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The Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group: An Interdisciplinary, Cross-Cultural, Stakeholder Approach to Caribou Management in NW Alaska

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The WACH Working Group is a stakeholder group whose members include: representatives for 42 villages within the range of the herd, hunting guides, transporters, conservationists, the Anchorage Fish & Game Advisory Committee, Fairbanks hunters, and the Reindeer Herders Association. While not voting members of the group, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service serve in an advisory and supportive capacity to the group. This presentation will give an overview of the goals and objectives of the group, its history and early challenges, its current strengths and successes, and its future direction and vision.

Collectively, the Caribou Working Group promotes the gathering and sharing of traditional knowledge and local observations; discusses potential impacts of climate change and resource development; supports habitat monitoring and biological research on the herd; encourages student participation with the annual caribou collaring project and other caribou-related education programs; makes recommendations to organizations and agencies on the need to the preservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and their habitat; and disseminates information on all these issues through its annual newspaper, *Caribou Trails* (sent to all residents within the range of the herd), and with interested individuals, organizations, and agencies statewide.

The Caribou Working Group is a way for local hunters and residents to become more involved in protecting the health and habitat of the herd and subsistence activities; for researchers to share and promote relevant research; and for land and resource management agencies to view a collaborative stakeholder group successfully undertaking cooperative planning and management of a shared resource.

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