

PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Title: Issuance of Special Recreation Permit in the
Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area
Dall Sheep Hunting in GUA 24-03

EA Number: DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0013

The four applicants are:

Dave Morris, Alaska Arctic Guide Service, BLM permit FF095531;

Eric Salitan, Bushwhack Guiding and Outfitting, BLM permit FF095719;

Jonah Stewart, Jonah's Alaska Outfitters, BLM permit FF095660.

Stan Parkerson, Denali Hunt Consultants of Alaska, BLM permit FF094218;

Date Prepared:

Prepared By: Central Yukon Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
(907) 474-2200

I. PURPOSE AND NEED

The BLM is responding to four applications filed under 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 2930 by state licensed commercial hunting guides requesting access to the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA) near Wiseman, Alaska and north to the Brooks Range. The purpose of the requests is to provide commercial guides permitted access to conduct guided Dall Sheep (*Ovis dalli*) hunts for a total of 12 clients within an area identified by the state of Alaska as Guide Use Area (GUA) 24-03. The applicants have requested to use Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands in this GUA because sheep are known to inhabit the area and it is open for guided hunting.

BLM Decision to be made:

The BLM will decide whether or not to issue Special Recreation Permits (SRP) that allow for commercial hunting guides to provide guided sheep hunting using archery hunting methods within the five mile corridor, and rifle hunting outside of the five mile corridor, on BLM lands in GUA 24-03. If SRPs are issued, the BLM will determine the terms, conditions and stipulations prior to issuance.

Issues

There have been issues raised as a result of scoping letters sent to the community of Wiseman and other stakeholders for the proposed action of commercially guided sheep hunting in GUA 24-03. Issues as described by respondents are:

- There is a declining sheep population in the area of the Environmental Assessment.
- Use of aircraft in support of hunts provides guides and their clients with an advantage over hunters not using aircraft. The premise is that aviation users can locate full curl rams and later hunt them without breaking state laws.

- Pursuit of full curl rams disturbs 7/8 curl rams that then reduces their availability to federally qualified subsistence hunters.
- There is a perceived conflict between federal subsistence users from the community of Wiseman and guided and non-guided hunters who hunt sheep within the five-mile limit of the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA) of the Central Brooks Range due to hunting pressure on available full curl rams.

An additional issue has been raised by current and past holders of BLM SRPs in GUA 24-03 regarding the quality of the hunt experience for their clients. Guides state that camp placement and movement/placement of guided clients has resulted in a negative impact on their clients hunt experiences. They describe a situation where they feel guides are overlapping each other in their use of BLM lands in the GUA which in turn is impacting the satisfaction of their clients.

II. PROPOSED ACTION

A) **Proposed Action**

The Proposed Action is to permit a total of four (4) commercial hunting guides' access to BLM lands within GUA 24-03 for the purpose of guiding sheep hunters using both bow and rifle hunting methods as allowed for by State of Alaska regulations.

Access

Three of the applicants use fixed wing aircraft to access off road hunting activities and the forth is hiking only. Once in the hunt area, all guides use backpacking and hiking as the main mode of access. Typical hunts will be for less than seven (7) days and be self-supported. Guides using fixed wing aircraft to access points within GUA 24-03 typically land on gravel bars.

Camping

Three of the guides have base camps on private lands and one guide is based on BLM land at mile post (MP) 222. The guides on private lands are based in Wiseman, Nutirwik Creek, and one near the Matthews River. Spike camps will be used for short durations of approximately three days or less and will be set up based on game movement and hunting activities.

Outing Etiquette

Leave No Trace principles will be used and no equipment or material from the applicants camp(s) will be left in the field after the guiding season. In order to minimize the potential of introducing invasive and non-native plant seeds into the surrounding environment, the applicant and his clients will use methods outlined in Attachment A of the permit.

Hunting dates

The State of Alaska has typically set August 10 through September 20 each year as the open season for sheep hunting in Game Management Unit 24. Guides would be allowed access into the area seven days on each side of the hunt dates set by the state to set up and remove equipment used in seasonal operations.

B) No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would be to deny issuance of Special Recreation Permits to commercial hunting guides for sheep hunting on BLM lands in GUA 24-03.

III. CONFORMANCE WITH LAND USE PLAN**A) Location**

The general location of the lands under consideration include: Sukakpak Mountain, Snowden Mountain, Poss Mountain, the Matthews River drainage, the Bettles River drainage, and the Dietrich River drainage. This EA considered all of the lands encompassed by GUA 24-03.

B) Land Status

A map is attached outlining GUA 24-03 with land ownership identified.

C) Conformance

The Proposed Action conforms to the existing land use plans (LUPs) and environmental documentation below.

