Note: Proposal 201 was approved by the Board as an Agenda Change Request and will be heard at the Southeast Region meeting, January 2015.

PROPOSAL 201 - 5 AAC 92.220(i). Salvage of game meat, furs and hides. Clarify the language regarding retrieval and salvage of wounded game as follows:

(i) A person who has wounded game shall make every **lawful** [reasonable] effort to retrieve and salvage that game.

The Alaska Wildlife Troopers ask the board to change the regulation. If the board changed the regulation to "lawful" this would eliminate someone from using a method or means already prohibited in regulation or statute. The current regulation has unforeseen consequences regarding the salvage of wounded animals. Each person has their own definition of what is a reasonable effort. This compels enforcement to look for a pre-existing wound and has the potential for someone to use illegal methods or means to harvest an animal but claim they were using a reasonable effort to retrieve a wounded animal.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS AND WHY? The current regulation states: a person who has wounded game shall make every reasonable effort to retrieve and salvage that game. This creates a problem for enforcement as to what is reasonable? If someone wounds a moose are they allowed to use an airplane to locate, land and shoot the moose? As currently written, this regulation allows hunters to use whatever methods they deem reasonable to retrieve game they wounded. This puts enforcement in a difficult position. The Department of Public Safety has the burden of proof to prove the animal was wounded and the methods used were not reasonable.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Wildlife Troopers (EG-C14-359)

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Note: Proposal 202 was approved by the Board as an Agenda Change Request and will be heard at the Southcentral Region meeting, March 2015.

PROPOSAL 202 - 5 AAC 85.025 (a) (16) (17) (18) (19) (20) (21) Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. *and* **5 AAC 92.085 (2) (D) Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions.** Change the caribou regulation for all game management units (GMU) associated with the Western Arctic caribou herd (WAH) and Teshekpuk caribou herd (TCH).

The affected GMUs within the ranges of the caribou herds are: portions of GMU 21D; GMU 22; GMU 23; portions of 24A; portions of GMU 24B; 24C; 24D; GMU 26A, and portions of GMU 26B. When the caribou population analysis is completed, additional regulatory changes, if any, will be shown in an amended proposal that will be provided when department comments are submitted to the Alaska Board of Game (board). The regulatory changes in this proposal are listed below. To aid in conservation of the herd, the department recommends that changes to regulations to reduce harvest begin

in RY2015 (next hunting season). The board should discuss whether adopting any of the changes still provides a subsistence user with a reasonable opportunity for success.

The department prefers implementing regulatory changes to reduce harvest concurrently in both herds because of overlapping ranges of the WAH and TCH. Regulatory changes are needed to reduce opportunity to effectively lower annual harvest to promote recovery of the population. Options to reduce harvest include adoption of one or more of the following:

1) Change seasons:
    a. Shorten season for bulls;
    b. Shorten season for cows;
    c. Close bull season after the rut (after October 1);
    d. Keep cow season open when bulls are in rut (bull season closed);
2) Change bag limits:
    a. Reduce total daily bag limit for residents;
    b. Reduce total season bag limit for nonresidents;
    c. Prohibit the take of calves;
    d. Create 'bull only' bag limit during appropriate time of year;
    e. Create 'cow only' bag limit during appropriate time of year;
    f. Change resident daily bag limit to a total season (annual) bag limit;
3) Change exceptions to unlawful methods:
    a. Discontinue same day airborne hunting in Unit 22 [5 AAC 92.085 (8)(D)];
4) Manage hunts by permit
    a. Consider registration permit hunts in defined areas with harvest quotas, separately by herd.
    b. Board of Game allocation of nonresident permits (drawing or registration);

The department will continue to explore and evaluate measures to reduce harvest and conserve the herds. Any modifications will be included in department comments.

Intensive Management feasibility assessments will be presented for the respective herds at the next available opportunity.

Resident Open Season

Units and Bag Limits	**(Subsistence and General Hunts)**	**Nonresident Open Season**
(16)		
…		
Remainder of Unit 21(D); *(Note to reader: this hunt area is Unit 21(D), north of the Yukon River and west of the Koyukuk River)*		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be	July 1 – June 30	

taken May 16 – June 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken **Aug. 1 – Sept. 30**
[5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]
COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE
TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]

(17)

Units 22(A)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
5 caribou per day; however, July 1 – June 30
calves may not be taken;
cow caribou may not be
taken May 16 – June 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken **Aug. 1 – Sept. 30**
[5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]
COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE
TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]

Unit 22(B), that portion west of
Golovnin Bay, and west of a line
along the west bank of the Fish
and Niukluk Rivers to the
mouth of the Libby River, and
excluding all portions of the
Niukluk River drainage upstream
from and including the
Libby River drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
5 caribou per day; **however,** Oct. 1 – Apr. 30
calves may not be taken; and

