

## **Galena Area - Units 21B, 21C, 21D & 24**

*Note: This proposal is also scheduled for the January 26-29, 2024 Western Arctic / Western Region meeting in Kotzebue, Alaska as Proposal 2, during which Units 22, 23 and 26A will be considered. The board may defer final action on all Units to the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting.*

### **PROPOSAL 139**

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

Reduce the bag limit for taking caribou in Units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D and 26A to four caribou per year, only one of which may be a cow as follows:

**RESIDENT HUNTERS: Four caribou [FIVE CARIBOU PER DAY] per year, however, no more than 1 cow may be taken.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Data from biologists at the ADF&G illustrate that there has been continued decline in the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH). The July 2022 photo census estimated 164,000 caribou in the Western Arctic caribou herd which is down from 188,000 in 2021. Census numbers for past years: 2020 – no census; 2019 – 244,000; 2018 – no census; 2017 – 259,000; 2016 – 201,000. In the two years between the 2019 and 2021 census, the herd declined nearly 12% per year. Additionally, data shows that the cow survival rate is at 71% in 2021, well below the herd's average of 81% (1981-2020). ADF&G presented this information to the WACH Working Group in December 2022.

At its annual meeting the WACH Working Group assigned the management level “Preservative, Declining” to the herd based on the current census (within the range of 130,000-200,000) and adult cow survival rate less than 80%.

In doing so, the WACH Working Group sees the immediate need to address the current herd decline by limiting the harvest of both bulls and cows to allow the herd population to begin to recover.

In the units identified above, the current bag limit is set at five caribou per person per day during the open periods for bulls and cows. The WACH WG proposes to change regulations to four caribou per person per year, with no more than one cow allowed.

**PROPOSED BY:** Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, Vern Cleveland, Chair (EG-F23-208)

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*Note: This proposal is also scheduled for the January 26-29, 2024 Western Arctic / Western Region meeting in Kotzebue, Alaska as Proposal 3, during which Units 22, 23, and 26A will be considered. The board may defer final action on all Units to the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region meeting.*

### **PROPOSAL 140**

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

Close nonresident caribou hunting in Units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D, and 26A as follows:

The Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) Working Group proposes to close caribou hunting in units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D, and 26A to non-Alaska residents.

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: **No open season** [1 BULL].

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Data from biologists at the ADF&G illustrate that there has been continued decline in the Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH). The July 2022 photo census estimated 164,000 caribou in the Western Arctic caribou herd which is down from 188,000 in 2021. Census numbers for past years: 2020 – no census; 2019 – 244,000; 2018 – no census; 2017 – 259,000; 2016 – 201,000. In the two years between the 2019 and 2021 census, the herd declined nearly 12% per year. Additionally, data shows that the cow survival rate is at 71% in 2021, well below the herd’s average of 81% (1981-2020). ADF&G presented this information to the WACH Working Group in December 2022.

At its annual meeting the WACH Working Group assigned the management level “Preservative, Declining” to the herd based on the current census (within the range of 130,000-200,000) and adult cow survival rate less than 80%. In doing so, the WACH Working Group sees the immediate need to address the current herd decline by limiting caribou harvest to allow the herd population to begin to recover.

In a separate proposal, the WACH Working Group proposes a reduction in harvest for resident hunters. The working group feels that if harvest reductions are placed on Alaskans to allow the herd to recover, there should also be harvest reductions for nonresident hunters.

Currently, in the units identified above, non-Alaska resident hunters are allowed to harvest one (1) bull per year. The WACH Working Group proposes to close caribou hunting in units 21D Remainder, 22, 23, 24B Remainder, 24C, 24D, and 26A to non-Alaska residents.

**PROPOSED BY:** Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, Vern Cleveland, Chair (EG-F23-209)  
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### **PROPOSAL 141**

#### **5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.**

Close the youth sheep hunts in Units 24A and 25A as follows:

Eliminate the youth hunts in Units 24A and 25A which fall outside the regular season therefore allowing sheep to be spotted from the air.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** I would like the board to address the issue of the declining Dall sheep population in Units 24A and 25A.

**PROPOSED BY:** Tim Nelson (EG-F23-223)  
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## **PROPOSAL 142**

### **5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.**

Change sheep hunting in portions of Units 24A and 25A to archery only as follows:

In Units 24A and 25A, in the vicinity of the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA), on the east side of the road, all sheep hunting is by bow and arrow only within 15 miles of the Dalton Highway for one ram, full-curl or larger.