Subject lands are covered under the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan, which was approved on January 11, 1991; the action has been reviewed for and is in conformance with Chapter Two of the Plan (pages 2-26 and 2-27) and also implementing action #1 under Recreation Program Objective 2 found in Appendix N (page N-19) which states “Process Special Recreational Permit applications for all commercial and competitive events on a case-by-case basis;”.

D) Required Permits, Licenses, etc.

The applicants have State of Alaska, Guide license and have authorization to guide in Guide Use Area (GUA) 24-03.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**A) General Setting**

The area is about 47 miles north of Coldfoot, AK along the Dalton Highway (Figure 1). Coldfoot has a population of less than 50 temporary residents. Coldfoot is the location for all services within the surrounding area. Wiseman, a small village north of Coldfoot is closer to the area of the guided hunting. There are less than 15 permanent residents in Wiseman, a rural community that qualifies for subsistence activities as provided for in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Adjacent Land Use consists of the following:

The lands on the eastern boundary are managed by the State of Alaska and Native Corporations and on the west by the National Park Service. In addition, there are private lands, native allotments, and native corporation lands dispersed throughout the area.

B) Affected Resources

The following table identifies those Elements that could be affected by the proposed action. **Following the table is a more detailed description of those affected elements. Elements where no affect is anticipated will not be discussed further.**

Elements of the Affected Environment	Affected		Resource Specialist Signature	Resource Specialist
	Yes	No		
Air Quality		X	CK	Carl Kretsinger
ACEC's		X	MC	Merben Cebrian
Cultural Resources		X	WH	Bill Hedman
Environmental Justice		X	KE	Kelly Egger
Farm Lands		X	CK	Carl Kretsinger
Floodplains/Wetlands/Riparian		X	CK	Carl Kretsinger
Invasive, Nonnative Species		X	MC	Merben Cebrian
Native American Religious Concerns		X	WH	Bill Hedman
Threatened and Endangered Species		X	MC	Merben Cebrian
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid			RH	Rebecca Hile
Water Quality Drinking/Ground		X	CK	Carl Kretsinger
Wilderness		X	LSJLSJ	Lisa Shon Jodwalis
Fire		X	ST	Skip Theisen
Hydrology		X	CK	Carl Kretsinger
Mineral Resources/Geology		X	DV	Darrel Vandeweg
Paleontological			WH	Bill Hedman
Realty/Land Status		X	JV	Joyce Voight
Recreation		X	KE	Kelly Egger
Socio-Economic Conditions		X	KE	Kelly Egger
Subsistence	X		MC	Merben Cebrian
Vegetation		X	MC	Merben Cebrian
Visual Resources		X	CW	Cal Westcott
Wildlife (Non T&E)		X	MC	Merben Cebrian
Engineering			RM	Rodd Moretz
Essential Fish Habitat/Fisheries		X	CK	Carl Kretsinger

C) Description of Elements Affected**Subsistence:**

The issues identified with the proposed action are 1) the Dall sheep population is

declining, 2) the use of aircraft by commercial hunting guides confer an unfair advantage to guided sheep hunters, 3) guided and non-guided hunters in pursuit of full curl rams disturb 7/8 curl rams to the extent that it reduces their availability to federally qualified subsistence users, 4) there is a perceived conflict between subsistence users from the community of Wiseman and guided and non-guided hunters who hunt sheep within the five-mile limit of the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA) of the Central Brooks Range due to hunting pressure on available full curl rams.

The proposed action is to occur in Guide Use Area (GUA) 24-03 of Game Management Unit (GMU) 24A. Sheep hunting in the vicinity of the proposed action is open to Alaska residents and non-Alaska residents and is governed by State hunting regulations. Furthermore, federally-qualified rural residents also hunt sheep in the area and are governed by Federal hunting regulations.

1. Pertinent hunting regulations

State regulations regarding sheep hunting in GMU 24A allow one (1) ram with full curl horn or larger from August 10 to September 20. State hunting regulations require non-Alaska residents to acquire the service of a guide when hunting big game including sheep. Therefore, even though the sheep hunting permits issued for GMU 24A are general season sheep hunting permits, non-resident hunters have to have a guide with them when hunting sheep. In addition, hunters are required to have the harvested sheep horns be sealed by a sealing officer of the ADF&G.

Federal regulations regarding sheep hunting in GMU 24A, except that portion within the Gates of the Arctic National Park, allow one (1) ram with 7/8 curl horn or larger by federal permit from August 20 to September 30 for federally-qualified rural residents. Unstructured interviews and anecdotes from interactions with Wiseman residents while issuing subsistence permits show that while they “hunted everywhere”, they “did not find a 7/8 curl ram anywhere”. Federal subsistence hunters in GMU 24 are not required to have the harvested sheep horns sealed by a sealing officer of the ADF&G. Therefore, it is not known how much of their harvests are of full curl rams. Unstructured interviews with federal subsistence hunters when we issue federal subsistence permits indicate that federal subsistence hunters prefer to hunt full curl rams over sub-full curl rams.