5 caribou per day; **however,** (Season to be
calves may not be taken; during announced by
the period May 1 – Sept. 30, emergency order)
a season may be announced by
emergency order; however,
cow caribou may not be
taken May 16 – June 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
[5 CARIBOU; OR] [OCT. 1 – APR. 30]

1 bull; however, calves may not be taken (Season to be
[5 CARIBOU]; during announced by
the period **Aug. 1** [MAY 1] – Sept. 30, emergency order)
a season may be announced by
emergency order [; HOWEVER
COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE

TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]		
Remainder of Unit 22(B)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	July 1 – June 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **1 bull; however, calves may not be taken** [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]		**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]
Unit 22(D), that portion in the Pilgrim River drainage		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; **however, calves may not be taken**; and	Oct. 1 – Apr. 30	
5 caribou per day; **however, calves may not be taken**; during the period May 1 - Sept. 30, a season may be announced by emergency order; however, cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	(Season to be announced by emergency order)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: [5 CARIBOU; OR]		[OCT. 1 – APR. 30]
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken **[**5 CARIBOU]; during the period **Aug. 1** [MAY 1] – Sept. 30,		(Season to be announced by emergency order)
a season may be announced by emergency order [; HOWEVER COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]		
Unit 22(D), that portion in the Kuzitrin River drainage (excluding the Pilgrim River drainage) and the Agiapuk River drainage, including the tributaries		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	July 1 – June 30	

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **1 bull; however, calves may not be taken** [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]		**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]
Unit 22(E), that portion east of and including the Sanaguich River drainage		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	July 1 – June 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **1 bull; however, calves may not be taken** [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]		**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]
Remainder of Unit 22		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; however **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	(Season to be announced by emergency order)	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **1 bull; however, calves may not be taken; during the period Aug. 1 – Sept. 30 a season may be announced by emergency order** [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]		(Season to be announced by emergency order)
(18)		
Unit 23		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	July 1 – June 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **1 bull; however, calves may not be taken** [2 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE		**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]

TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30]

(19)

…

Remainder of Unit 24(A)
(Note to reader, this hunt area is Unit 24(A), north of the south bank of the Kanuti River)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30 — July 1 – June 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30] — **Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]

…

Remainder of Units 24(B), 24(C), and 24(D)
(Note to reader, the 'Remainder of Unit 24(B)' is Unit 24(B) north of the south bank of the Kanuti River downstream from the Kanuti-Killitna River drainage)

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30 — July 1 – June 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN MAY 16 – JUNE 30] — **Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]

…

(21)

Unit 26(A)**, that portion of the Colville River drainage upstream from the Anaktuvuk River, and drainages of the Chukchi Sea south and west of, and including the Utukok River drainage**

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

5 caribou per day; however, **calves may not be taken**; cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	July 1 – June 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken [5 CARIBOU; HOWEVER, COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN		**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30** [JULY 1 – JUNE 30]
Remainder of Unit 26(A)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
5 bulls per day; however, calves may not be taken	**July 1 – Sept. 30**	
3 cows per day; however, calves may not be taken	**Oct. 1 – Oct. 31**	
5 caribou; however, no more than 3 cows may be taken; calves may not be taken	**Mar. 1 – Mar. 31**	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
1 bull; however, calves may not be taken		**Aug. 1 – Sept. 30**
Unit 26(B), that portion north of 69° 30' N. lat. and west of the east bank of the Kuparuk River to a point at 70° 10' N. lat., 149° 04' W. long., then west approximately 22 miles to 70° 10' N. lat. and 149° 56' W. long., then following the east bank of the Kalubik River to the Arctic Ocean		
RESIDENT HUNTERS:		
5 caribou per day; however, cow caribou may not be taken May 16 – June 30	July 1 – June 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:		
5 caribou		July 1 – Apr. 30
Unit 26(B), that portion south of 69° 30' N. lat. and west of the Dalton Highway		
5 caribou; however, cow caribou may be taken only from July 1 – Oct. 10	**July 1 – Oct. 10 May 16 – June 30**	**July 1 – Oct. 10 May 16 – June 30**

Unit 26(B), that portion south of 69˚ 30' N. lat. **and east of the Dalton Highway**		
5 caribou; however, cow caribou may be taken only from July 1 - May 15	July 1 – July 30	July 1 – June 30
Remainder of Unit 26(B)		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou;	July 1 – Apr. 30	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou		July 1 – Apr. 30

5 AAC 92.085. Unlawful methods of taking big game; exceptions. The following methods and means of taking big game are prohibited in addition to the prohibitions in 5 AAC 92.080:

...

