988		191	53	28%	38	14	22%	82%	172	17	90%	1	42.0	8.1	37.0	13.8	---	
1989		180	35	19%	30	5	18%	42%	168	12	93%	0	---					
1990		158	23	15%	14	6	11%	43%	133	14	84%	1	41.0					
1991		150	38	25%	30	8	21%	89%	141	9	94%	2	41.0	9.2	36.5	13.7	13%	
1992		165	33	20%	23	10	16%	63%	142	16	86%	1	40.0					
1993		154	29	19%	25	4	17%	80%	148	5	96%	3	41.0					
1994		163	39	24%	31	8	21%	67%	151	12	93%	6	42.5					
1995		177	27	15%	22	5	13%	56%	165	9	93%	6	43.0	9.2	37.1	13.5	11%	
1996		217	48	22%	34	13	17%	72%	196	18	90%	7	40.4					
1997		190	36	19%	25	11	15%	69%	170	16	89%	6	42.75					
1998	907	293	38	19%	22	16	12%	73%	180	22	89%	1	42.0					
1999		196	36	18%	20	14	12%	67%	173	21	88%	0	---					
2000		169	27	16%	19	7	12%	58%	153	12	91%	0	---	7.9	35.8	13.6	11%	
2001		162	22	14%	11	10	8%	59%	144	17	89%	2	40.0	8.5	35.8	13.5	11%	
2002		178	33	19%	24	9	15%	56%	162	16	91%	1	40.0					
2003	950	165	29	18%	18	11	12%	65%	148	17	90%	1	40.5					
2004	950	183	41	22%	23	17	15%	68%	154	25	84%	1	42.1					
2005		179	48	27%	20	28	15%	62%	132	45	74%	5	41.4	8.7	35.5	13.5	---	
2006	644	186	37	20%	14	23	10%	50%	137	46	74%	1	41.5					
2007		169	34	20%	14	20	10%	57%	134	35	79%	1	40.9					
2008		51	13	26%	10	2	24%	33%	42	6	82%	0	---					
2009		74	15	20%	12	3	17%	60%	69	5	93%	0	---					
2010		63	12	19%	7	5	13%	56%	54	9	86%	0	---	8.8	35.2	13.4	---	
Low		51	10	14%	7	2	8%	42%	42	5	74%	0	40.0	7.9	35.2	13.4	11%	
High		221	59	28%	44	28	25%	89%	199	46	96%	7	43.0	9.2	34.1	13.8	13%	
Ave.		170	35	21%	24	11	16%	62%	147	17	88%	2	41.2	8.6	36.1	13.5	12%	
2011		83	21	25%	14	7	10%	78%	71	8	86%	0	---					