2. Hunting pressure

The BLM has been issuing SRPs to hunting guides who operate on BLM managed lands in the area for more than ten years. Guides to whom the BLM issue SRPs bring clients into the area to hunt sheep using bows if hunting within the 5-mile zone of the DHCMA. If the clients choose to hunt outside of the 5-mile zone, they have the option of hunting sheep with a firearm.

The Federal Subsistence Permit System (FSPS) reports that between 2000 and 2010, there were, on average, 14 federal subsistence permits issued annually for sheep in GMU 24A. Of the 14 permits, an average of seven (7) hunters went afield annually. Of the seven hunters who hunted annually, an average of three (3) or 43% manages to harvest a sheep (Table 1). Federal harvest reports do not require divulging horn configuration of killed sheep.

Table 1. Federal sheep harvests for Game Management Unit 24A from 2000 to 2010. Catch per unit effort calculated as Kill ÷ Dayshunt. (Source: Federal Subsistence Permit System, downloaded 28Feb2012)

Regyear	Species	Issue	State Res	Non-Res	Hunter	Kill	Kill Res	KillNon-Res	Male	Fema	Ukn Sex	Dayshunt	Success Res	CPUE(100dy)
2000	Sheep	17	17	0	6	3	3	0	2	0	1	26	50	11.5
2001	Sheep	14	14	0	7	2	2	0	2	0	0	26	28.6	7.7
2002	Sheep	13	13	0	7	2	2	0	2	0	0	59	28.6	3.4
2003	Sheep	11	11	0	6	2	2	0	2	0	0	33	33.3	6.1
2004	Sheep	11	11	0	7	3	3	0	3	0	0	38	42.9	7.9
2005	Sheep	14	14	0	6	4	4	0	4	0	0	22	66.7	18.2
2006	Sheep	12	12	0	6	5	5	0	5	0	0	50	83.3	10
2007	Sheep	15	15	0	9	4	4	0	4	0	0	59	44.4	6.8
2008	Sheep	17	17	0	6	1	1	0	1	0	0	52	16.7	1.9
2009	Sheep	13	13	0	8	1	1	0	1	0	0	146	12.5	0.7
2010	Sheep	14	14	0	6	4	4	0	4	0	0	41	66.7	9.8
AVERAGE		13.7			6.7		2.8					50.2	43.1	7.6

Harvest of sheep under the state permit system has increased over time (Table 2). There has been a marked increase in harvests by state residents from 13 in 2000 to 23 in 2010. Resident hunters who hunt sheep in GMU 24A can access the area via the Dalton Highway. This is one of a few areas in the state that hunters can walk into the hunting area with moderate ease of access. Between 2000 and 2010, on average, eight (8) general season permits were issued annually to non-resident hunters while 35 were issued to state resident hunters. Of these hunters, non-residents averaged six (6) kills (72% success) annually while residents averaged nine (9) kills (26% success) annually (Table 2). The harvest records indicate that harvests by guided non-residents remain stable while harvests by non-guided resident hunters have increased.

Table 2. State sheep harvests for Game Management Unit 24A from 2000 to 2010. (Source: Federal Subsistence Permit System, downloaded 28Feb2012)

Regyear	Species	Issued	State Res	Non-Res	Hunted	Kill	Kill Res	KillNon-Res	Male	Female	Ukn Sex	Dayshunt	Success Res	Success Non-Res	CPUE(100dy)
2000	Sheep	35	27	8	35	13	7	6	13	0	0	231	26%	75%	5.6
2001	Sheep	36	28	7	36	8	4	4	8	0	0	167	14%	57%	4.8
2002	Sheep	27	23	4	27	10	7	3	10	0	0	183	30%	75%	5.5
2003	Sheep	41	31	10	41	15	9	6	15	0	0	277	29%	60%	5.4
2004	Sheep	35	27	8	35	14	9	5	14	0	0	169	33%	63%	8.3
2005	Sheep	41	33	8	41	16	8	8	16	0	0	197	24%	100%	8.1
2006	Sheep	55	45	9	55	12	6	6	12	0	0	345	13%	67%	3.5
2007	Sheep	48	41	7	48	14	10	4	14	0	0	280	24%	57%	5
2008	Sheep	60	49	9	60	27	18	7	27	0	0	348	37%	78%	7.8
2009	Sheep	53	46	7	53	17	11	6	17	0	0	357	24%	86%	4.8
2010	Sheep	52	40	12	52	23	15	8	23	0	0	280	38%	67%	8.2
AVERAGE		43.9	35.5	8.1	43.9	15.4	9.5	5.7				257.6	27%	71%	6.1

3. Sheep population

Sheep population surveys conducted from 2002 to 2009 by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) includes BLM lands to the east of the Dalton Highway. The National Parks Service (NPS) also conducted sheep surveys from 2005 to 2010 including

BLM lands to the west of the Dalton Highway. Land ownership is divided in the Central Brooks Range generally by that between the State of Alaska to the east of the DHCMA, the NPS to the west of the DHCMA, and the BLM right along the Dalton Highway corridor.