(8) a person who has been airborne may not take or assist in taking a big game animal until after 3:00 a.m. following the day in which the flying occurred; however, this paragraph does not apply to

…

[(D) TAKING CARIBOU FROM JANUARY 1 THROUGH APRIL 15, IN UNIT 22 IF THE HUNTER IS AT LEAST 300 FEET FROM THE AIRPLANE AT THE TIME OF TAKING;]

…

…

WHAT IS THE ISSUE YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Change caribou hunting regulations for the Western Arctic caribou herd (WAH) and the Teshekpuk caribou herd (TCH) to conserve the populations while they are in decline.Population estimates as of July 2013 for the WAH and TCH were completed after the January 2014 report to the board at the Arctic and Western Region meeting in Kotzebue. The degree of decline in each herd was higher than expected and consistently supported through population metrics measured in each herd.

Since both herds have significant range overlap during their seasonal movements, it would be best to consider both herds simultaneously when considering regulatory changes. If hunting in either herd continues with no harvest restriction, overharvest will likely occur and recovery of the population will be delayed. This proposal supplements the department's agenda change request (ACR) to consider WAH and TCH caribou regulations before the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Arctic and Western Region in 2016.

The board has made a positive customary and traditional use finding for both the Western Arctic caribou herd and the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd in GMUs 21, 22, 23, 24, and 26. The board has found that 8,000–12,000 caribou in these two herds in those GMUs combined is the amount reasonably necessary (ANS) for subsistence (5 AAC 99.025(a)(4)).

Western Arctic caribou herd. Census results for the WAH show a 27% decline from 2011 to 2013, and

a 50% decline from 2003 to 2013 (Figure 1). Long term trends of increasing adult cow mortality and decreasing recruitment suggest that the herd will likely continue to decline into the near future. Results of community-based harvest surveys and statewide harvest reports estimate that approximately 14,000 caribou were harvested in each of the last 2 years, RY2012 and RY2013. Each year residents within the range of the herd accounted for 95% of the harvest and they took approximately 60% bulls, 30% cows and 10% unknown sex. Hunters residing outside the range of the herd, including nonresidents, accounted for 5% of the harvest and took approximately 90% bulls, 9% cows and 1% unknown sex. At these rates, harvests of WAH cows have slightly exceeded the 2% sustainable harvest rate in each of the last 3 years (RY2011–RY2013) and harvests of bulls will likely exceed the 15% sustainable harvest rate within the next 1–3 years (RY2015–RY2017). Based on population size and composition, the current WAH harvestable surplus is estimated at 13,100 caribou, approximately 7% less than the annual harvest in the last 2 years. If the decline remains consistent, the projected harvestable surplus for RY2015 is estimated at 11,300 caribou, approximately 20% lower than total harvest during RY2012 and RY2013.

The *Western Arctic Caribou Herd Cooperative Management Plan* (WAH PLAN; online at http://westernarcticcaribou.org/the-group/management-plan/) defines the current population status as "declining conservative management level" (see Table 1 below, adapted from WAH PLAN). However, the magnitude and trajectory of the decline depicted in Figure 1 suggests the herd could quickly change to "declining preservative management level". The harvest recommendations at these management levels in the WAH PLAN are:

Conservative Management Level

1) No harvest of calves.
2) No cow harvest by nonresidents.
3) Restriction of bull harvest by nonresidents.
4) Encourage voluntary reduction in cow harvests by residents.
5) Limit the subsistence harvest of bulls only when necessary to maintain a minimum 40:100 bull:cow ratio.

Preservative Management Level

1) No harvest of calves.
2) Limit harvest of cows by resident hunters through permit hunts and/or village quotas.
3) Limit the subsistence harvest of bulls to maintain at least 40 bulls:100 cows.
4) Harvest restricted to residents only, according to state and federal law.
5) Closure of some federal public lands to nonqualified users may be necessary.

