



Alaska Access-Travel Management
Thinhorn Summit III
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation
April 2022

- Per the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, fixed-wing aircraft, snowmachine, and motorized boat use is allowed for customary and traditional uses, such as hunting, on federal lands in Alaska, including federally designated Wilderness Areas. Use of ATVs and other wheeled motorized vehicles is generally not allowed in Alaska Federal Wilderness Areas.
- There are also large National Parks that prohibit hunting entirely, or are closed to hunting by non-federally qualified users (those people who live in designated communities and areas considered urban).
- Helicopters are not allowed for use in hunting or for transporting hunters, hunting gear, game meat, trophies, or any equipment used to pursue or retrieve game.
- A large percentage of sheep hunting areas in Alaska are accessed using fixed-wing aircraft.
- It is against the law to hunt or help someone else take big game until 3:00 a.m. the day following the day you have flown. This is referred to as "same day airborne". Same day airborne does not apply if you have flown on a regularly scheduled commercial or commuter airplane.
- From August 10 – 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 (or electronic communication) to locate sheep or direct hunters to sheep during the open sheep hunting season.
- Alaska has approximately 14 State Controlled Use or Management Areas within sheep hunts areas. Some of these areas have drawing permit sheep hunts, and some limit or prohibit motorized access. The Board of Game created these management and controlled use areas for various reasons including allocation of opportunity among different user groups and to manage for quality of hunting experiences (e.g., reduce crowding).
- 5 AAC 92.004 Policy for off-road vehicle use for hunting and transporting game: the Board of Game can take action to avoid or minimize:
 - o Soil erosion-compaction, significant effects to important wildlife habitat, or impacts to wildlife distribution or abundance
 - o Harvest that affects condition, abundance, or trophy size relative to management goals

- Wildlife disturbance that significantly affects reproductive success, abundance, or condition, movement patterns, distribution, or behavior, or avoidance of important habitats such as mineral licks, birthing sites, wintering habitat, and other wildlife feeding sites and food sources
 - Chronic conflicts with other user groups leading to the decline in the quality of the outdoor experience
 - Creation of Controlled Use Areas and Travel Management Areas is a result of this regulation
- Eastern GMU 26A and all of GMU 23 (Fig. 1) closed to sheep hunting in 2014 due to severe decline in sheep numbers. The contiguous sheep populations in the De Long Mountains, Schwatka Mountains, and state managed lands in Unit 26A saw a population decline of 50-75% from 2011-2014, and was preceded by a 30% decline from 2009-2011. Severe winter conditions in 2013-2014 prompted the department to close sheep hunting in those areas. Sheep hunting has remained closed since then.
 - Alaska is experiencing conflicts between hunters and mineral exploration companies. The short hunting window in most of AK also overlaps with the short resource exploration season.
 - Another example of a recent action that could result in access restrictions include a Wildlife Special Action request made from the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council to the Federal Subsistence Board for closure of Dall's sheep harvest in Unit 24A and a portion of Unit 26B (Fig. 2) that are accessible from the Dalton Highway.

Fig. 1. Dall's sheep range and Alaska Game Management Units.

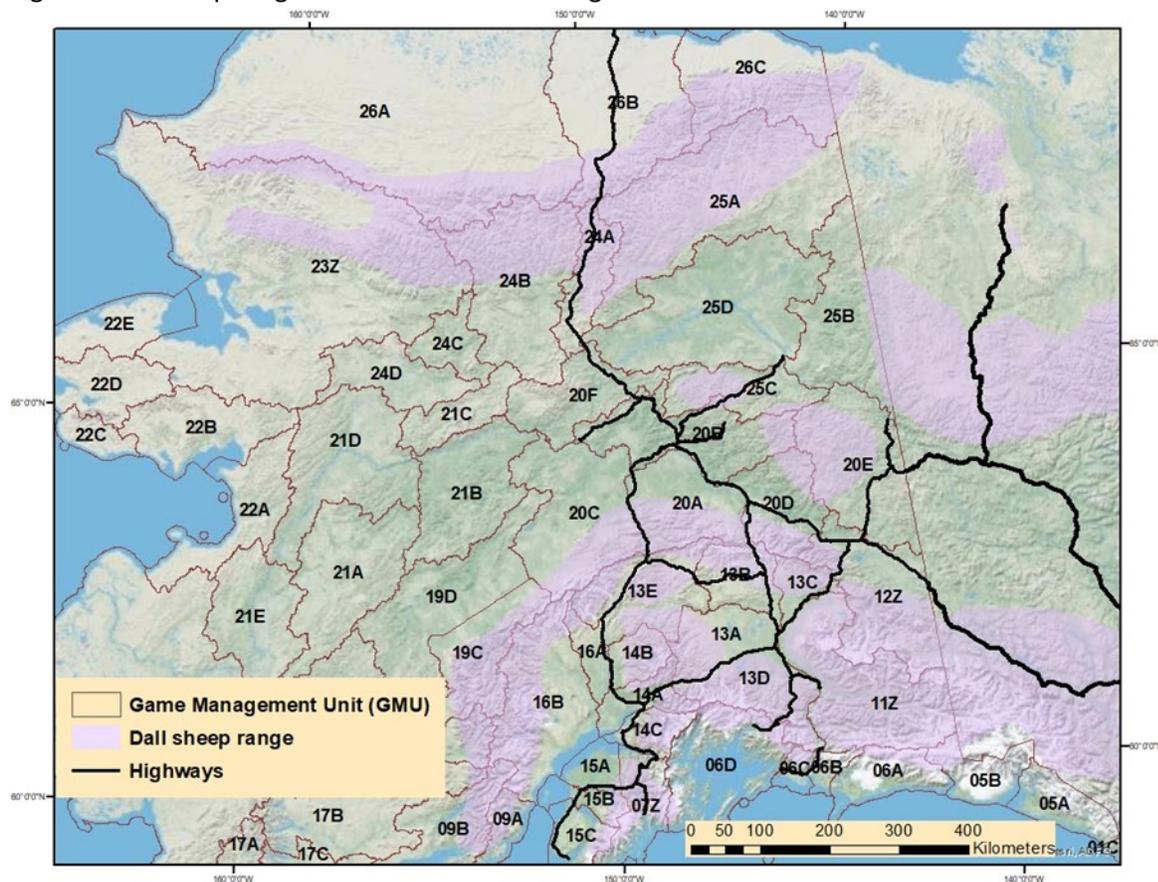


Fig. 2. Proposed sheep hunting closure in Game Management Units 24A and 26B.