Table 3. Results of sheep population surveys in the Central Brooks Range from 2002 to 2009. Counts of ewes likely included some young rams. Legal rams were those with full-curl or larger horns, or with both horns broomed. (Source: ADF&G)

Year	Total sheep	"Ewe-like"	Lambs	Sublegal rams	Legal rams	Unclass. Rams	% legal rams	% lambs	Lambs:100 "ewes"	Survey Time
2002	1539	884	221	380	50	4	3.2	14.4	25.0	14 hrs 5 min
2003	989	621	114	207	34	13	3.4	11.5	18.4	11 hrs 32 min
2004	1460	908	180	320	43	9	2.9	12.3	19.8	16 hrs 41 min
2005	1099	636	214	203	42	4	3.8	19.5	33.6	15 hrs 10 min
2006	1517	857	224	313	46	77	3.0	14.8	26.1	17 hrs 30 min
2007	1310	779	332	152	47	0	3.6	25.3	42.6	18 hrs 7 min
2009	1535	911	295	298	31	0	2.0	19.2	32.4	21 hrs 38 min
Mean	1350	799	226	268	42	15	3.2	16.7	28.3	

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) surveys (Table 3) show that sheep population in the Central Brooks Range appears to be stable, with an average of 1,350 sheep between 2002 and 2009. The lowest number of full curl rams (2%) was seen in 2009. However, the number of less than full curl rams in the 2009 population survey was above average. Note that ADF&G defines legal rams as full curl rams as compared to the federal definition of legal rams in Unit 24A as 7/8 curl rams.

Rams travel through the mountains for various resources such as food, mineral licks, escape from predators, etc. Therefore, at any given time, the number of sheep seen on any particular location will vary. For example, in the July 2009 ADF&G survey, only three (3) less than full curl rams and no full curl rams were seen within five miles on the east side of the highway between Nutirwik Creek and Minnie Creek (Figure 2). In the same

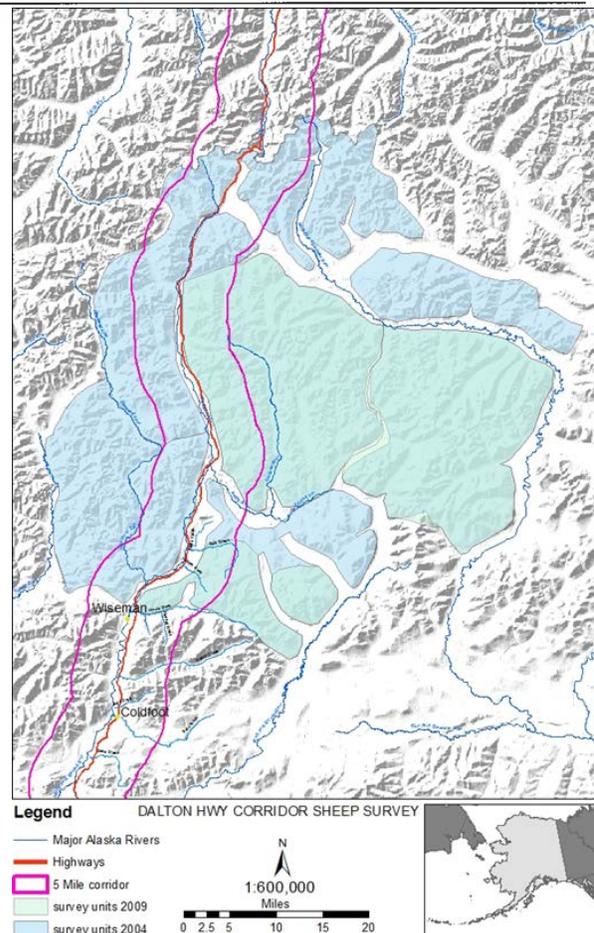


Figure 2. The survey areas in 2004 and 2009. (Source: ADF&G)

area in July 2004, ADF&G found 12 less-than-full curl rams and no full curl rams within five miles on the east side of the highway. Possible explanations include that the sheep were moving up in elevation in response to temperatures at the time of the survey in 2004. The warmer the temperatures, the higher in elevation the sheep are found. The 2004 sheep survey was conducted in an area that covered both sides of the five-mile DHCMA. Between 2005 and 2010 (except 2009), on average, the NPS counted an average of 11 full curl rams per year within the DHCMA west of the Dalton Highway. Within the same time period, the NPS located a total of 157 sheep in the DHCMA west of the Dalton Highway.

