

## **PROPOSAL 97**

### **5 AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions.**

Lengthen the time period hunters are restricted from using aircraft to locate sheep or direct hunters to sheep as follows:

From August 1-September 20, aircraft may only be used by and for sheep hunters to place and remove hunters and camps, maintain existing camps, and salvage harvested sheep. A person may not use or employ an aircraft to locate sheep or direct hunters to sheep during the open sheep hunting season.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Board of Game has wisely restricted the use of aircraft to “locate sheep or direct hunters to sheep during the open sheep hunting season”. In the experience of many sheep hunters this has made a very positive impact on the experience of sheep hunting and has created a much more fair chase hunt. This regulation does not, however, account for the fact that there is a youth hunt that starts in many parts of the state on August 1 during which time aircraft could be legally used to locate sheep and direct hunters. This is the antithesis of a fair chase hunt and, if/when this happens we are setting a poor example for young impressionable hunters instead of teaching them the importance of fair chase hunting that creates challenge and adventure.

Furthermore, the author of this proposal has also written a proposal to create an archery sheep season from August 6 – 9 and limiting aerial scouting during that time would be important to maintain the spirit of fair chase for that hunt as well.

It’s also worth noting that officially that the Boone and Crocket Club has the following to say:

#### **“I. Spotting or herding game from the air, followed by landing in its vicinity for the purpose of pursuit and shooting;**

With the popularity of personal aircraft in the 1960s increasing and being used for hunting to access remote areas in North America, it became apparent that some hunters were using aircraft not only to reach their hunting destination, but locate their game from the air, and in the vicinity, and pursue for a shot. In some cases, hunters were using aircraft to herd game into a more accessible situation. The Club determined that this was an unfair advantage to both the game and other hunters. At the same time the Club established this policy, some states and provinces began outlawing the practice and instituting laws prohibiting hunting the same day as flying.”

Spotting game from the air prior to harvest is clearly a violation of the basic principles of fair chase and pushing back the date for which Alaska permits this would be acting in a way consistent with fair chase and ethical hunting. Even for areas without youth hunts, pushing back the aerial scouting prohibition to the August 1 would decrease the amount number of hunters who fly to their intended hunting areas in the couple of days prior to August 10 and then locate sheep, land near them by the 9th and subsequently kill them. Anyone who has spent extensive time in sheep terrain has seen examples of this style of “hunting”.

In the past some of the opposition to the exiting aerial scouting ban from August 10 – September 20 have complained that there is increased aviation hazard during the days immediately prior to August 10 because it's the only time hunters have to locate sheep and move hunters into position. (There are also limited pilot position reports during that period because of the intent to keep sheep hunting locations secret.) If the period was pushed back to August 1, this would potentially create a safer situation because pilots would only be flying directly to predetermined sites to drop hunters instead the low and circuitous flying that has been cited as hazard if several pilots are doing it in the same area. This proposal could potentially decrease aviation hazard during sheep season.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?** I discussed this proposal with several ADF&G biologists who agree with the spirit and sentiment of the proposal.

**PROPOSED BY:** Paul Forward

(EG-F24-093)

\*\*\*\*\*