

Hunting and Trapping

Emergency Order

Alaska Department
of Fish and Game

Under the Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order 05-02-26

Issued at Nome, Alaska May 26, 2026

Effective Date: 12:01 am July 1, 2026

Expiration Date: June 30, 2027

EXPLANATION

This Emergency Order closes the state resident hunting season for cow caribou in Units 22, 23, and 26A Southwest (*Note: this area is referred to as Unit 26(A), that portion within the Colville River drainage upstream from the Nuka River and drainages of the Chukchi Sea south and west of and including the Kuk and Kugrua River drainages*) by registration permits RC800 (Unit 22) and RC907 (Units 23 and 26A). Given the long-term decline of Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WAH) since 2003 and concomitant decreases in harvestable surplus, the Department estimates there is no harvestable surplus of cow caribou and thus harvest of cows is not warranted for Regulatory Year (RY) 2026-2027.

All other caribou hunting regulations remain unchanged in Units 22, 23, and 26A.

REGULATION:

Therefore, the following regulations in **5 AAC 85.025 (a) (17), (18), AND (21) HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS FOR CARIBOU**, are superseded by this emergency order and the following provisions are effective for hunting caribou in Units 22, 23, and 26A Southwest:

Units and Bag Limits

Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)

Nonresident Open Season

(17)

Unit 22(A), that portion north
of the Golsovia River
drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

15 **bulls** [CARIBOU] total,
by registration permit only
[, ONLY ONE OF WHICH
MAY BE A COW; COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE
TAKEN APR. 1 – JUNE 30]

July 1 – June 30

...

Remainder of Unit 22(B)
RESIDENT HUNTERS:

15 **bulls** [CARIBOU] total, July 1 – June 30
by registration permit only
[,ONLY ONE OF WHICH
MAY BE A COW; COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE
TAKEN APR. 1 – APR 30]

...

Unit 22(D), that portion in the
Kuzitrin River drainage
(excluding the Pilgrim River
drainage) and the Agiapuk
River drainage, including the
tributaries

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

15 **bulls** [CARIBOU] total, July 1 – June 30
by registration permit only
[,ONLY ONE OF WHICH
MAY BE A COW; COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE
TAKEN APR. 1 – APR 30]

...

Unit 22(E), that portion east
of and including the

Sanaguich River drainage

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

15 **bulls** [CARIBOU] total, July 1 – June 30
by registration permit only
[,ONLY ONE OF WHICH
MAY BE A COW; COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE
TAKEN APR. 1 – APR 30]

(18)

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

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

15 **bulls** [CARIBOU July 1 – June 30
TOTAL], by registration
permit only [,ONLY ONE OF
WHICH MAY BE A COW]

Remainder of Unit 23
RESIDENT HUNTERS:


15 **bulls** [CARIBOU TOTAL], by registration permit only [ONLY ONE OF WHICH MAY BE A COW; COW CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN APR. 1 – JUNE 30] July 1 – June 30
 (21)

...
 Unit 26(A), that portion within the Colville River drainage upstream from the Nuka River and drainages of the Chukchi Sea south and west of and including the Kuk and Kugrua River drainages

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
 15 **bulls** [CARIBOU TOTAL], by registration permit only [ONLY ONE OF WHICH MAY BE A COW] July 1 – June 30

All other caribou hunting regulations in Unit 22, Unit 23, and Unit 26A remain unchanged by this emergency order.

Doug Vincent-Lang
 Commissioner

By delegation to: 
 Alex Hansen
 Western Arctic Herd Caribou Biologist

JUSTIFICATION

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WAH) has historically been the largest herd in Alaska and has provided subsistence opportunity for up to 40 rural communities. This herd has a positive intensive management (IM) finding with a population objective of at least 200,000 and a harvest objective of 12,000-20,000. The WAH has been below the IM population objective since 2021. The long-term historical harvest for this herd has been estimated at 12,000+ caribou annually and the estimated harvestable surplus has been below 12,000 since 2020.

Despite recent attempts to slow the decline of the Western Arctic Herd (WAH), the population has continued to decline. Regulatory changes that took effect July 1, 2024, to decrease bag limits and reduce the harvest of cows have not slowed the rate of decline. The harvestable surplus for the WAH has decreased concurrently with the population decline and is estimated at zero cows based on the 2025 census of 121,000 individuals. Elimination of cow harvest has been identified as a necessary step towards slowing the population decline as there is no harvestable surplus of cows at this time.