In July 2012, the BLM collaborated with the ADF&G in a joint survey for sheep in the Central Brooks Range that included both sides of the Dalton Highway from milepost 175 in Coldfoot to milepost 226 near Kayuktuvuk and Nutirwik Creeks. Preliminary results indicate an increase in overall sheep population. However, preliminary indications also show a low lamb:ewe ratio. Overall, about 13% of all rams seen were full curl, a much higher percentage than in previous surveys. Furthermore, within five miles on the west side of the Dalton Highway, of 53 rams seen there, at least eight (15%) were full curl rams. A total of 105 sheep were seen within five miles on the west side of the Dalton Highway. Final results of the survey will not be available until late fall of 2012.

Overall, the sheep surveys indicate a generally stable population within the Central Brooks Range. Therefore, the issue of the sheep population declining is not supported by these survey results.

4. Disturbance

Land ownership along the Dalton Highway in GMU 24 determines, in part, how different hunters can hunt sheep, and consequently where guided hunters want to hunt. On the west side of the DHCMA, the lands directly adjacent to the Dalton Highway are likely to be BLM lands (Figure 1). State residents and non-residents as well as federally qualified subsistence hunters can hunt sheep on BLM lands under different regulations. Directly west of BLM lands are NPS lands. Hunting for sheep within NPS lands adjacent to the DHCMA westward is allowed for federally-qualified rural residents of GMU 24 residing north of the Arctic Circle, Alatna, Allakaket, Hughes, and Huslia. Most other hunters are not allowed to hunt sheep within the abovementioned NPS lands. By contrast, state lands east of the DHCMA are open to both resident and non-resident sheep hunters using either bow or firearms. Sheep hunters have to pass through BLM lands on the east side of the Dalton Highway to reach state lands beyond the DHCMA. Furthermore, state hunting regulations generally apply to BLM lands thereby allowing both Alaska residents and non-residents to harvest sheep on BLM lands along the Dalton Highway under certain conditions (e.g. bow hunting only).

Human disturbance can influence the movement of Dall sheep including 7/8 curl rams in the DHCMA. Ambient temperature can also influence the movement and distribution of Dall sheep; the warmer the weather, the higher the sheep are on the mountain. There is little to no documented evidence that 7/8 curl rams are disturbed by guide activity and

guided hunters in the DHCMA to the extent that 7/8 curl rams that were present in the DHCMA before hunting season leave the DHCMA and are unavailable to federally qualified subsistence users. However, oral accounts from some Wiseman residents indicate a perceived conflict with guide activities in the DHCMA regarding the harvest of full curl rams. Wiseman residents also allege that illegal harvest of less than full curl sheep by guided hunters as well as walk-in resident hunters abound, but there has been little to no support or prosecution of such activities. Despite such assertions, federal harvest records indicate an average federal subsistence harvest of 2.8 sheep per year between the 2000 and 2010 hunt seasons, with a maximum of five in 2006 and a minimum of 1 in 2008 and 2009 (Table 1). Between 2005 and 2010, the average number of sheep harvested per year was 3.17, showing a gradual increase in the latter half of the last decade. Despite human disturbance from guide activity and guided hunters, federally qualified subsistence users continue to harvest sheep in the DHCMA at more-or-less the same rate, on average, between 2000-2005 and 2006-2010. However, disturbance from guiding activities may be temporary. Since full curl rams continue to be harvested within the DHCMA, it would appear that recruitment of these full curl rams must mean the presence of 7/8 curl rams within the DHCMA.

It is important to note that the Western Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (WIRAC) has requested, and received approval, for a Special Action request (WSA12-01) from the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) to permit the harvest of 1/2 curl rams for the 2012 hunting season. The temporary nature of this special action will not have a significant effect on the viability and continuity of the sheep population in the Central Brooks Range. However, long-term effects of the harvest of 1/2 curl sheep, if it becomes permanent, is difficult to predict and is subject to other factors such as climate and hunting pressure.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A) Impacts of the Proposed Action (Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative)

Subsistence:

Direct Impacts: The direct impacts of the proposed action include competition for resources with subsistence users. Guided hunters will directly compete with subsistence users for full curl rams within the five mile DHCMA. Moreover, the guided hunters have a 10-day head start over subsistence hunters. However, since subsistence users can harvest 7/8 curl sheep, there is only partial competition because 7/8 curl sheep is unavailable to non-subsistence users. Competition is generally greatest where subsistence users prefer to hunt, west of the Dalton Highway.