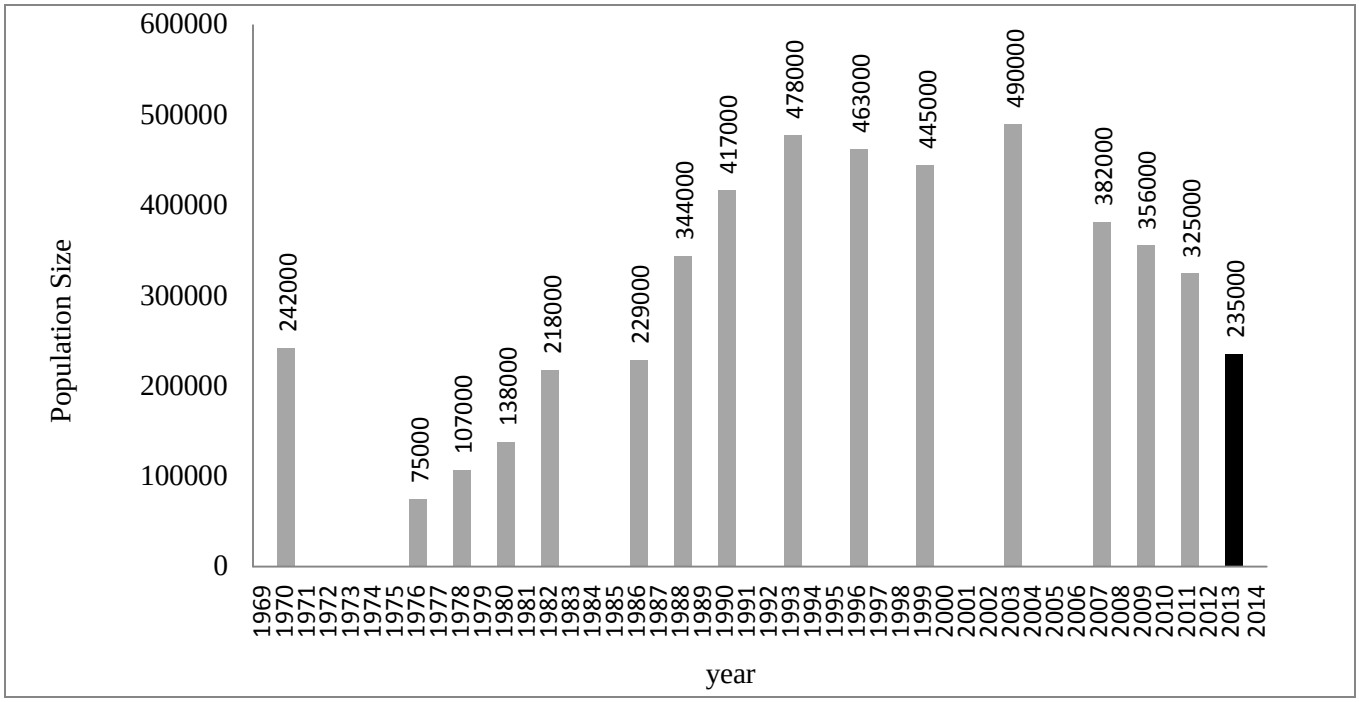

Figure 1. Population size of the Western Arctic caribou herd, 1970 – 2013.

Table 1. Western Arctic caribou herd management levels using herd size, population trend and harvest rate. (adapted from *Western Arctic Caribou Herd Cooperative Management Plan*, Revised 2011. Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, PO Box 175, Nome, AK 99762)

	Population Trend		
Management Level and Harvest Level	**Declining Low harvest: 6%**	**Stable Med harvest: 7%**	**Increasing High harvest: 8%**
Liberal	**Pop: 265,000+ Harvest: 18,550-24,850**	**Pop: 230,000+ Harvest: 16,100-21,700**	**Pop: 200,000+ Harvest: 16,000-21,600**
Conservative	**Pop: 200,000-265,000 Harvest: 14,000-18,550**	**Pop: 170,000-230,000 Harvest: 11,900-16,100**	**Pop: 150,000-200,000 Harvest: 12,000-16,000**
Preservative	**Pop: 130,000-200,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000**	**Pop: 115,000-170,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000**	**Pop: 100,000-150,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000**
Critical Keep Bull:Cow ratio ≥40 Bull:100 Cow	**Pop: <130,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000**	**Pop: <115,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000**	**Pop: <100,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000**

In fall 2014 we estimated there were 39 bulls:100 cows in this herd. This level is at or slightly below the minimum management objective of 40 bulls:100 cows recommended in the WAH PLAN. Modeling of population parameters also suggests that within 1–3 years herd size could drop below the Intensive Management (IM) population management objective of 200,000 caribou, and the corresponding estimated harvestable surplus could go below the IM harvest range of 12,000–20,000 caribou.

In summary, the WAH decline has been detectable since 2003 and recently increased in rate due to the combined effects of increasing adult mortality and decreasing recruitment. The causes behind these trends are not well understood, but were likely stimulated by winter icing conditions (rain-on-snow events), predation, and increased risk of nutritionally-mediated predation (weakened animals appear more vulnerable to predators). Harvests will have increasing influence on herd dynamics if herd size and bull:cow ratios continue to decline.

