PROPOSAL 20

Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23

Proposed by
Western Arctic Herd Working Group – (Identical to proposal 19)

Department Recommendation
Neutral

AC Recommendations
Kotzebue Sound AC- No Action

Current Regulations

Unit 23

Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.

Resident Hunting Season

Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30
Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31
**Effects of the Proposal**

- Provide year-round bull caribou harvest opportunity
- Potentially reduce harvest pressure on cow caribou
- Eliminate violations associated with misidentification of young bull caribou

**Background**

- Prior to 2016 bull caribou harvest was open year-round
- Between 2003-2016 the WAH declined from nearly 500,000 to 201,000
- The Kotzebue Sound AC proposed a bull closure between Oct 14th-February 1st
- In 2016 the board adopted the proposal and the current bull closure was enacted
**Background**

- Bull to cow ratios are above 40:100

**Department Position**

**Neutral**

- A portion of the harvest may shift from bulls to cows
- This may have a positive influence on population trajectory
- No biological concern
### Proposal 20

**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**
Western Arctic Herd Working Group – *(Identical to proposal 19)*

**Department Recommendation**
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**
Kotzebue Sound AC - No Action

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### Proposal 19

**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**
Kotzebue Sound AC - Support 15-0
### Current Regulations

**Unit 23**

*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.*

**Resident Hunting Season**

- **Bulls:** July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30
- **Cows:** Sept 1 - Mar 31

### Effects of the Proposal

- Provide year-round bull caribou harvest opportunity
- Potentially reduce harvest pressure on cow caribou
- Eliminate violations associated with misidentification of young bull caribou
• Prior to 2016 bull caribou harvest was open year-round

• Between 2003-2016 the WAH declined from nearly 500,000 to 201,000

• The Kotzebue Sound AC proposed a bull closure between Oct 14th-February 1st

• In 2016 the board adopted the proposal and the current bull closure was enacted

• Bull to cow ratios are above 40:100
**Neutral**

- A portion of the harvest may shift from bulls to cows
- This may have a positive influence on population trajectory
- No biological concern

**PROPOSAL 19**

**Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23**

***Proposed by***
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

***Department Recommendation***
Neutral

***AC Recommendations***
Kotzebue Sound AC - Support 15-0
PROPOSAL 21
Caribou/Unit 23

Reduce the Unit 23 resident bag limit to 25 caribou annually, of which only 5 may be cows

Proposed by
Public

Department Recommendation
Neutral

AC Recommendations
Kotzebue Sound AC - Opposed 0-15

Current Regulations
Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23

_Five caribou per day_, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.

Resident Hunting Season

_Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30_
_Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31_
### Effects of the Proposal

- Harvest in general, and cow harvest specifically, may be reduced
- High harvesters and the households they provide for would be impacted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effects of the Proposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Background

- Unit 23 bag limit has been 5 caribou per day for 30+ years
- Harvest up to 15 caribou per day has been allowed under federal regulations
- RY15 the board adopted an annual bag limit of 20 caribou in Unit 22
- Federal regulation was reduced to match state regulations of 5 caribou per day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background

Caribou/Unit 23

- WAH harvest has been fairly static since the late ‘90s
- Insensitivity in the harvest model makes it difficult to understand when harvest exceeds surplus

Harvest is largely based on availability, which is limited by access
- Caribou movements can be highly variable
- Availability can be highly seasonal and brief for some communities
RC907 data from 2017-2018 suggest:

• A small portion of hunters harvest >25 caribou

• These high harvesters are often providing for others within the community

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**Caribou Harvested per Permit Holder**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caribou Harvested per Permit Holder</th>
<th>RY17</th>
<th>RY18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Cows Harvested per Permit Holder**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cows Harvested per Permit Holder</th>
<th>RY17</th>
<th>RY18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 cows</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 cows</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 cows</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Background**

**Caribou/Unit 23**

RC907 data from 2017-2018 suggest:

• Only a small portion of permit holders, harvest >5 cows per year
Household harvest data from 1998-2013 suggest:

- That even though few individuals harvest >25 caribou
- They account for a significant portion of the harvest
**Department Position**

**Neutral**

- Proposal is not likely to have a significant effect on overall resident harvest
- Accommodations may need to be made to allow high harvesters to continue to provide for communities
- Refined harvest information would provide a better understanding of harvest

**PROPOSAL 21**

*Reduce the Unit 23 resident bag limit to 25 caribou annually, of which only 5 may be cows*

**Proposed by**

Public

**Department Recommendation**

Neutral

**AC Recommendations**

Kotzebue Sound AC- Opposed 0-15
PROPOSAL 22

Caribou/Unit 23

Extend the season for taking cow caribou in Unit 23
Remainder an additional 15 days from March 31st to April 15th

Proposed by
Northern Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee

Department Recommendation
Neutral

AC Recommendations
Kotzebue Sound AC- Oppose 0-15

Current Regulations

Remainder of Unit 23

Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.

Resident Open Season

Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30
Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31
Current Regulations

Unit 23 (pink)
Remainder (green)

Effects of Proposal

• Some increase in the harvest of cows may occur

• Provide additional harvest opportunity

• Additional harvest of pregnant cows is likely
Background

2003-2016 the WAH population declined from nearly 500,000 to 201,000

Cow season shortened from May 15 to Mar 31 (RY15)

2017 census 259,000

2019 census 244,000

Background

Recruitment rates have been above average for the past 4 yrs.
Background

Caribou/Unit 23

- Higher than average adult female mortality over the past 2 yrs.

