

PROPOSAL 112

5 AAC 85.025 Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Limit nonresident hunting of the Fortymile caribou herd as follows:

Limit nonresident Fortymile caribou hunters to Zone 2 only until the herd is within the Intensive Management (IM) population objective and stabilizes.

RC 860 Fortymile Caribou

Nonresidents

Zone 2 only [Zones 1, 2, 3, &4] One bull Aug 10 – Sept 30

We would also support including parts of Zone 3 off the road system included for nonresidents, such as the Joseph area, and Fortymile River upstream of the South Fork.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Fortymile caribou herd (FCH) is an identified big game prey population under our Intensive Management (IM) law important for high levels of human harvest by Alaskans. It has an IM population objective of 50,000 - 100,000 animals.

Based on department information at this time (April 2023), the 2023 fall quota for the Fortymile caribou hunt RC860 will only be 450-500 caribou, bull only. The current FCH population is well under the IM objective, at about 38,000 animals, yet caribou are showing signs of nutritional stress. We expect 2024 quotas to be even less.

Along with Nelchina caribou herd declines and very little harvest opportunity for that herd now and in the near future, we expect increased hunting pressure on the FCH. Added pressure on FCH will lead to more problems along the Steese and Taylor Highways, especially if the caribou are near the road during hunting season. The quota could be reached very quickly, allowing little opportunity for many residents to put some meat in their freezer. We could also go over the quota, which has happened in the past, resulting in a lower winter subsistence hunt quota or a closure of the resident-only winter subsistence hunt.

Our main emphasis with this proposal is to outline the importance of the FCH to resident Alaskans who want to put food on the table to feed their families. We question whether any nonresident hunting opportunity should exist at all when the population is below the IM objective, or when that additional harvest may lead to a winter subsistence hunt closure or reduced quota.

We have spoken to transporters and understand their concerns with a complete closure to nonresidents. In that light, we'd like to offer a compromise position at this time to restrict nonresident RC860 caribou hunters to Zone 2 only. This will still allow ample nonresident opportunity off the road system, and keep the road systems and other zones available to residents only.

PROPOSED BY: Resident Hunters of Alaska (HQ-F23-014)