Or, put another way:

In Units 24A and 25A, all areas within 15 miles of the Dalton Highway is open to sheep hunting by bow and arrow only for one ram, full curl or larger.

Upon manager discretion, the season could either revert back to the previous 8/10-9/20 or update to the new 8/10-10/5 for the DHCMA.

All other existing regulations for this area would remain unchanged by this proposal.

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

**The purpose of this proposal is maintain hunting opportunity along the Dalton Highway while significantly decreasing the harvest in an area with recent sheep population concerns that resulted in a temporary emergency closure.**

In July of 2022 the Federal Subsistence Board approved WSA22-02 which put a two-year closure for sheep hunting in part of the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA). The explanation given was that “although sheep numbers across the entire Brooks Range may be generally stable, declines in sheep populations along the DHCMA are a substantial concern for rural Alaska subsistence users. These subsistence users depend on efficiency of harvest, close to where they live, regarding the local sheep population. The local rural Alaska residents are especially concerned with the population status of sheep within the DHCMA.” Furthermore, as in some other areas of Alaska, biologists have begun to question (and potentially study) whether full-curl management (FCM) is an adequate strategy to conserve sheep populations, especially those within relatively easy reach from places like the Dalton Highway.

Those who have spent extensive time hunting in the DHCMA are aware that within the relatively narrow five mile corridor there are only few isolated areas that hold sheep and there are even fewer areas in which bands of rams typically reside. The success rate of archery hunters for sheep in this portion of the DHCMA is close to zero sheep per year by bow for much of the past decade. Groups of sheep that live near the five mile boundary are often hunted by those using rifles who have easy access given the narrow band of bowhunting terrain separating them from the highway. Because archery hunters kill less than one sheep per year in the DHCMA, if there is decline in the area related to hunting, it is very likely due to that fact that the Dalton Highway allows easy access to the sheep who live just five miles off the road to the much more efficient use of rifles for sheep hunting.

One solution to this issue that would **maintain opportunity while essentially cutting the non-subsistence harvest to almost zero**, would be to expand the archery only corridor in Units 24 and 25A for Dall sheep to 15 miles. This would provide a large enough area of respite from rifle use that rams of all ages would have much higher survival rates. This would also decrease the amount of airplane hunters

using planes to find (during preseason scouting or illegally during the season) and harvest sheep close to the road where subsistence users also rely on them. Creating an enlarged archery only area would have **zero negative impact in overall hunting opportunity** because anyone who wants to hunt via general season harvest tag would still be able to. They would just have to accept a little more challenge by taking a bow instead of a rifle. Skilled and/or lucky hunters would still occasionally kill a ram but the harvest within 15 miles of the road would be greatly decreased as would the impact on local subsistence users.

**If this were to be passed a proposal would then be submitted by this author to the Federal Subsistence Board asking to rescind the closure due to the change in regulation. With the prospect of essentially zero rams being killed within 15 miles of the highway by non-subsistence users, this may prove a tenable option.**

On Precedent:

There is precedent in Alaska demonstrating that archery only sheep hunting has a very low impact on sheep populations while providing excellent opportunity for hunters. In the two existing archery draw hunts in Alaska, DS140 and DS 141, which are easily accessible by road system near anchorage and have an established ATV trail within a couple of miles of much of the hunting area, there are still abundant sheep and mature rams in the area. Of the 64 resident hunters who receive that tag each year, on average one to three sheep have been killed in total in recent years and those are *any ram hunts*. This precedent demonstrates that archery hunts provide great opportunity for hunters but have little to no affect on animal populations. Based on this precedent in Unit 14C, we can expect that the proposed hunt in Units 24 and 25 hunt would have essentially zero adverse effect on sheep populations while increasing hunter opportunity.

On Opportunity:

In the past there has been some resistance to transitioning existing rifle hunts into archery hunts because of the perception of some that this somehow decreases opportunity. It is, however, well established throughout the United States and in Alaska that all hunters are capable of taking advantage of archery hunts by the simple means of purchasing and layering to shoot a bow. Currently, it's possible to buy an effective hunting bow for less than the cost of most rifles and to learn to shoot accurately in a matter of weeks.

\*\*\*Limiting the expansion of the corridor like this in just Units 24A and 25A for sheep hunting would not create any issues for other rifle hunting opportunities outside of the five mile corridor.

**PROPOSED BY:** Paul Forward

(EG-F23-325)

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## **PROPOSAL 143**

### **5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.**

Eliminate the extended season archery sheep hunts within the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area as follows:

Eliminate the extended archery season in Units 24 and 25 within the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA.)