Teshekpuk caribou herd. Population counts of the TCH as of July 2013 show trends with steeper declines than the WAH, with a 42% reduction since 2011, and a 53% decline since 2008 (Figure 2). Based on observed adult mortality (>20%), low parturition rates (<60%), low calf survival (<30%), low yearling recruitment (12–15:100 adults), and reduced bull:cow ratios, the population decline appears likely to continue into the foreseeable future. Similar to the WAH, mortality rates based on collared caribou have increased steadily since 1990. It is notable that the two highest mortality rates of adult caribou have occurred in the last two years. Decline in recruitment to 10-months of age is also nearly identical to the WAH and this decrease in survival of short yearlings over the long-term is likely influencing the observed declines in TCH bull:cow ratios. Bull:cow ratios are currently estimated at 39:100 cows, down from 46:100 cows in 2009. Based on the 2013 estimate of abundance and composition of the herd, sustainable harvest is calculated by applying a 15% rate to bulls and 1.5% rate to cows, yielding an estimated range of 1,500–1,600 caribou as harvestable surplus. Harvest is estimated based on community harvest survey data collected since 2002 and adjusted for the likely ratios of WAH and TCH in the harvest, but unadjusted for annual availability of caribou. These data imply that annual harvest is approximately 1,800–1,900 bulls and 400–500 cows (dataset "A", *Customary and Traditional Use Worksheet and Options for Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence Uses of the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd, GMUs 26A and 24B*, Braem 2014, posted online at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=01-10-2014&meeting=kotzebue). Continued harvest at this level exceeds the current estimated harvestable surplus by almost 50%. In relation to IM, the estimated harvestable surplus is within IM harvest objectives of 900–2,800 caribou; however, continued declines in the herd will push the surplus towards the lower objective. In the present structure of a combined ANS, subsistence hunt management in the TCH will largely be dominated or controlled by the available surplus in the much larger WAH.

In summary, the TCH decline is the combination of low and declining calf production, poor calf survival (30%), and high adult mortality rates. The causes are not well understood, but likely related to poor nutrition in summer and winter, high levels of winter predation on calves, and increased risk of nutritionally-mediated predation (weaken animals appear more vulnerable to predators). Harvests will have increased influence on herd dynamics if this decline continues.

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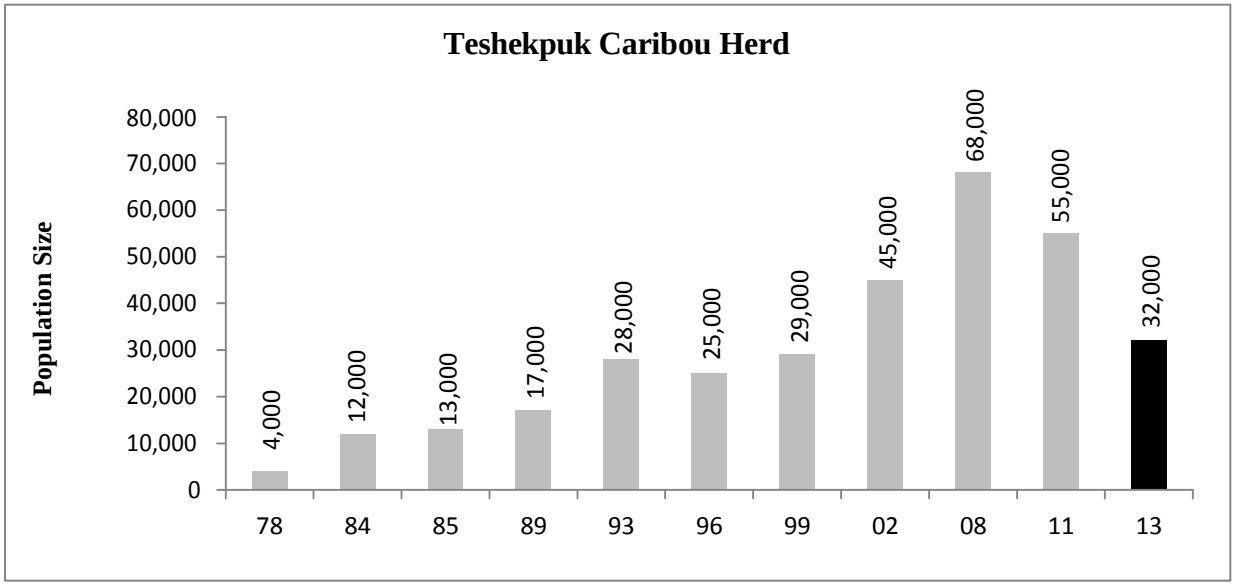

Figure 2. Population size of the Teshekpuk caribou herd, 1978–2013.

Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS). For RY2014, the combined estimate of harvestable surplus in both the WAH and TCH is 14,600–14,700 caribou (WAH=13,100 plus TCH=1,500–1,600), where the WAH contributes about 85% of the surplus. This is close to, but above, the ANS range of 8,000–12,000 caribou. The trends in each herd described above suggest the combined harvestable surplus will be below the upper ANS threshold in the near future. In the event that the harvestable surplus drops below the upper ANS level before the next Region V board meeting, the department can close the non-resident season by emergency order.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game at the request of the Alaska Board of Game

(EG-C14-360)

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Note: Proposal 203 was approved by the Board as an Agenda Change Request and will be heard at the Southcentral Region meeting, March 2015.

