

UNIT 23GMU

Growing up hunting in both the rivers of the Noatak and the Kobuk I have seen the declination of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. I have experienced the hardships of getting gas and getting camping gear ready for the long trips, just to come home with nothing. I have been in the field and seen firsthand that the fly in hunters do not follow anywhere close to the regulations they are given. They fly well below the minimum requirement while transporting in and out of the field. Doing what we can to make out a tail number is close to impossible because they know exactly when to turn away or get to elevation before the known hunting areas where the hunters are waiting for the caribou to make the river crossing. With that being said, being a regular hunter, my meat is processed that same day/night even if it comes to being 2am and were just finishing up. Yes, some hunters hang their meat for a more tender meat in the end. My concern is, with the fly in hunters they do NOT take care if their meat in the field. I have seen, personally, about 90% of the hunted meat in black trash bags, baking in the sun, rotting out to a smell where the meat is wasted and then claim that they "give to the elders." Not only do the elders get meat but there is also a few younger folks who do not have the equipment to get out themselves and get meat from the outside hunters. After receiving the meat they find out that the meat is green and stink. Sure they might be giving the meat to the elders, but to give them meat they do not want because of the fact they did not take care of it in the field? That just shows they do not respect our land, they don't show remorse that this is what we live off, while they think its just another trophy for them to brag about.

While Speaking of hunting and protecting the WACH, the Ambler Road project should absolutely be a no. Do you understand the effect this can make on the Herd? The herd would be decimated as not only NWAB residents would be hunting it but as well as people from further inland hunting off the same herd when they get that far north. The Ambler Road Project is a subtle idea but far from a good one.

I am not saying they are not allowed to hunt, I am simply saying the amount of hunters who are willingly to drive up, would be in mass numbers and make the herd harder to control growth wise.

Allowing the caribou harvest to drop from 5 a day to 4 a year is a big deal for all Inupiaqs. That would hurt the native culture in a way of living off land but not hurt as much as it would if the WACH wasn't around anymore. Keeping the Herd alive would be more of a success and doesn't go only as far as making it a regulation but actually having it be regulated, such as making sure there is a wildlife trooper at which the migration is happening to taking accountability that each hunter is getting the regulated 4 and no more. I am not against in making the harvest limit to 4 a year but I am also not agreeing on shortening the harvest limit as this is food I live on year-round. It is a necessity to have caribou not only in my freezer but a large number of elders that I also hunt for. How do you expect to keep the elders happy and their freezers full if the harvest limit is reduced? Not all elders have family that can hunt for them. If this change was ever to be accepted than we need to make sure that this change is being regulated and not just making it a regulation.

Falling back to the brief statement I made about outside hunters, Alaskan caribou hunting should only be allowed to Alaskan Residents. Making GMU23 with fastest shrinking caribou herd, should by far, be an easy vote to make this unit an Alaskan resident only hunt.

Understanding the proposal of the harvest limit, rather than making it from 5 day to 4 a year, my proposal is, is to possibly allow the limit to 4 a month. 4 a year makes it hard for Inupaits to live, especially with caribou being one of the main inupaiq diets weve grown up on.

I oppose proposal 36 and 37.

I support proposal 38, 39, and 40.