This hunt falls outside of the regular season which means that sheep can be spotted from the air during this hunt giving guides with airplanes an unfair advantage.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The issue that I would like the board to address is the decline of the Dall sheep population in Units 24 and 25.

**PROPOSED BY:** Tim Nelson

(EG-F23-252)

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## **PROPOSAL 144**

### **5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep.**

Allow nonresident sheep hunting by drawing permit only in portions of Units 24A and 26B and reduce the season as follows:

Limit nonresident sheep hunters in Units 24A and 26B west of the Sagavanirktok River to draw-only hunts with a limited allocation and shorten the season.

**Unit 24A within the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area, Unit 24A Remainder, and Unit 26B west of the Sagavanirktok River:**

#### **Nonresidents**

**One ram with full curl horn or larger  
by drawing permit only, every four  
regulatory years; up to 10 permits  
may be issued**

**Aug 10 – Sept 20** [AUG 10 – OCT 5]

[ONE RAM WITH FULL CURL HORN OR LARGER  
EVERY FOUR REGULATORY YEARS]

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

**Unlimited nonresident sheep hunting opportunity, federal sheep hunting closure**

Just prior to the 2022 sheep hunting season, the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) closed all sheep hunting on federal lands in Unit 24A and 26B west of the Sagavanirktok River for two years based on conservation concerns for the sheep population.

This temporary closure will be reviewed in two years at which time the FSB will determine whether to open sheep hunting opportunity again for both federally qualified subsistence users (FQU) and non-federally-qualified users (NFQU).

Much of this closure area is within the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA) where bowhunters are able to access sheep country from the road and is very popular with resident sheep hunters.

Guides have taken advantage of no limits on nonresident sheep hunters in these areas by booking more hunts for nonresident sheep hunters who want to attempt to harvest a Dall sheep ram with a bow. Nonresident sheep hunters are now harvesting a bit over 40% of the rams in these units, and that impact was part of why the FSB shut down sheep hunting.

Nonresident sheep hunters need to be limited across the state to draw-only hunts with a limited allocation and that especially needs to happen in these units. Limiting nonresident sheep hunters now sends a message to the FSB that the Board of Game is willing to take action on reducing overall harvests on declining sheep populations by non-Alaskans and will go a long way in encouraging the FSB to again open these lands to sheep hunting by both FQU and NFQU. If nothing is done to limit nonresident sheep hunters, it is doubtful the FSB will open sheep hunting at all in the near future to NFQU.

**PROPOSED BY:** Resident Hunters of Alaska (HQ-F23-016)  
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**PROPOSAL 145**

**5 AAC 85.045(a)(19)(B). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.**

Reauthorize a winter any-moose season during March in a portion of Unit 21D as follows:

| <b>Units and Bag Limits</b> | <b>Resident<br/>Open Season<br/>(Subsistence and<br/>General Hunts)</b> | <b>Nonresident<br/>Open Season</b> |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| ...                         |   |                                    |
| (19)                        |   |                                    |
| ...                         |   |                                    |

(B) on or after July 1, 2018, the hunting seasons and bag limits for moose in Unit 21 are as follows:

...  
  
Unit 21(D), that portion south of the South bank of the Yukon River, downstream of the up-river entrance of Kala Slough and west of Kala Creek

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 moose, by registration permit  
only, up to 15 days during March; a  
person may not take a cow  
accompanied by a calf

(Winter season to be  
announced)

...

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Antlerless moose hunting seasons must be reauthorized annually. Our goal is to provide additional harvest opportunity and meet harvest objectives. This harvest opportunity of antlerless moose recently emerged because the moose population in the Kaiyuh Flats is increasing rapidly, especially the number of cows in the population. If this antlerless moose hunt is not reauthorized, opportunity to utilize a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and our ability to meet Intensive Management (IM) harvest objectives could be reduced. In addition, rather than allow the population to go through dramatic rates of expansion and contraction, we believe it is necessary to slow the rate of increase.

The IM harvest objective for Unit 21D is 450–1,000 moose. The ten-year average estimated harvest during 2012–2021 was 401 moose, which includes the reported and estimated unreported harvest. The annual estimated harvest has not met the harvest objective since 2003 when the estimated harvest was 489 moose. Additional harvest from this hunt will help make progress toward achieving the IM harvest objectives without reducing bull:cow ratios to low levels. Subsistence hunters will benefit from the opportunity to harvest cow moose.