PROPOSAL 203 – 5 AAC 85.055 (a) (9) and (10). Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Close all Dall sheep seasons in Unit 23 and Unit 26(A) west of the Etivluk River drainage (e.g., the Brooks Range west of Howard Pass). Retain hunt areas and hunt types (general season and subsistence hunts by harvest ticket hunts and/or permit) so similar hunt regimes may be restored when the population recovers.

	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and	**Nonresident**

Units and Bag Limits	General Hunts)	Open Season
(9)		
Unit 23, that portion north of Rabbit Creek, Kiyak Creek, and the Noatak River, and west of the Aniuk River ("DeLong Mountains")		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 sheep by registration permit only	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – APR. 30] (Subsistence hunt only)	
ALL HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger by drawing permit only, provided that the harvestable surplus is greater than 9 sheep in combination with that portion of Unit 26(A), west of the Etivluk River.	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]
Unit 23, that portion south of Rabbit Creek, Kiyak Creek, and the Noatak River, and west of the Cutler and Redstone Rivers ("Baird Mountains")		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 sheep by registration permit only	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – APR. 30] (Subsistence hunt only)	
ALL HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger by drawing permit only, provided that the harvestable surplus is greater than 47 sheep	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]
Remainder of Unit 23 ("Schwatka Mountains")		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 3 sheep by registration	**No open season.**	

permit only	[AUG. 1 – APR. 30] (Subsistence hunt only)	
ALL HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]

(10)

…

Unit 26(A), that portion west of the Etivluk River **drainage**		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 sheep by registration permit only	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – APR. 30] (Subsistence hunt only)	
ALL HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger by drawing permit only 20] provided that the harvestable surplus is greater than 9 in combination with that portion of Unit 23 in the DeLong Mountains	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT. 20]	**No open season.** [AUG. 10 – SEPT.
Unit 26(A), that portion east of **and including** the Etivluk River **drainage,** excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 3 sheep by registration permit only	Aug. 1 – Apr. 30 (Subsistence hunt only)	
ALL HUNTERS: 1 ram with full-curl horn or larger	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20	Aug. 10 – Sept. 20
Unit 26(A), that portion within Gates of the Arctic National Park		
3 sheep	Aug. 1 – Apr. 30	No open season.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS AND WHY?

Sheep populations in the western Brooks Range within Unit 23 and the western portion of Unit 26(A) experienced severe winter conditions in 2013–2014 resulting in high levels of natural mortality. Extensive icing conditions contributed to rapid declines of sheep populations in the De Long Mountains, Schwatka Mountains, and Baird Mountains. Populations are currently very low. If hunting continues with 'any sheep' bag limits, overharvest will likely occur and recovery of the populations will be delayed. This proposal supplements the department's agenda change request (ACR) to consider sheep regulations in units 23 and 26(A) before the next regularly- scheduled meeting of the Arctic and Western Region in 2016. To aid in conservation of sheep in these areas, this proposal recommends closures of sheep seasons in Unit 23 and western portions of Unit 26(A) effective in RY2015 (next hunting season). All current regulatory year (RY2014) seasons in this area were closed by emergency order in August 2014.

Winter icing conditions in 2013–2014 affected broad areas of contiguous mountain habitat in Unit 23 and the western portion of Unit 26(A). These conditions are believed to be the primary cause of natural mortality of sheep that was detected during surveys in July 2014. The severity of impacts to sheep in 2013–2014 appears to be worse than the severe winter conditions that precipitated a sheep population decline in 1989 through 1991.

Winter (November to March) temperature data from Kotzebue shows a 50-yr average maximum of 7ºF and average minimum of -6ºF. During the winter period in 2013–2014 temperatures were approximately 10ºF warmer, with an average maximum high of 15.2ºF and average minimum low of 4.6ºF. This warming was influenced by winter storm patterns that were bringing warm moist air from southern latitudes into northwestern Alaska. Unlike normal winters, rain was observed in Kotzebue every month from October to April, causing significant icing conditions in the areas affected by the storm. While lower elevations did not have lasting ice layers, higher elevations held ice due to colder ambient conditions.

In units 23 and 26A, sheep are distributed at the northwestern margin of their range and occur at low density compared to other areas in the state (Singer 1984). They occur in three relatively discrete mountainous areas: 1) in the De Long Mountains in units 23 and 26(A): in the area west of Howard Pass north of the Noatak River and Kiyak Creek, including the Wulik Peaks; 2) in the Baird Mountains in Unit 23: in the area south and east of the Noatak River and west of the Cutler and Redstone rivers; 3) and in the Schwatka Mountains in Units 23 and 26(A): the area east of Howard Pass and the Cutler and Redstone rivers. Exchanges of sheep between these populations are likely minimal resulting in separate management strategies for each area.

