

## **PROPOSAL 179**

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

Remove the East Fork Eklutna from the sheep hunt area for DS124, DS125, DS126 and DS224 in Unit 14C as follows:

**What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?**

Option 1) Remove the East Fork Eklutna from the hunting areas of DS124, 125, 126, 224 and revert back to the previous situation with the East Fork being open for sheep hunting only as part of DS140/240.

Option 2) Remove the East Fork Eklutna from the hunting areas of DS124,125, 126, 224 and include that area both within DS140/240 as well as DS141 and DS241.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?**

We need to remove the Eklutna East Fork from the hunt areas for DS124, 125, 126 and 224 and add them to the hunt area for DS141 and 241 to increase opportunity, safety and equity for draw permit winners in these areas.

In the 2022/2023 proposal cycle Proposal 82 was carried by the BOG. This proposal, submitted by a hunting guide, expanded DS124, DS125, DS126 and DS224 to include the East Fork Eklutna drainage that had, at one time had it's own draw tag, and the in subsequent years was included in DS140 and DS240. While the effort to expand hunting opportunity in a sustainable way should be commended, this proposal has the opposite affect. DS124, DS125, 126 and 224 include a vast area that only has 3 tags/hunters for each of the allowed seasons. This is an uncrowded hunt with plenty of terrain and opportunity for a DS recipient to hunt safely and enjoyably away from the two other hunters who are allowed to be in the area.

On the other hand, recipients of DS141 and 241 (I've had 141 twice myself) find themselves in a much smaller more easily accessible area competing with 23 other tag holders each season. Furthermore, many of the rams that can be pursued in the DS141 area often travel back and forth across the hunt boundary into the east fork Eklutna making them vulnerable to DS124, DS125, 126 and DS224 who, at times, could almost shoot those rams from the popular hiking trail that ascends the east fork. This unfortunate result of Proposal 82 results in not just a lower quality experience for the 25 hunters who draw DS141 and DS241 but also puts in them in potential danger if they find themselves stalking rams near the hunt border where an errant shot from a rifle hunter just the other side of the border could be in their direction. I have many times seen rams residing right on the divide between the two hunting areas. Essentially, the 22/23 Proposal 82 has greatly increased decreased the hunt quality, stalking opportunity and physical safety of up to 25 hunters per year just to allow additional area for a much smaller group of tag holders who already have a large area with very little competition.

Furthermore, prior to Proposal 82, DS 140 and DS240 hunters could already hunt in the East Fork. For those 40 tag holders the East Fork Eklutna provided one of the only areas of their entire hunting area that had not been previously hunted by other hunters during earlier seasons and was a small refuge for those looking to hunt less disturbed sheep. Now that is no longer a reality after at least 10 hunters have been able to rifle hunt the relatively small area during the preceding ~2 months.

A quick view of the map will show that geographically it makes much more sense to either revert have to the previous situation of having the East fork included in the other hunts that include the Eklutna lake area. DS124, 125, 126 and 224 hunters are unlikely to access that area via any other terrain in their area and would rather use a completely different access and be isolated from the other hunting areas of their tag. DS140,141,240 and 241 hunters however, could venture up in the East Fork easily from the areas they are already hunting, making this a much more natural option. Geographically including the east fork Eklutna with the other Eklutna drainage tags is intuitive.

It should also be noted that during the 22/23 cycle ADFG staff wrote that it would make sense to include the East Fork in the already somewhat crowded DS141/241 hunts and mentioned that as an alternative. Personal conversations with local ADFG staff have confirmed that sentiment.

Finally, the mandate of the Board of Game is to increase opportunity for hunters. The recently adopted Proposal 82 creates increased hunting area for about 10 hunters per year while adding this area into DS141/241 or reverting back to having it open only for DS140/240 would increase opportunity for up to 65 hunters each season. At the same time, restricting the area to archery only would provide this greatly increased hunting opportunity while likely decreasing the overall harvest in the area due to the dramatically decreased success rates of bowhunters for sheep.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?**

Yes, through discussion with area biologists and through review of ADF&G comments from the 22/23 proposal cycle documents and meeting.

**PROPOSED BY:** Paul Forward (OI-F25-212)  
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