DISTRIBUTION

This Emergency Order is distributed to the recipients listed below. Copies are available from the Department of Fish and Game office in Nome.

1. Lieutenant Governor
2. Assistant Attorney General (Board of Game Liaison, Anchorage)
3. Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game
4. Division of Wildlife Conservation
 - Director
 - Deputy Director
 - Assistant Director
 - Regional Supervisors
 - Regulation Coordination Team
 - Area Offices Statewide
 - Information Management Section, Anchorage, Douglas, Juneau
 - Public Communication/Information, Anchorage, Fairbanks
 - Federal Subsistence Liaison
5. Division of Boards
 - Boards Support Section, Executive Director
 - Field Offices: Dillingham, Kotzebue
 - Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Chair
 - Unit 22 AC, Northern Norton Sound
 - Unit 22 AC, Southern Norton Sound
 - Unit 23 AC, Kotzebue Sound
 - Unit 23 AC, Noatak/Kivalina
 - Unit 23 AC, Upper Kobuk
 - Unit 23 AC, Lower Kobuk
 - Unit 23 AC, Northern Seward Peninsula
 - Unit 26A AC, North Slope
6. Division of Subsistence
 - Assistant Director
 - Program Director, Fairbanks
 - Field Offices: Fairbanks, Kotzebue
7. Public Communications Section, Juneau
8. Department of Public Safety, Alaska Wildlife Troopers
 - Director
 - Detachment Commander
 - C Detachment, Western
 - D Detachment, Northern
 - Field Offices:
 - Unit 22: Nome
 - Unit 23: Kotzebue
9. U. S. Department of the Interior
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - BLM, State Director

- BLM, Anchorage District
 - Unit 18/22/23 Anchorage, Mgr.
 - Unit 18/22/23 Anchorage, Subsistence
 - Unit 18/22/23 Anchorage, Wildlife
- BLM, Fairbanks District
 - Unit 22/23 Central Yukon, Mgr
 - Unit 22/23 Central Yukon, Wildlife
- Fish and Wildlife Service
 - FWS, Regional Director
 - FWS, Office of Federal Subsistence Management
 - FWS, OSM Regional Advisory Councils, Coordinators
 - FWS RAC Unit 22, Seward Peninsula
 - FWS RAC Unit 23, Northwest Arctic
 - FWS RAC Unit 26A, North Slope
 - FWS, Refuges
 - FWS, Selawik NWR, Refuge Mgr.
 - FWS, Togiak NWR, Refuge Mgr.
 - FWS, Yukon Delta NWR, Refuge Mgr.
 - FWS, Law Enforcement, Nome
- National Park Service
 - NPS, Regional Director
 - NPS, Subsistence
 - NPS, Park Unit, Superintendent
 - Bering Land Bridge, Nome

10. Clerk of the Court or Magistrate

- Unit 22: Nome
- Unit 23: Kotzebue
- Unit 26A: Utqiagvik

11. I.R.A./Traditional Village Councils/Regional Native Corporations

- Unit 22
 - Bering Straits Native Corporation
 - Kawerak, Inc., Natural Resources Department
 - Kawerak, Inc., Reindeer Herders Association
 - Sitnasuak Native Corporation
 - Brevig Mission
 - Council
 - Elim
 - Golovin
 - Koyuk
 - Mary's Igloo
 - Nome
 - Shaktoolik
 - Shishmaref
 - Solomon
 - Stebbins
 - St. Michael

- Teller
- Unalakleet
- Wales
- White Mountain
- Unit 23
 - NANA
 - Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation
 - Native Village of Kotzebue
 - Ambler
 - Buckland
 - Deering
 - Kiana
 - Kivalina
 - Kobuk
 - Noatak
 - Noorvik
 - Point Hope
 - Selawik
 - Shungnak
- Unit 26A
 - Arctic Slope Regional Corporation
 - Atqasuk
 - Nuiqsut
 - Pt. Lay
 - Utqiagvik
 - Wainwright

12. News Media: Statewide