

## **Kotzebue Area – Unit 23**

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### **PROPOSAL 36**

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

Reduce the caribou bag limit for residents in Unit 23 from five caribou per day to four caribou total, only one of which may be a cow as follows:

#### **5 AAC 85.025(18).**

##### **Unit 23 caribou.**

RESIDENT HUNTERS: Four caribou [FIVE CARIBOU PER DAY], however, no more than 1 cow may be taken by permit available online at [http:// hunt.alaska.gov](http://hunt.alaska.gov) or in person in Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, and at license vendors in Units 23 and 26A beginning June 1.

#### **What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?**

The continuous decline of the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) and the need to address harvest levels of bulls and in particular cows, to try and halt the decline and allow the population to begin to recover. Currently, the bag limit is five per day during the open periods for bulls and cows. We are proposing a change to four caribou per regulatory year, with no more than one being a cow. We believe a severe reduction is called for under the preservation status of the WACH in the WACH Working Group guidelines for the current population level of 160,000 with year after year declines being observed.

PROPOSED BY: Kotzebue Advisory Committee

(HQ-F23-030)

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### **PROPOSAL 37**

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

Reduce the caribou bag limit for residents in Unit 23 from five caribou per day to four caribou total, only one of which may be a cow as follows:

#### **5 AAC 85.025(18).**

##### **Unit 23 caribou.**

RESIDENT HUNTERS: Four caribou per regulatory year [FIVE CARIBOU PER DAY], however, no more than 1 cow may be taken by permit available online at [http:// hunt.alaska.gov](http://hunt.alaska.gov) or in person in Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, and at license vendors in Units 23 and 26A beginning June 1.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Reduce the caribou harvest limit in all of Unit 23 to four caribou (either four bulls or three bulls and one cow) per regulatory year. The Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) has continued to decline with the most recent estimate being 164,000 caribou. The Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) is greatly concerned about the precipitous decline of the WACH and feel that this action is needed to slow the decline and prevent the herd from reaching a point of no return. The NWARAC feels that the harvest recommendations set forth by the WACH working group would be a starting point for the conservation of the WACH while still

allowing some harvest. The NWARAC recognizes that subsistence users are already facing food insecurities, but this drastic reduction of caribou harvest is a means to help protect the caribou herd while still allowing some harvest.

The NWARAC also submitted a proposal to eliminate nonresident caribou harvest in Unit 23.

**PROPOSED BY:** Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) (HQ-F23-009)

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### **PROPOSAL 38**

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

Close all nonresident caribou hunting in Unit 23 as follows:

##### **5 AAC 85.025**

##### **Unit 23 caribou.**

For all of Unit 23, close all caribou hunts to nonresidents, no open seasons are permitted.

*Unit 23, that portion north of and including the Singoalik River:*

**NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:** No Open Season [1 BULL; AUG. 1-SEPT. 30]

*Remainder of Unit 23:*

**NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:** No Open Season [1 BULL; AUG. 1-SEPT. 30]

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) population has been in decline for years and the low population level in 2022 is cause for concern. This proposal would close hunting of caribou in Unit 23 year-round to nonresident hunters to help with conservation and recovery of the herd, although still providing some opportunity for resident hunters.

The Northwest Arctic Council also submitted a proposal to reduce harvest limits for resident hunters.

**PROPOSED BY:** Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) (HQ-F23-010)

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### **PROPOSAL 39**

#### **5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

Lengthen the brown bear hunting season in Unit 23 for residents to no closed season as follows:

##### **5 AAC: 85.020(21).**

Resident hunters: 2 bears every regulatory year; No closed season [AUG. 1-MAY 31].

In addition to other regulations, Residents only subsistence hunters: 2 bears every regulatory year by permit; No closed season [AUG. 1-MAY 31].

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The current state hunting season for brown bear/grizzly bear in Unit 23 for resident general hunting and for resident subsistence hunting by permit is closed in June and July. This proposal would open resident general and resident subsistence hunting in Unit 23 of brown bear to year-round.

Brown bear populations have increased in Unit 23, and there is currently no conservation concern for hunting in June and July, which is when many area residents are at remote subsistence camps yet do not have opportunities to hunt brown bear then. Open hunting year-round would also encourage hunting and assist with the recovery of the declining caribou and moose populations that often fall prey to bears, and increase safety of residents. The current bag limit for residents is two bears per regulatory year of which can be taken in the general hunt or by permit. This regulation change would also match the federal regulations for Unit 23.

**PROPOSED BY:** Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) (HQ-F23-011)  
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#### **PROPOSAL 40**

##### **5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 23 for residents to year-round as follows:

##### **5 AAC 85.020 (21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

##### **Unit 23.**

Create no closed season for brown/grizzly bears in Unit 23:

**July 1-June 30** [AUG 1 - MAY 31].

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** To encourage hunting of brown/grizzly bears in Unit 23, assist with recovery of caribou and moose populations, and to increase safety of residents. Currently, there are opportunities to harvest brown bears at camps and near Kotzebue during the months of June and July that are passed on because the season is unnecessarily closed - since there is not currently a conservation issue being addressed with the two-month closure. Having an open season all year would allow for harvest of grizzly bears under general hunting license and not as a Defense of Life or Property (DLP.) The current bag limit is two bears per regulatory year.

**PROPOSED BY:** Kotzebue Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F23-031)  
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#### **PROPOSAL 41**

##### **5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

Lengthen the brown/grizzly bear hunting season in Unit 23 for residents to year-round as follows:

##### **5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

##### **Unit 23**

Open the brown bear hunting season in Unit 23 as follows: **July 1-June 30** [AUG 1-MAY 31]

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Currently, the brown bear season is closed during the summer months of June and July. During these summer months, bears that roam close to the community can pose a life and safety concern to community members who recreate and engage in subsistence activities.

The brown bear harvest season should be changed for year-round harvest. This will allow residents to address problem bears at the local level. This regulatory change will keep the community safe and would eliminate the paperwork and enforcement resources required with Defense of Life or Property (DLP.)

**PROPOSED BY:** John Chase (HQ-F23-032)  
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## **PROPOSAL 42**

### **5 AAC 85.020. Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

Consolidate the nonresident brown bear registration permits into a single, unit-wide fall registration permit and a single, unit-wide spring registration permit.

### **5 AAC 85.020(21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for brown bear.**

#### **Units and Bag Limits**

#### **Nonresident Open Season**

Unit 23

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

Aug. 1-Oct. 31

Apr. 15-May 31

1 bear every regulatory year by registration permit only

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Unit 23 currently has fourteen nonresident registration hunts; seven fall hunts and seven spring hunts that correspond to the seven historic guide use areas. The number of permits issued for each of these hunts is not currently limited.

Nonresident hunters often do not know which of the seven hunt areas they will be hunting and are advised by their guides to acquire permits for each area that the guide operates in. This allows the most flexibility for guides and hunters to work around weather and other field conditions but often leaves the hunter with multiple permits to acquire, carry in the field, and report on post-hunt. It is not unusual for a hunter to be unaware of which hunt area they ultimately hunt in or for them to fail to report on registration permits that were acquired but not hunted on; there is a legal penalty for failing to report. The department proposes to simplify the process for hunters, guides, and department staff by consolidating the fourteen registration hunts into two, unit-wide, registration permits; one for the fall season and one for the spring season. Transitioning to a two-permit structure should not have any biological effects or the distribution of hunt pressure relative to the current structure.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F23-060)  
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