Calf Recruitment vs Cow Mortality

- The combination of these trends may indicate relative stability in the population.
Background

- Current harvest levels appear to be at or below harvestable surplus

Background

- Long-term bull cow harvest composition
Background

Caribou/Unit 23

- Annual variation in harvest composition Unit 23/26A (RC907)

![RC907 Reported Harvest](image)

- Annual variation in harvest composition Unit 22 (RC800)

![RC800 Reported Harvest](image)
### Department Position

**Neutral**

- The population is slightly above the intensive management population of 200,000
- Overall harvest may be sustainable; high proportions of cows would be a concern
- Data on the harvest of cows is limited
- The bull season remains open during the cow closure

### PROPOSAL 22

**Extend the season for taking cow caribou in Unit 23**

Remainder an additional 15 days from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>

**Proposed by**
Northern Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**
Kotzebue Sound AC - Oppose 0-15
PROPOSAL 23

Restrict the use of snowmachines for taking caribou in Unit 23

Proposed by
Public

Department Recommendation
Neutral

AC Recommendations
Kotzebue Sound AC- Oppose 0-15

Current Regulations

- The current regulation was crafted during a special session of the 2014 Board of Game meeting in Kotzebue and subsequently adopted the following day

  You may not take game by a motorized land vehicle, unless the motor has been shut off and the progress from the motor’s power has ceased, EXCEPT:

  - A snowmachine may be used to position a caribou for harvest, and a caribou may be shot from a stationary snowmachine in Unit 22, 23, and 26A

- Federal regulation: “a snowmachine may be used to position a hunter” to select individual caribou for harvest provided that the animals are not shot from a moving snowmachine.
Provide a more precise definition of what is allowable under “positioning” and align with regulations addressing similar issues in Unit 17

(B) Motorized land vehicle may be used as follows:

(viii) in Unit 17, a snow machine may be used to assist in the taking of a caribou and a caribou may be shot from a stationary snow machine. “Assist in the taking of caribou” means a snowmachine may be used to approach within “300 yards” of a caribou at speeds under 15 miles per hour, in a manner that does not involve repeated approaches or that causes a caribou to run. A snowmachine may not be used to contact an animal or to pursue a fleeing caribou.

Effects of the Proposal

Harvest typically occurs by boat in fall or snowmachine during the winter and spring

Snowmachines allow access to caribou when migratory routes do not favor harvest by boat

Cow caribou make up a large proportion of winter harvest

Reported issues and public concern include concerns over wasteful and unethical harvest

Local councils have issued guidelines on winter caribou hunting
## Proposal 23

### Department Position  
**Caribou/Unit 23**

- Additional guidelines may alleviate local concerns with wasteful and unethical harvest practices.
- Although overall harvest rates appear to be sustainable, cow harvest remains a concern.
- At lower abundance levels, the harvest and harassment of pregnant cows could be a concern.

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## PROPOSAL 23  
**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Restrict the use of snowmachines for taking caribou in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**
- Public

**Department Recommendation**
- Neutral

**AC Recommendations**
- Kotzebue Sound AC - Oppose 0-15
### PROPOSAL 24  
**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23**

- **Proposed by**
  Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

- **Department Recommendation**
  Neutral

- **AC Recommendations**
  Kotzebue Sound AC- Support 15-0

### Current Regulations  
**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Unit 23**

- **Resident Hunters:**
  *Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken*

- **Non-Resident Hunters:**
  *One bull, however calves may not be taken*
**Effects of the Proposal**

- The incidental and intentional harvest of caribou calves would be allowed
- Anecdotal information suggests that calf harvest prior to the prohibition was minimal
- Allowing calf harvest is of no biological concern to the WAH
- Proposal will align calf harvest regulations with other herds in the state

**Background**

- Several instances of orphaned or wounded calves following local caribou harvest
- Kotzebue AC proposed removing calf restriction to allow harvest for human consumption
- Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group submitted an identical proposal (25)
From 2003 to 2016 the WAH population saw a steady decline.

In RY15 regulations were adopted in attempt to minimize harvest impact while meeting hunter needs:

- Shortened bull season
- Shortened cow season
- Prohibition on the take of calves
The prohibition on calf harvest occurs only within the range of the Western Arctic and Teshekpuk Herds; 26A, 24B & C, 23, 22 and 21D.

The harvest of calves is allowed in all other Alaska caribou herds.

- RC907 permit does not report animal age class
- Difficult to determine if calf harvest affects calf recruitment
- Future permit could capture calf harvest
- Adult female survival is the main driver of population change
- Meaningful conservation should focus on reduction of cow harvest
### Department Position

**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Neutral**

- Calf harvest largely incidental and compensatory in nature
- Likely minimal calf harvest prior to the prohibition
- Consider extending any change to all WAH units

### PROPOSAL 24

**Caribou/Unit 23**

**Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**
Kotzebue Sound AC: Support 15-0
**PROPOSAL 25**

Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23

**Proposed by**
Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group – (Identical to proposal 24)

**Department Recommendation**
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**
Kotzebue Sound AC – No Action

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**Current Regulations**

Unit 23

**Resident Hunters:**
*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken*

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*One bull, however calves may not be taken*
Effects of the Proposal

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- RC907 permit does not report animal age class
- Difficult to determine if calf harvest affects calf recruitment
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- Adult female survival is the main driver of population change
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PROPOSAL 25
Caribou/Unit 23

Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23

Proposed by
Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group – (Identical to proposal 24)

Department Recommendation
Neutral

AC Recommendations
Kotzebue Sound AC – No Action