

PROPOSAL 18

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Open the caribou season in the portion of Unit 22A as follows:

Open up the caribou season in Unit 22A in all Golsovia River drainages and north of the Klikitarik River for resident and nonresident hunters.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to see the caribou season in Unit 22A south of and including the Golsovia River opened back up. Now I realize the Western Arctic caribou herd has been in decline. But the reason for closing this area to hunting caribou was unwarranted. The Stebbins and Saint Michael reindeer herders claimed there were no caribou down here and that local villages were coming up and killing their reindeer and calling them caribou. The truth is, there has always been caribou scattered up in the hills. If you look online, you can find documented cases of caribou that were found in the Andreafski hills back in the late 1800’s. They were described as a smaller herd that didn’t migrate like other herds in the state. They also tell stories from long ago of a herder who lost his herd between Saint Michael and Saint Mary that scattered and stayed up in the hills. I believe there is truth in both of these stories. I also know that when the caribou used to migrate down this way in the winter several would stay behind and mix in with other caribou and wild reindeer. So there has always been a herd if not smaller of caribou/wild reindeer in this area.

Now that first year the season was shut down, man oldest son run into some caribou up in Chief Mountains at the headwaters of the Golsovia. And when word got out, guess who were the first ones to go after them. The same reindeer herders that were telling everyone to quit hunting caribou because they are reindeer. Shutting this season down has stopped nothing. Yukon people are still coming up and hunting these caribou/wild reindeer and so are people from up north.

The only thing shutting this season down has done, was make it for someone like myself whom holds a guide license, unable to legally harvest caribou in this area. I don’t believe anyone had done their homework when they closed down this season. I’ve been trapping, subsistence hunting and guiding in this area for 28 years and was not even aware they were thinking of shutting it down until afterwards. I’ve heard some of the herder’s report of the herd size as much as 5,000 to 6,000 animals. When they fly around and do their count, they are going as far back as the head waters of the Andreafski, the upper Golsovia and beyond. There are caribou/wild reindeer scattered from the hills above Kotlik, through Step Mountain, Chief Mountains, the Nulato hills over to Needle Mountain and all the way north to upper South River of the Unalakleet River. Just north of the Golsovia River in Unit 22A, the season is open. And they have a fall season just over the ridge in Unit 21E. I think it only fair to open up the Unit 22A Remainder to caribou hunting, if nothing else at least in the Golsovia River drainages or north of the Klikitarik River. All that land is past the corporation property and gives a buffer zone for the local reindeer herd to free range in without being bothered.

Resident hunters and the few nonresident hunters should not be penalized because of the fact that the reindeer are just running wild. As stated, I realize the caribou herd has been in decline and this is not the time to expand the regulation. But this in my opinion is a regulation that should of never been instated. I would like to see it reopened, even if the limit is set as one caribou per hunter per year.

PROPOSED BY: Johnny Richardson (EG-F23-167)
