

ALASKA BOARD OF GAME  
BOARD FINDINGS AND POLICY REGARDING  
NELCHINA CARIBOU

Many Alaskans from a large geographic area have customarily and traditionally utilized caribou of the Nelchina Herd for subsistence during the last two or more decades. Between 1954 and 1980 more than 100,000 caribou from this herd were killed by hunters. The herd has fluctuated in size in recent years, peaking at about 70,000 animals in 1962 and reaching a low of about 10,000 animals in 1972.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, winter seasons were established for harvesting Nelchina caribou and snow machines were commonly used for hunting them. Reported abuses with the machines were common--some hunters used the machines to pursue and shoot caribou. Many Alaskans objected to this illegal practice, which was difficult to control and could endanger maintenance of the herd on the sustained yield basis. At least partly for these reasons no winter seasons for the Nelchina caribou have been established in recent years.

Range conditions where the Nelchina Herd lives showed heavy use when the herd was at a high level. Management strategy in recent years has been to harvest mostly males and at a low level to allow the herd to increase to about 20,000 adults. A drawing permit system has been used to limit the number of hunters. The August 20-September 20 season of recent years, with the limited harvest, has allowed the herd to increase and at the same time to provide hunters with an esthetically pleasing experience while they obtained high quality meat.

For each of the past two seasons 1,300 permits were issued. Permit applications exceeded 6,800 in 1980, about 4 percent of which were from nonresidents. In 1980, 5.5 percent of the permits were issued to residents of the Copper River valley.

Harvest in 1979 was 630 caribou; 80 percent of the kill was bulls. Preliminary data indicate the 1980 harvest was about the same. The high kill rate for males is part of the management strategy. The Department of Fish and Game staff believes that a 1981 kill during the August 20-September 20 season will result in a kill for about half the number of permits in force, with 80 percent or more of the kill being bulls. A January-February season limited to antlerless caribou is expected to result in a harvest of perhaps 90 percent or more Bulls, which is consistent with management strategy. It is expected to be three or more years before the herd increases to 20,000 adult (breeding) members.

Direct dependence on the Nelchina Caribou Herd for meat is greatest for subsistence users who are low-income residents who live immediately adjacent to the herd in Game Management Unit 13 and 14 (except 14C),

an area where alternative resources include salmon and other fish, moose, small game, and few dollars. A special allocation of permits to these users will give a greater priority for subsistence and a good opportunity for subsistence users to continue their subsistence activities.

ADOPTED: Anchorage, Alaska  
April 1, 1981

VOTE: 7/0

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Dr. Samuel J. Harbo, Jr., Chairman  
Alaska Board of Game

NELCHINA CARIBOU

Units 13 and 14  
except 14(C)

Aug. 20-Sept. 20  
Jan. 1-Feb. 28

One caribou by drawing permit only; however, only antlerless caribou may be taken between Jan. 1 and Feb. 28. 1,600 permits will be issued, including 150 subsistence permits. See 5 AAC 81.055 and separate permit hunt supplement.

Conditions of the hunt:

1. No more than 5 percent of the permits will be issued to nonresidents.
2. Up to 150 subsistence permits will be valid for both the fall and winter hunting seasons. The remaining 1,450 permits will be valid only for the period August 20-September 20.
3. Those applying for subsistence permits must:
  - a. be at least 12 years old, and
  - b. be a resident of Game Management Units 13 or 14, except 14(C), with no permanent abode elsewhere, and
  - c. live, or have lived, in a household where fish or game not commercially purchased comprised more than half of the meat and fish of the diet during the previous 5 years, and
  - d. be a member of a household with \$12,000 or less gross income for the household for the previous income tax filing year.
4. An applicant for a subsistence permit must provide an affidavit attesting to the facts of 3. (a), (b), (c), and (d) above. (It is a felony to falsify an affidavit.)
5. Applications for subsistence permits will be drawn first. If all 150 subsistence permits are issued, all other applications for subsistence permits will be included in the drawing for the remaining 1,450 permits. If fewer than 150 subsistence permit applications are received, excess permits will be issued to other applicants, but such permits will be valid only for the period August 20-September 20.
6. Only the following areas are open for hunting by subsistence permittees during the period January 1-February 28:
  - a. Game Management Subunit 13(A), except that area within one-half mile of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline
  - b. Game Management Subunits 13(B), 13(C), 13(D), 13(E)
  - c. Game Management Subunits 14(A) and 14(B)
7. Successful hunters must present their completely filled-out permit report by appearing in person at the ADF&G office in Glennallen or Anchorage during regular working hours, or by mailing the permit to the Anchorage office. All reports must be made within 10 days of killing a caribou.