On average, there were 42 full curl rams per year in the survey area between 2002 and 2009 (Table 3). Furthermore, on average, there were 18 sheep (43%) harvested per year in the same time period. If four guides were to bring 12 sheep hunters into GMU 24A, at 75% success rate, the potential harvest for guided sheep hunters is approximately eight (8) full curl rams throughout GMU 24A. However, the availability of full curl rams

varies from year to year. Given that the state hunt opens earlier than the federal subsistence hunt, guided hunters have a timing advantage over federal subsistence hunters. This timing advantage may result in reducing the availability of full curl rams to federal subsistence hunters. However, the federal subsistence hunt extends 10 days past the end of the state season. This may confer an advantage to federal subsistence hunters because sheep may be lower on the mountain with cooler weather later in the season.

It is unknown how many 7/8 curl rams were among the 12 sub-full curl rams counted within the DHCMA in 2004 that was again surveyed in 2009 when 3 sub-full curl rams were counted between Nutirwik Creek and Minnie Creek. Since 7/8 curl rams are not legally harvestable by sport hunters, the direct effects from the proposed action also include accidental killing by inexperienced sport hunters who erroneously determine the legal status of the ram they were shooting. Guides allow for a more nuanced hunt because of the expert advice the guides provide on the horn size of the rams the guided hunters are stalking. The current harvest of sub-full curl rams in the DHCMA is difficult to determine.

Indirect Impacts: The indirect impacts of the proposed action include the displacement of 7/8 curl rams due to disturbance from guided hunting activities. Human disturbance are known to affect the distribution of game (Macarthur *et al.* 1982, Bleich *et al.* 1993, Bleich *et al.* 2009). As guided hunters arrive via airplane, there is likely some disturbance from airplane noise. And when guided hunters travel through the terrain, there is likely some disturbance from their movement as well. Sheep that respond to disturbances may move from one location to another to avoid disturbance.

This indirect impact likely influences the success of federal subsistence hunters to harvest 7/8 curl rams or greater in the DHCMA. If four guides were to bring 12 guided hunters into the DHCMA, they are likely to disturb 7/8 curl sheep that are amongst full curl sheep that the hunters are going after. The extent of such disturbance directly related to guide activities is unknown since there are also walk-in hunters that may pass through BLM lands and disturb the sheep.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts of the proposed action and past and future actions are difficult to predict. However, with increased hunting pressure from non-guided hunters, it may be harder to find a full curl ram within five miles of the Dalton Highway corridor. Nonetheless, 7/8 curl rams are still available within the DHCMA for federally-qualified subsistence users.

Scott (1983) indicated in her research about resource use in the Wiseman area that Wiseman residents prefer to hunt game closer to home. Hunting regulations and competition for resources with non-local hunters have influenced Wiseman residents' hunting patterns on either side of the Dalton Highway. However, residents acknowledge that there is less competition for resources in the park west of the highway where non-subsistence users are not allowed.

Since Wiseman residents can harvest three sheep in the Park and they can also harvest 7/8 curl sheep in the DHCMA, then the cumulative effects to Wiseman residents include shifting in harvest patterns toward the Park where there is no pressure from non-subsistence hunters and the hunting season is long (August 1 to April 30), providing the opportunity to use snowmachines for hunting purposes as they have customarily done so (Table 4).

Month	Moose	Dall Sheep	Caribou	Black Bear	Grizzly Bear
October		x	x		
November		x	x		
December			x		
January			x		
February			x		
March	x	x	x		
April		x	x	x	
May				x	x
June					
July					
August	x	x	x		
September	x	x	x	x	

B) Impacts of the No Action Alternative

Subsistence:

In the No Action Alternative, the impacts from guided hunting activities will not occur in the area. Impacts from non-guided hunters will remain the same.

C) Mitigation Measures

Subsistence:

1. Most of the competition and disturbance is generally greatest where subsistence users prefer to hunt, west of the Dalton Highway. Therefore, we will not allow guided commercial sheep hunters on the west side of the Dalton Highway from milepost 175 to milepost 227.
2. The number of commercial sheep guides will be limited to 4 and guided sheep hunters will be limited to 12 clients in order to reduce disturbance and competition. These 12 guided hunters will be dispersed over non-overlapping areas in order to disperse guided hunting pressure.
3. Airplanes in support of guided sheep hunting will not fly below 1500 ft. AGL over sheep in order to reduce disturbance to sheep.

D) Residual Effects

Subsistence:

Direct Impacts: If the number of guides and guided clients are limited in the DHCMA, then the residual effects direct impacts will also be a reduction in competition for full curl rams between guided hunters and subsistence users.

Indirect Impacts: The indirect impact to a reduction in number of guides and guided clients in the DHCMA would be the lessening of perceived sheep disturbance from guided hunters either via less airplane noise and/or human movement that would entail

avoidance behavior by sheep moving from one location to another. There is, however, the need to distinguish between disturbance caused by guide and their clients' activities and that of disturbance caused by walk-in hunters who are unguided.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts of the residual effects are also difficult to predict. However, subsistence users would still have to contend with walk-in hunters who would still have a 10-day head start over subsistence users and could still potentially disturb sheep during that time.

