



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Edition 1- August 2024

akwildsheep.org



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Email us at info@akwildsheep.org
Please send:

- Questions about what we're up to
- Stories and photos sharing your hunting experiences
- Feedback on our events or fundraisers
- Ideas for future educational events or conservation projects

We can't promise we'll feature them all, but we'll surely try!

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Kevin Kehoe- President and Board Chair

It's been a while since our last Newsletter- but rest assured, we've been busy. I'd like to thank all of the AK WSF members who are the foundation of our organization- without your support, we could not fulfill our mission.

After a series of extremely hard winters, the Dall sheep numbers are down dramatically throughout the State. While there are no "silver bullet" solutions, this is the time when we need to ask ourselves honestly if we are doing everything possible to help guarantee and facilitate the natural recovery of Dall sheep. Corresponding to every great problem is an opportunity waiting to be seized. In this case, sportsmen and women through the Sheep World are willing and eager to help resource wild sheep projects in Alaska. While we have to avoid the pitfalls of overreaction, it is time that we challenge ourselves and dare to dream a little about what is possible for wild sheep management in Alaska. We are blessed with a great team of professional biologists, but we need to make sure they are fully resourced and must even consider augmenting their capabilities. So, with this in mind it is time to continue and potentially increase our collaborative efforts to support Dall sheep management specifically and wildlife management in general throughout Alaska. We hope you enjoy reading what we've been up to and encourage you to reach out if you have questions, comments or ideas.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS-ELECTION RESULTS

We want to thank all of our members who participated in the online election for the Board of Directors! Based on your votes, both Kevin Dana and Keith Granberry were re-elected for the Board to serve another 3-year term, and Erin Kehoe was elected to fill a vacant Board seat. If you'd like to learn more about any of our Directors or staff, please visit our website!



Top Left: Erin Kehoe, our newest Director.



Top Right: Kevin Dana, re-elected for another term on the Board.

Bottom Right: Keith Granberry, re-elected for another term on the Board.



If you have questions for our Directors, you can email us anytime at info@akwildsheep.org.

Our bylaws were recently updated during our membership meeting this July. Now, our Board can hold 13 Director seats. Currently, 10 of those seats are filled with the potential of adding more Directors to the Board next election cycle, which will occur in spring 2025. Board members must be active volunteers for the organization for at least 1 year to be eligible. If you are interested in serving on the Board, let us know!

