



DPS PR# 16-029
June 21, 2016

Sheep Poacher to Serve Jail Time

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – Last week Alaska Wildlife Troopers closed out an investigation into the illegal killing of three Dall Sheep from a drainage 20 miles back on the East Fork of Kings River. The case closed with a guilty plea to five counts from James Randall Wyatt, 58 of Palmer. Upon pleading guilty to Wanton Waste, two counts of taking a Sublegal Sheep, Illegal Possession and attempted Evidence Tampering, Wyatt was sentenced to pay a composite fine of \$17,200 with another \$35,000 suspended and to serve ten active days in jail with two and a half years suspended. The suspended jail time and fine may be imposed if Wyatt commits any jailable offense or fish and game offenses in the next five years. As a part of his sentencing, Wyatt also forfeited his rifle used and he may not apply for a hunting license for five years.

In late August of 2015, Alaska Wildlife Troopers were contacted by a man reporting he and a hunting partner witnessed another man, later identified as Wyatt, shoot two sheep. The witness later encountered Wyatt leaving the area without any animal. It was clear to the witness that the sheep had not been harvested. When Alaska Wildlife Troopers responded to the area they found one of the sheep fully intact buried beneath a rock pile. The second animal was found in the open. While the animal had been preyed upon by other wildlife, there were no signs that the sheep had any part of it salvaged by a hunter. Both sheep were sublegal.



In September of 2015, Fish and Game contacted Alaska Wildlife Troopers to inform them that a man was in its Palmer office getting a sheep sealed but the sheep was sublegal. The sheep was brought in by Wyatt. At the time, Wyatt told responding Wildlife Troopers that it was the only sheep he had ever shot.

“In the drainage where these sheep were poached there are typically only about one or two legal sized Dall Sheep every hunting season, and that is in a good year” said Captain Rex Leath, Commander of the Northern Detachment for the Alaska Wildlife Troopers. “There are not a lot of sheep up there. These illegal kills have essentially eliminated legal sheep out of the valley and nixed legal hunting for the next two to three years.”

Ultimately, the case went to the Office of Special Prosecutions and, after about a 10-month investigation, was closed out with a plea deal.

“This was one of the most egregious cases I have worked on in almost twenty years and it might never have happened if it weren’t for ethical hunters coming forward to help,” said Trooper John Cyr, an Alaska Wildlife Trooper that worked the case. “They not only reported the kills but provided valuable information which proved critical in identifying the person responsible. Poaching hurts animal populations as well as puts ethical hunters, who put in time and dedication to follow the hunting regulations, at a disadvantage.”

Wildlife violations can be reported anonymously through the Wildlife Safeguard website at <http://dps.alaska.gov/awt/safeguard.aspx>. Violations can also be directly reported at any Trooper Post.