

**Division of Wildlife Conservation**  
**Bruce Dale, Director**  
Region V, Nome Office  
PO Box 1148  
Nome, AK 99762-1148



**Alaska Department of Fish and Game**  
**Sam Cotten, Commissioner**  
PO Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526  
[www.adfg.alaska.gov](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**CONTACTS:** Letty Hughes  
Assistant Area Biologist  
Nome, (907) 443-8186  
[letty.hughes@alaska.gov](mailto:letty.hughes@alaska.gov)

**Bill Dunker**  
Wildlife Biologist  
Nome, (907) 443-8191  
[william.dunker@alaska.gov](mailto:william.dunker@alaska.gov)

### **GMU 22 Caribou Hunting Regulations to Change for Alaska Residents Effective July 1**

(NOME) – Alaska residents who hunt in Game Management Unit 22 are reminded that new caribou hunting regulations go into effect next month. Beginning July 1, 2016, the new regulations incorporate several significant changes including a requirement that residents hunting caribou in GMU 22 possess a registration hunting permit. Permits for registration caribou hunt RC800 will be available beginning June 15, and may be obtained online, in person at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game office in Nome, or from license vendors within Unit 22.

The RC800 permit hunt is part of a new regulations package for GMU 22 adopted by the Alaska Board of Game in March. The new regulations, which apply to Alaska resident hunters only, also eliminate a bull harvest closure instituted in 2015, establish an annual bag limit of 20 caribou (five caribou per day, calves may not be taken), and require RC800 permit holders to submit hunt reports within 15 days of taking the legal bag limit or within 15 days of the close of the season. No changes have been made to GMU 22 nonresident caribou hunting seasons or bag limits. Nonresident caribou hunters are required to have in possession a valid Alaska big-game hunting license, metal locking tag, and general season harvest ticket.

The new regulations were adopted by the board in response to suggestions from local advisory committees and are intended to better suit local harvest patterns and to include a regulatory framework needed to monitor caribou harvest and reduce the overall harvest in GMU 22 if necessary for the conservation of the herd.

The Western Arctic caribou herd has a history of rapid fluctuations which can result from variations in weather, habitat, disease, predation and other factors. In 1970 the herd numbered about 242,000 caribou, declining to about 75,000 by 1976. From 1976 to 2003 it grew, peaking at 490,000 caribou. The herd subsequently declined to 325,000 in 2011 and to 235,000 in 2013. Current metrics suggest the herd is declining at a much reduced rate or even stabilizing. The herd is currently estimated at approximately 206,000 animals based on population models that incorporate recent information. A survey to estimate the population size is scheduled for the summer of 2016.

In 2015, regulations implemented to incrementally reduce harvest were made in accordance with recommendations from the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Management Plan and the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group. This included the establishment of a bull harvest closure, lengthening an existing cow harvest closure, prohibiting the harvest of calves, and eliminating a same-day airborne exception in GMU 22.

Under the new regulations beginning July 1, GMU 22 caribou hunt areas and Alaska resident hunting season dates are as follows:

- Unit 22A, north of Golsovia River drainage; remainder of 22B; 22D, in the Kuzitirin River drainage (excluding the Pilgrim River drainage) and the Agiapuk River drainages; and 22E, east of and including Sanaguich River drainage:
  - Bulls, July 1 – June 30;
  - Cows, July 1 – March 31.
- Unit 22B, west of Golovnin Bay, west of the west banks of Fish and Niukluk rivers below the Libby River, and excluding the Niukluk River drainage above, and including the Libby River drainage; 22D, Pilgrim River drainage:
  - Bulls, October 1 – April 30;
  - Cows, October 1 – March 31.
- Remainder of 22A, 22C, remainder of 22D, and remainder of 22E:
  - Seasons and bag limits may be announced based on caribou and reindeer distribution.

For more information, please contact Assistant Area Biologist Letty Hughes in Nome at (907) 443-8186, email [letty.hughes@alaska.gov](mailto:letty.hughes@alaska.gov); or Wildlife Biologist Bill Dunker at (907) 443-8191, [william.dunker@alaska.gov](mailto:william.dunker@alaska.gov).

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