VI. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Public notification of the Environmental Analysis will be on file at the Fairbanks District Office.

List of Preparers

Kelly Egger, Outdoor Recreation Planner,
Central Yukon Field Office, BLM

Merben Cebrian, Wildlife Biologist,
Central Yukon Field Office, BLM

Carl Kretsinger, Fish Biologist,
Central Yukon Field Office, BLM

Bill Hedman, Archaeologist,
Central Yukon Field Office, BLM

Lisa Shon Jodwalis, Interpretive Ranger
Central Yukon Field Office, BLM

References Cited or Reviewed.

Bleich, V.C., R.T. Bowyer, A.M. Pauli, M.C. Nicholson, and R.W. Anthes. 1993. Mountain sheep (*Ovis Canadensis*) and helicopter surveys: ramifications for the conservation of large animals. *Biological Conservation*, 70(1): p. 1-7.

Bleich, V.C., J.H. Davis, J.P. Marshal, S.G. Torres, and B.J. Gonzales. 2009. Mining activity and habitat use by mountain sheep (*Ovis Canadensis*). *European Journal of Wildlife Research*, 55(3): p. 183-191.

Macarthur, R.A., V. Geist, and R.H. Johnston. 1982. Cardiac and behavioral responses of mountain sheep to human disturbance. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, 46(2): p. 351-358.

Scott, C.P. 1993. Continuity and change in the Wiseman area of Alaska: a look at land and renewable resource use over time. Masters Thesis. University of Alaska Fairbanks. 268 p.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
BLM Fairbanks District - Central Yukon Field Office
2930 – Special Recreation Permit
DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0013-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed **DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0013-EA**, and have concluded that impacts described do not approach the threshold of significance; therefore I have determined that a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Nichelle Jacobson
Manager, Central Yukon Field Office



Date

DECISION RECORD
BLM Fairbanks District - Central Yukon Field Office
2930 – Special Recreation Permit
DOI-BLM-AK-03000-2012-0013-EA

Decision:

1. It is my decision to approve this 2930 Special Recreation Permits for use of BLM lands for commercial hunting activities within the Dalton Highway Recreation Management Area in Guide Use Area 24-03. The permit to be issued is subject to the attached general terms and stipulations. The permitted area includes BLM managed lands east of the Dalton Highway for hunting in GUA 24-03 in the Matthews River Drainage per the attached map. The permit is for up to three (3) clients beginning August 10, 2012 and ending September 30, 2012. It is understood that hunting dates are determined by the State of Alaska and set annually and will be adhered to by the applicant.

Rationale:

1. Authorizing the permit is specifically provided for in the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan.
2. There will not be a significant restriction to subsistence use (See attached ANILCA 810 documentation).
3. There will be no adverse impacts to cultural resources (See attached Assessment of Archaeological and Historic Resources Sec. 106 documentation).
4. There will be no impact on Essential Fish Habitat (see attached EFH determination).
5. The Analysis documents no impact on Wilderness Characteristics (see attached report).

Protest and Appeal Procedures

Process for Protest

This decision may be protested. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer at the Fairbanks, Alaska Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Field Office. Protests must be received by the authorized officer within 15 calendar days of the receipt of the proposed decision by the affected party. Protests received more than 15 calendar days after notification of the decision will not be considered.

Protests must be in writing. E-mail and faxed protests will not be accepted. The protest letter must be postmarked by the close of the protest period.

The protest must include:

1. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
2. A statement of the issue being protested.
3. A concise statement explaining why the Authorized Officer's proposed decision is believed to be incorrect. This is a critical part of your protest. Document all relevant facts.
4. The serial number or other identification of the case.

Upon filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the decision in light of the evidence submitted by the protestor, and in view of other information pertinent to the case. At the conclusion of the review of the protest, the authorized officer shall prepare a recommended decision on the protest, and it shall be reviewed by the next higher level authority. If the authorized officer is the Field Manager, the higher level authority is the District Manager. If the authorized officer is subordinate to the Field Manager, the higher level authority is the Field Manager. The decision of the higher level authority shall be the final decision of the BLM. Final decisions on protests will be made within 15 calendar days of receipt of protests.

Process for Appeals

An appeal is an opportunity for a qualified party to obtain a review of a BLM decision by an independent board of Administrative judges within the Department of Interior's Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). The IBLA determines whether the BLM followed applicable laws and regulations, adhered to established policies and procedures, and considered relevant information in reaching a decision.