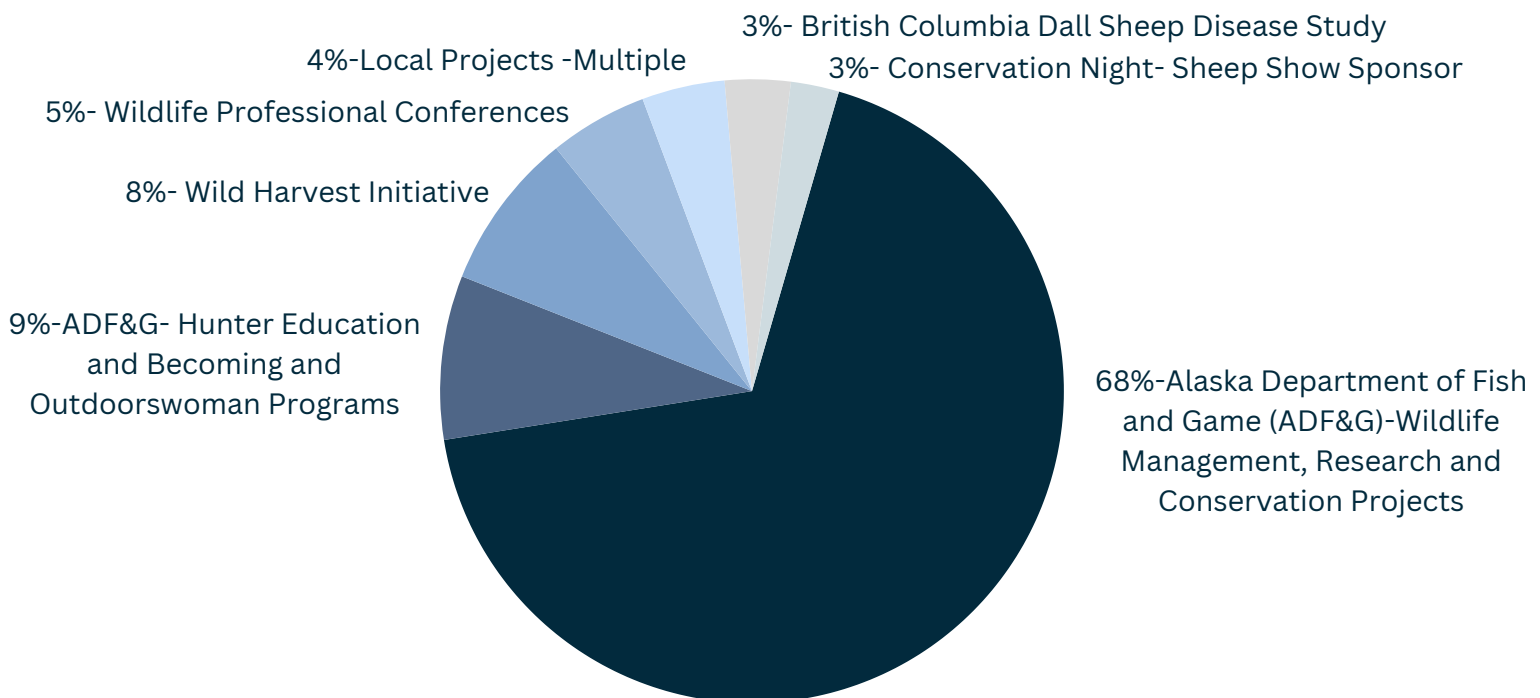
PROGRAMS FUNDED IN FY24

>>> PUTTING YOUR DOLLARS TO WORK FOR CONSERVATION!

It was another busy fundraising season for us this spring! We owe a huge thanks to all of you who helped at any capacity- whether you worked with us on offering a hunt for the live auction, purchased raffle tickets, sponsored our banquet, or contributed gear for our raffles, we could not have raised the funds we did without you! With your help, we were able to contribute over \$350,000 back to wildlife conservation efforts this fiscal year. Below is a breakdown of the major projects and programs we funded.

From our successful auctions and raffles, we were able to give the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) a check for \$200,000 to spend on wildlife management, research and conservation projects. There are multiple sheep surveys and research projects happening in Alaska this summer, and we are excited to have provided funds to help with those.

Like many other partners, we contribute to the Wild Harvest Initiative. The loss of hunting is the biggest risk to our future as not only hunters, but conservationists. The Wild Harvest Initiative aims to quantify the number of people in each state and province who consume wild game as part of their regular diet. With hunting consistently under attack, this effort helps prove that there is not enough commercially produced meat available to feed the world if hunting was not part of our heritage.



Aside from helping fund wildlife research and conservation, we are also passionate about Hunter Education and training. We purchased multiple different firearms (left-and-right handed) and optics to donate to HIT program, run through the Alaska Department of Fish and Game so program participants (specifically, women and youth) would have better options. We also provided some gifts for volunteer Hunter Education instructors as part of our annual support. We were also excited to sponsor the first “Mountain Huntress” Clinic. Our Director, Becky Gerritsen, taught a portion of the course, and multiple Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation members played a part in making it a success! A second Mountain Huntress clinic will be offered this fall, and we look forward to helping empower more women to get out in the mountains and hunt Dall sheep and mountain goats.

Multiple conferences for wildlife professionals were hosted in Alaska this spring-, including the Northern Sheep and Goat Council Conference, and the Wildlife Society Conference. We were happy to financially support these conferences, both aiming to facilitate the sharing of scientific research and foster collaboration among states and jurisdictions to come up with solutions to complex wildlife management problems.

