

# Mountain Goat and Bighorn Sheep

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## Issue 1: Drop the clause that allows permit holders hunting with archery equipment to start hunting September 1

**Species:** Mountain goat

**WAC(s):** [220-415-130](#)

**Background:** Currently there are 12 special permit goat hunts, with season dates starting on Sept. 15 for 10 of the hunts and starting on Oct. 1 for the other two. All permit season dates end on Nov. 30. However, there is a clause for the 10 hunts that open on Sept. 15, which states permit holders hunting with archery equipment may start hunting Sept. 1. The Department is proposing to eliminate this clause because it adds confusion. Hunters can choose to use archery equipment during the entire season, season lengths are already very long, it reduces overlap with elk hunts in some areas, and very few hunters elect to hunt mountain goats with archery equipment.

### **Alternatives:**

1. No change.
2. Remove the clause that allows permit holders hunting with archery equipment to start hunting September 1.

## Issue 2: Reduce the number of special permits for the North Lake Chelan (Area 2-1) and South Lake Chelan (Area 2-3) hunt areas

**Species:** Mountain goat

**WAC(s):** [220-415-130](#)

**Background:** The Department currently issues two permits for the North Lake Chelan hunt area and one permit for the South Lake Chelan hunt area. In addition, these are two of the hunt areas where the winners of the Mountain Goat Auction and Raffle permits can hunt. The last aerial survey for the North Lake Chelan hunt area occurred in 2015 and resulted in an estimate of 91 goats, while only exploratory flights have occurred in the South Lake Chelan hunt area and resulted in no formal population estimates. Since 2015, surveys have been completed in collaboration with Chelan County PUD and consisted of biologists counting goats observed from a boat on Lake Chelan. The number of goats observed during these surveys has varied, but also indicate a possible decline over the past five years. No goats were observed along the north shore of Lake Chelan during the February 2020 survey (compared to 20 in 2019 and a high of 65 in 2015) and only 20 were observed along the south shoreline in 2020 (compared to 43 in 2019 and a high of 50 in 2016).

The Department's current strategy is to limit harvest opportunities to populations where estimates indicate there are at least 100 goats within a hunt area. However, the Department recognizes the limitations associated with surveying mountain goats from a boat and does not believe results from these surveys accurately reflect population size. The Department has prioritized the development of a formal survey approach for these two goat hunt areas in 2021. Nonetheless, a great deal of uncertainty remains relative to the current status of goat populations in these two hunt areas and results from boat surveys indicate a possible decline. As such, the Department believes reductions in harvest are warranted until formal population estimates are available.

### **Alternatives:**

1. No change.
2. Reduce the number of permits in the North Lake Chelan hunt area from 2 to 1
3. Remove the North Lake Chelan and South Lake Chelan hunt areas from the list of areas where Auction and Raffle permit hunters can hunt.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3

## Issue 3: Reinstate conflict reduction special permits for mountain goats in the Olympic Mountains

**Species:** Mountain goat

**WAC(s):** [220-415-130](#)

**Background:** Following an increase in conflicts between humans and mountain goats in the Olympic Mountains, the Department created special permit opportunities that were designed to reduce goat numbers in areas where those conflicts occurred. These permit opportunities were not available in 2018 and 2019 to avoid conflicts with efforts to capture and translocate goats from the Olympic Mountains to the Cascade Mountains. The Department is proposing to reinstate these permits to assist with Olympic National Park's (ONP) efforts to lethally remove goats that remain following the final translocation effort in 2020. The hunt areas associated with these permits **would not** include any portion of ONP and would primarily target mountain goats on U.S. Forest Service lands. Specific permit numbers and season dates will be determined at a later date.

### **Alternatives:**

1. No change.
2. Reinstate the conflict reduction special permits for mountain goats as proposed.

## Issue 4: Offer a youth, ewe-only hunt for the Swakane Sheep Unit (Unit 14)

**Species:** Bighorn sheep

**WAC(s):** [220-415-120](#)

**Background:** The Swakane herd has been consistently meeting or exceeding management objectives for several years now. This herd could easily sustain a minimal amount of ewe harvest and there currently are no opportunities for Youth hunters in this herd area. As such, the Department is proposing to create a Youth, Ewe Only hunt that would occur Oct. 11-31 and would consist of one permit.

### **Alternatives:**

1. No change.
2. Create the special permit hunt as proposed.