Individuals, who believe they are adversely affected by a BLM decision to deny, modify or cancel a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) may appeal the decision. Appeals are made to the IBLA under Title 43 C.F.R. Part 4. Pursuant to 43 C.F.R. § 4.411, a person who wishes to appeal to the IBLA must file in the office of the officer who made the decision a notice that he wishes to appeal. We have enclosed Form 1842-1, Information on Taking Appeals to the Interior Board of Lands Appeals, for your convenience.

Nichelle Jacobson
for _____
Nichelle Jacobson
Manager, Central Yukon Field Office

8/3/2012

Date

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this EA review and decision, contact Kelly Egger, Natural Resource Specialist, Central Yukon Field Office, at 907-474-2242 or email kegger@blm.gov.

**Stipulations for Dalton Highway Dall Sheep Hunting
Special Recreation Permit Holders**

1. The permittee is authorized to guide clients in pursuit of Dall Sheep in GUA 24-03 as defined by in the attached map. Hunting is no allowed west of the Dalton Highway for any species during the fall hunt season.
2. The permittee must comply with all federal, state, and local laws.
3. The dates authorized for use are August 3 – October 7, 2012-2014. The permittee will adhere to the hunt dates set by the State of Alaska. Upon expiration of the SRP, lands must be restored as nearly as possible to pre-existing conditions.
4. Base and spike camps located on BLM lands are to be used only in support of authorized activities. Support of none commercial activities of base and spike camps on BLM lands is not authorized. This includes but is not limited to supporting non-paying hunters in the approved camps. Camps will not be used in support of personal, family, or 'buddy' hunts.
5. Use of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) for the permitted guiding activities is prohibited.
6. The permittee is responsible for preventing the spread of invasive non-native plants (INP) caused by use of the public lands. He is advised to be familiar with invasive plants in the operating area. **The permittee will provide a copy of the attached letter (attachment A) to all clients prior to travel into the field so that they can adequately clean equipment, clothing and gear.** The same preventive measures will apply, not only to clients, but to the permittee and any personnel associated with the guiding operation.
7. For the purposes of this permit, conclusion of event or activity on an annual basis, shall be the following annual date: October 7.
8. If the BLM or the permittee identifies locations where Special Status Species Plants occur, the permittee will avoid camping in those areas.
9. This permit is not valid for lands owned by the State of Alaska. It is the responsibility of the permittee to obtain a letter of concurrence pursuant to Section 906(k) of ANILCA on any lands selected by the State of Alaska and submit a copy of the letter to the Authorized Officer.
10. It is the responsibility of the permittee to know the land status (ownership) of lands adjacent to the permitted hunt area. The process of BLM lands being transferred to the State and Native organizations continues. The following web site can be of assistance in conducting an assessment of land ownership: <http://adms.ak.blm.gov/sdms/index.html>
11. The use of aircraft as identified in your plan of operations in support of your commercial hunting activities is authorized. Only aircraft reported to BLM prior to the beginning of the season are allowed in support of your guiding operation.

12. Aircraft landing sites will be selected in a method that does not negatively impede the experience of other users. To avoid impacts to wildlife and other commercial and noncommercial users of the area, flights less than 1,500 feet above ground level are prohibited except for landing and takeoff.
13. Base and spike camps are to be used only in support of authorized activities. Support of none commercial activities of base and spike camps on BLM lands is not authorized. This includes but is not limited to supporting non-paying hunters in the approved camps.
14. Wastewater must be managed in accordance with Title 18 Alaska Administrative Code, Chapter 72, (18 AAC 72) Wastewater Disposal. Wastewater is defined as Human Waste (sewage), and Gray Water (water which has been used for personal hygiene, washing clothing or equipment, or sanitizing cooking and eating materials). If the standards for Pit Privies found at 18 AAC 72.030 cannot be met, all wastewater must be collected and transported to a state approved disposal facility. Upon closure of the campsite the Pit Privy must be completely back-filled with the surface area covered and re-graded to approximate original appearance.
15. Non-Hazardous Solid Waste (trash/refuse) may be burned in campfire pits. All unburned/unburnable trash/refuse will be back hauled from the area and disposed in an approved waste disposal site. All fire rings/pits must be removed or destroyed after use. Trash/refuse will not be disposed of in a Pit Privy.
16. All hazardous materials storage containers must be labeled with the following information: Permittee's name, contents of the container (name of the product that you put in the container, if not in the original container from the manufacturer), date the product was purchased/put in the container. (e.g. Northern Guides, Diesel Fuel, 2012)
17. Transportation and storage of petroleum, oil and lubricants (POLs) shall be handled in a manner to ensure the products minimize the effects to the environment and human health. Containers that are transferred to remote locations for everyday operations are to be stored within secondary containment. The containment area must be large enough to store the capacity of the largest container stored, plus water from a 24 hour storm event.