Aside from these, we’ve helped sponsor some Dall sheep disease studies, some conservation initiatives in collaboration with the Wild Sheep Foundation, and we’ve funded some small local projects. We are incredibly proud of the work we’ve done this year to support Dall sheep in Alaska (and those who like to hunt them) and hope that next year proves to be even more fruitful- we have some amazing projects already on the radar!

NEW SUMMER RAFFLES!

We have two great raffles going on right now to get your ready for hunting season! Visit our website (raffles.akwildsheep.org) to buy your tickets! We’ll pull the winner 48-hours after sell out, or on the date listed on the website.



← **Solar 470 Jet Boat with 40hp jet motor and trailer! \$22,000 value!**

Swarovski optics package → with range finding binoculars, spotting scope, rifle scope, and tripod! \$12,000 value!



STATUS OF SHEEP IN ALASKA

There has never been a more important time than now for us to be at the ready to fund for Dall sheep projects and recovery efforts in Alaska. Recent reports from an ADF&G biologist are as follows: “Sheep populations are down statewide, and it’s safe to say that most populations in the state have declined 50-70% over the last ten to twelve years. Likewise, harvest has declined from approximately 800/year in 2015-2019 to 350-400 over the last three years. Much of this decline is attributed to heavy snowfalls and poor lamb crops in 2012-2014, and then those populations were hit again by weather conditions that caused as much as 3x higher than normal winter mortality in the winters of 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23. It’s worth mentioning that declines are not limited to the Alaskan sheep populations we hunt, our Canadian colleagues that work on thinhorns have reported declines of similar magnitude, and even unharvested or subsistence-hunted populations in the National Parks are also down by the similar proportions.

Most ADF&G offices fly annual summer surveys and conduct minimum counts in late July after most of the snow melts out of the high country, so stay tuned for that information. Preliminary reports from some other ADF&G staff suggest this last winter may not have been as bad as some recent winters. Biologists across the state are planning to fly their standard count areas before the season starts but of course, weather and snow conditions will have the final say in what gets flown and counted this summer.

One thing we have been trying to communicate to hunters is that because of those poor lamb crops in 2012-2014, there aren’t as many old rams in the population as we might have seen in earlier seasons. We’re asking folks to be careful evaluating rams to make sure their target ram is legal before harvesting it, and just because a ram is the largest in the group it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s legal”.

We will continue to work with ADF&G staff to support the recovery of Dall sheep populations throughout the state.



UPCOMING EVENTS

FALL/WINTER PLANNING SESSIONS



[Click here to sign up!](#)

Want to get more involved with helping us achieve our mission? Become a volunteer! We have many volunteer planning sessions in the winter months for fundraisers and conservation projects. Want to be added to our core volunteer list? Scan the code to the left or click the link below it, and fill out the information to be on the list for future meetings.

BANQUETS



December 12, 2024:

Join us for our second Annual December Dall's women's only night out in Anchorage at the Hilton Hotel! We'll have games, raffles, silent auctions, and more! Tickets will go on sale this fall, so be on the lookout!

April 12, 2025:

Join us for our 10th Annual Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation Banquet! The evening will be filled with multiple raffles, a live auction, silent auction, and other activities! Proceeds go to support Dall sheep conservation in Alaska. Save the date and don't miss out on one of the best banquets hosted in Alaska!



PHOTO CATALOG- SPRING EVENTS



Top: Photos from our 9th annual banquet, held at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage, Alaska, on April 13. We had a great time with you all! Mark your calendars for our 10th Annual Banquet- 4/12/2025!

Bottom: (left) Director Becky Gerritsen teaches the “Pack your Pack” section of a Mountain Huntress Clinic. (middle) New kiosks at the Antler Ridge Trailhead, an Eagle Scout project completed by Izzy Brown, and funded in part by us. (right) Our 2024 Mountain Huntress winner, Lydia Maharg, with a nice bear taken with our good friend and partner, Sue Entsminger, of Alaska Hunting Adventures.

