

Peace (Region 7B) Stone's Sheep and the Allocation Policy - Frequently Asked Questions

In December, 2011 the Regional Manager decided that Stone's Sheep in the Peace Region would not be a Category A species and thereby no longer managed under the Harvest Allocation Policy. Resident hunters have expressed many questions and concerns about the decision. We've compiled answers to the most frequently asked questions, which you'll find below.

1. What is a Category A species?

A "Category A species" means a big game species (e.g. Stone's Sheep), population (e.g. Stone's Sheep within the Peace Region) or class (e.g. full curl Stone's Sheep within the Peace Region) for which guided hunters' harvest is limited by quota. The allocation of harvest opportunities between resident hunters and guided hunters for Category A species is managed under the Harvest Allocation Policy. The rationale for designating a species as 'Category A' is to prevent or reduce causes for conflict between hunter groups. While all Category A species are on quota, other species may also be managed on quota outside of the Harvest Allocation Policy.

2. Was the decision to remove Stone's Sheep as an allocated species contrary to the Harvest Allocation Policy?

No. The Harvest Allocation Policy is designed to be flexible with regard to determining which species are designated as Category A. Species may be placed on or removed from the Category A list at the discretion of the Regional Manager. The Regional Manager also determines the level of consultation with respect to these decisions. While the Regional Manager for the Peace did communicate his intent to a small group of resident hunters and guide outfitters, with a brief rationale, there was not broad consultation. The Ministry will be providing guidelines for Regional Managers with regard to future decisions around designating Category A species, including the level of consultation.

3. Does the decision to remove Stone's Sheep from Category A in the Peace Region mean that guide outfitters will not be limited by quota, and that guides will now take more sheep?

No. Guide outfitters will continue to be allocated quota for Stone's Sheep based on a proportion of a scientifically derived annual allowable harvest (AAH; the number of animals that can be harvested annually by hunters to meet management objectives). In addition, quotas will be established such that guide outfitters should not exceed 40% of the regionally-based AAH, and that residents will continue to have access to 60% of the AAH.

4. How will the annual allowable harvest (AAH) be determined for Stone's Sheep?

For the first time in the Peace, the AAH will be derived from a harvest rate and a rigorously developed population estimate based on extensive aerial surveys.

5. We have heard that the annual allowable harvest (AAH) has increased this year. Is this true?

Yes. Prior to 2007 an AAH was not used to manage Stone's Sheep. It was assumed that the full curl regulation provided protection against an overharvest. Between 2007 and 2011, an AAH

was determined from past harvest levels which were assumed to be sustainable. Since 2007 wildlife staff in the Peace have worked diligently to develop a scientifically defensible population estimate for Stone's Sheep which has been used to calculate the 2012 AAH. Furthermore, this year the Peace region has assumed responsibility for the management of three guide outfitter territories that straddle the boundary between the Peace and Skeena Regions. Previously these guides were managed entirely by Skeena. These two factors have resulted in an increase in the AAH from 188 to 228.

6. What is the effect of this change expected to be on resident priority?

Residents will continue to enjoy a long 76 day general open season. The Resident Hunter Priority Policy states that resident hunters will be guaranteed a minimum of 60% of the allocated sheep in a region. Even though Stone's Sheep will not be allocated under the policy, it is anticipated that guide outfitters will not exceed 40% of the regionally-based AAH and the resident hunters will continue to have access to at least 60% of the AAH.

7. Under the Allocation Policy, resident hunters were able to achieve 60% of the harvest during the 2007-11 allocation period. They were not achieving 60% before the policy. Why did the Regional Manager remove Stone's Sheep when it appears that the policy was working?

The Regional Manager believed that the policy was too restrictive and that there was a more equitable way to distribute the Stone's Sheep harvest among guides and resident hunters. Specifically, the policy calls for a minimum of 60% harvest by resident hunters in all guide-outfitting territories in the region. Many guiding territories have very restrictive access and residents are unable to harvest 60% of the sheep within these areas. Applying the harvest allocation policy would have created resident opportunity that would not be used while negatively affecting guide outfitters needlessly. This decision will result in more fair distributions of resident and non-resident opportunity in which some guides will be able to harvest more than 40% of the AAH within their territory, while resident hunters will continue to have unlimited opportunity to hunt sheep in areas with more favourable access. Again, guide outfitters will not exceed 40% of the regionally-based AAH and resident hunters will continue to have access to at least 60% of the AAH.

8. Won't the decision to remove Stone's Sheep from Category A increase competition and conflict between guide outfitters and resident hunters?

No. This decision is expected to reduce conflict between hunter groups and in so doing arrive at an outcome that is consistent with the intent of the Harvest Allocation Policy. Residents will continue to have opportunity to hunt Stone's Sheep anywhere there is a sheep hunting season in the Peace while guide outfitters will still be managed under quota to ensure residents have access to the majority of the AAH within accessible areas.

9. How has the harvest by resident and non-residents changed during the last 20 years?

Year	Average Annual Guide Quota	Guided Allocation (%)	Resident Allocation (%)	Average Annual Guided Harvest	Average Annual Resident Harvest	% of Total Harvest by Residents
1992-96	162	n/a	n/a	128	148	53.6%
1997-01	160	n/a	n/a	124	117	48.5%
2002-06	151	n/a	n/a	109	87	44.4%
2007-11	112	60	40	93	116	55.5%

1 – For 2012, the AAH is 228. The target guided harvest is 91 sheep (40% of the AAH). The target resident harvest is 137 (60% of the AAH).

2 – Harvest data for this table was collated from the compulsory inspection database in Victoria, British Columbia, and includes all hunter-harvested male Stone's Sheep. Harvest data for the 2011/12 licence year is preliminary. Data is based on calendar years.

10. Where can I learn more about the Harvest Allocation Policy?

Details on the Harvest Allocation policy, including development of the 2007 Harvest Allocation Policy and Procedure, and the 2011 Harvest Allocation Policy Review can be viewed at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/harvest_alloc/.