Beginning in 1990, high natural mortality dramatically reduced sheep numbers in these areas resulting in closure of state and federal seasons for general and subsistence hunts from RY1991 through RY1994. Limited hunting was reestablished in all areas in RY1995 and is reflected in current regulations that provide opportunity through subsistence and general season hunts. Since RY1995 hunts in the Baird Mountains have been limited to federally-qualified subsistence users in hunts administered by National Park Service (NPS).

In 2014 sheep surveys were completed using distance sampling transects during late June and early July in broad areas of the western Brooks Range (units 23 and 26A) through coordination by NPS and department biologists (see Udevitz et al. 2006). Preliminary results indicate a

population decline of between 50-80% from the previous survey levels documented in 2011. A greater decline is apparent when the current estimates are compared to 2009 levels, a time when populations were similar to pre-1990 crash populations.

In the Baird Mountains, the 2014 preliminary estimate is 309 sheep, a 50% decline since 2011 (n = 587 sheep) and a 63% decline since 2009 (n=823 sheep). Since 2009, the ratio of rams:100 "ewe-likes" sheep has changed from 36:100 to 21 to 23, respectively in 2009, 2011, and 2014. Comparing 2009, 2011 and 2014, the ratio of large rams declined from 7 to 3 to 1 rams:100 "ewe-likes" (respectively) and lambs declined from 33 to 23 to 2:100 "ewe-likes" (respectively). Lamb recruitment was the lowest on record and much lower than the lamb ratio of 7:100 "ewe-likes" observed in 1991 (after the 1990 mortality event). When sheep abundance was higher (prior to declines), there were 30:100 "ewe-likes" lambs counted in 1989 and 33:100 "ewe-likes" lambs counted in 2009.

In the De Long Mountains, the 2014 preliminary estimate is 359 sheep, an 80% decline since 2011. The ram: "ewe-likes" ratio decreased slightly from 35 to 33 rams:100 "ewe-likes", the ratio of large rams declined from 3 to 2 rams:100 "ewe-likes" and lambs declined from 8 to 4:100 "ewe-likes".

The Schwatka Mountains were not surveyed in 2014. However, within Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (GAAR), the Itkillik Preserve was surveyed and declining populations were detected. The Itkillik Preserve serves as a comparative bordering area that is located further east and suggests that Schwatka Mountains were also affected by sheep population declines. In the Itkillik area, the 2014 preliminary estimate is 646 sheep, a 60% decline since 2011 (n = 1,669 sheep). Comparing 2011 and 2014, the ratio of rams:100 "ewe-likes" sheep changed from 38:100 to 70, and lambs declined from 25 to 11:100 "ewe-likes", respectively. The apparent increase in rams:100 "ewe-likes" is primarily influenced by a 60% reduction in "ewe-likes" (the denominator portion of the ratio), likely a function of low recruitment for several years. The number of rams decreased 27% from 2011 (335 rams) to 2014 (244 rams).

State harvests in the De Long and Schwatka mountains are monitored through hunt reports from applicable harvest tickets, registration permits and drawing permits. In RY2014, the drawing permit hunt (DS384) was closed so all hunting opportunity was by registration permit (RS388, RS389) or harvest ticket. NPS provides harvest summaries of sheep taken under federal regulations in the Baird and De Long mountains. The Alaska Board of Game established positive customary and traditional use determinations for sheep in each area and established amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (ANS) in each area, as follows:

Baird Mountains, 18 – 47 sheep; De Long Mountains, 0 – 9 sheep; and Schwatka Mountains, 2 – 4 sheep [5 AAC 99.025 (10)]. Federal management on federal public land in the Baird Mountains has preempted state management goals and objectives. The management goal of the De Long Mountains is to maintain a minimum ratio of 7-10 large rams: 100 "ewe-like" in areas receiving significant hunt pressure.

Summaries of recent harvests and ANS findings are listed in the chart below. Using the 2004–2011 population estimates, Baird Mountains harvests were an average of 2% of ewes and 14% of rams. In 2011, De Long Mountains harvests were 14% of large rams. Based on ram:100 "ewe-like" ratio, the current number of full-curl rams is calculated to be so low that hunter success is expected to be negligible in full-curl managed hunts. Furthermore, the 90% decline in lambs will provide little or minimal recruitment for near-term population recovery. In registration permit hunts (RS388 and RS389), take of 'any sheep' in the current bag limit is ill-advised due to negative impacts on population recovery. Due to low numbers of sheep and to promote population recovery, the department recommends that hunting seasons be closed.

	Number of sheep harvested				
Regulatory year	Baird Mtns	De Long Mtns	Schwatka Mtns	Unknown	Total Harvest
RY2009	7	12	0	1	20
RY2010	15	11	5		31
RY2011	17	4	5		26
RY2012	16	3	3		22
RY2013	13	7	3		23
	Amount Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence (ANS)				
	18–47	0–9	2–4		

In summary, the proposed hunting closures affect all state general season and registration subsistence hunts in the De Long Mountains, Schwatka Mountains, and Baird Mountains in Unit 23, and all state-managed lands west of the Etivluk River drainage in Unit 26(A). The general season closure affects residents and nonresidents hunting by harvest ticket. The registration hunt closure affects resident permits RS388 (De Long Mountains) and RS389 (Schwatka Mountains). The population will be monitored and when harvests can be sustained a proposal to restore hunting opportunity by opening seasons will be prepared by the department.

References:

SINGER F. J. 1984. Some population characteristics of Dall sheep in six Alaska National Parks and Preserves. Pp1–10 *in* M. Hoefs, ed. Proc. 4th Biennial Sheep and Goat Symp., Apr.30–May 3, 1984. Yukon Wildlife Br., Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada.

UDEVITZ, M.S., B. SHULTS, L.G. ADAMS, AND C. KLECKNER. 2006. Evaluation of aerial survey methods for Dall sheep in Alaska. Wildlife Society Bulletin. 34:732-740

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-361)

Note: Proposal 204 was approved by the Board as an Agenda Change Request and will be heard at the Central/Southwest Region meeting, February 2015.

PROPOSAL 204 - 5 AAC 92.037(a) and 5 AAC 92.037(g)(1). Permits for falconry. The following changes should be made to the regulation:

5 AAC 92.037(a) A permit and valid, current Alaska hunting [AND TRAPPING] license is required…

5 AAC 92.037(g)(1) a permit and a valid, current nonresident hunting [AND TRAPPING] license is required…

WHAT IS THE ISSUE YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS AND WHY?
The Department of Law has determined the Board of Game does not have the authority to require residents and nonresidents to have a trapping license to submit an application, take, transport, transfer to another state's falconry program, or possess a raptor for falconry, or for practicing falconry in this state. The current regulations need to be updated to correct this error in regulation.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-362)

Note: Proposal 205 was approved by the Board as an Agenda Change Request and will be heard at the Southcentral Region meeting, March 2015.

PROPOSAL 205 - 5 AAC 92.046 Permits for taking incidental or stranded musk oxen. Allow the immediate harvest of musk ox on stranded on ice flow in Unit 18.

For Unit 18, (primarily Nunivak Island) residents can harvest the musk ox immediately when musk ox are seen stranded on ice flow, rather than wait for ADF&G to issue an emergency order, which takes three days.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS AND WHY?
ADF&G issues permits for taking incidental or stranded musk ox on ice flow by emergency order under AAC: 92.046. It approximately takes at least three days for a response to get a permit according to the local area biologist from Bethel. Nunivak Island residents have reported stranded musk ox on ice flows during spring seal hunting seasons. It would seem pointless to report a stranded musk-ox and wait three days for a permit to harvest. This request is to allow Nunivak Island residents to harvest the musk ox immediately (on the spot where they see the musk ox). This would seem most logical since the animal will most likely perish. Musk ox will eventually die off from starvation or drowning, without residents having the opportunity to harvest immediately as requested.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (EG-C14-363)
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PROPOSAL 206 – 5 AAC 99.025. Customary and traditional uses of game populations. Modify the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses for deer in Game Management Unit 1A as follows:

5 AAC 99.025(a)(5). Customary and traditional uses of game populations.

SPECIES AND UNIT	FINDING	AMOUNT REASONABLY NECESSARY FOR SUBSISTENCE USES
(5) Deer		
Unit 1(A)	positive	[225–250] **xx–xx**

What is the issue the board is addressing and why? At its 2013 meeting in Sitka, the Alaska Board of Game (board) considered Proposal 178A to adopt an intensive management plan for Game Management Unit (Unit) 1A. At that time it came to the board's attention that the amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (ANS) for Unit 1A Sitka black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis*) was for the deer population in the entirety of Unit 1A, which includes Revillagigedo Island, Gravina Island, and other areas within the Ketchikan Nonsubsistence Use Area (5 AAC 99.015 (a)(1)). Subsistence hunts cannot be authorized in nonsubsistence areas. The board requested information from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) to address this issue.

In March 2013, at a Board of Game Southcentral Region meeting in Kenai, the department reviewed options for modifying the ANS with the board. The board was given four ANS options to choose from and a fifth option to take no action. The board chose to take no action and defer the ANS revision until the next Southeast Alaska meeting. On-the-record comments by the board stated that choosing the fifth option would be in the best interest of the public so that residents would have time to make comments prior to the meeting or at a meeting that took place in Southeast Alaska. Options for modifying the ANS are available on the Board of Game meeting information website at: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=01-09-2015&meeting=juneau .

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Game (EG-C14-364)
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