Analysis of three Trend Count Areas (Squirrel Creek, Pilot Mountain, and Kaiyuh Slough TCAs) within the Kaiyuh Flats demonstrated an increase in moose abundance among all age classes from 2001 to present. Geospatial Population Estimate data also increased from 1,897 ( $\pm 11\%$ ) moose in 2011 to 4,116 ( $\pm 10\%$ ) moose in 2017. Moose twinning data for the hunt area also showed high twinning rates 2004–2022 (avg. = 35.7%), although the five-year twinning rate average (2018–2022) was 25.4%.

The portion of Unit 21D affected by this reauthorization is approximately 21% (2,559 mi<sup>2</sup>) of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi<sup>2</sup>). Moose abundance in this area was estimated at 4,000–4,500 moose, which is approximately 39–44% of the total moose estimated in Unit 21D at 10,478 moose ( $\pm 1,572$ ) in 2021. The mid-point for the total Unit 21D moose population estimate was above the IM population objective for all of Unit 21D (12,093.6 mi<sup>2</sup>) of 9,000–10,000 moose.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-048)

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## **PROPOSAL 146**

### **5 AAC 92.124. Intensive Management Plans VIII.**

Adopt an Intensive Management Program and implement wolf control on all state lands in Units 24A and 25A as follows:

Adopt and implement a wolf Intensive Management program on all state lands in Unit 24A and 25A.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In the last three years we have noticed a substantial increase in predation on moose in Unit 24A and 25A. I believe this to be caused by two main factors. The first being the crash of the snowshoe hares in 2019, and the second being the Porcupine Caribou Herd wintering in the area. Each fall when the caribou migrate in we see new packs of wolves following the caribou. These are in addition to the local wolf packs that are there year round. In the last few years it has not been uncommon to see wolves on a daily basis while in the field moose and sheep hunting in the fall. I believe that a wolf Intensive Management predator control program implemented on all state lands in Units 24A and 25A would help to maintain moose, and caribou populations as well as benefit other ungulates in the area.

**PROPOSED BY:** Jonah Stewart

(EG-F23-199)

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## **PROPOSAL 147**

### **5 AAC 92.124. Intensive Management Plans VIII.**

Allow hunters to take wolves in Units 24 and 25 the same day they have been airborne as follows:

Same Day Airborne Exceptions:

You may hunt wolf in unit Units 24 & and 25 the same day you have flown, provided you are at least 300 feet from the airplane.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** We have seen increased predation on moose and sheep within this area since the crash of the snowshoe hair population a few years ago. It is not uncommon to see wolves chasing sheep and moose during the fall on a regular basis. Changes in regulation to liberalize harvest methods will allow for more incidental harvest on wolves and help increase ungulate populations.

**PROPOSED BY:** Jonah Stewart

(EG-F23-182)

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## **PROPOSAL 148**

### **5 AAC 92.124. Intensive Management Plans VIII.**

Create a predator control program for wolves in Units 24A and 25A as follows:

Creation of a predator control program with the intention of harvesting wolves on state lands in Units 24A and 25A. Aerial predator control in these areas from fixed wing aircraft would be highly effective.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Over the past three years we have observed an increase in the wolf population and an associated increase in predation on moose resulting in a drop in the overall moose population in the area. The Porcupine Caribou Herd has had an increased presence in these areas in the early fall through late spring, bringing with them more wolf packs. A predator control program aimed at harvesting wolves on state lands in Units 24A and 25A would greatly benefit moose and sheep populations in these areas.

**PROPOSED BY:** Luke Tyrrell

(EG-F23-270)

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## **PROPOSAL 149**

### **5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.**

Lengthen the wolf trapping season in Units 24 and the remainder of 25 by one month, to open October 1 as follows:

Wolf trapping season Units 19D, 21A, 24, and 25..... Oct. 1 - April 30.....No Limit

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In recent years the Porcupine caribou herd has wintered in Unit 24A and 25A near the Dalton Highway. This has brought in more wolves than we have seen in a long time. I believe it would be helpful to align the wolf trapping season in all of Units 24 and 25 with the current trapping season dates in Unit 25D of October 1-April 30.

**PROPOSED BY:** Jonah Stewart

(EG-F23-256)

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## **PROPOSAL 150**

### **5 AAC 85.056. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf.**

Lengthen the wolf hunting season in Units 24 and 25 as follows:

Change wolf season to August 1-June 15 for residents and nonresidents in Units 24 and 25. This will allow for incidental wolf harvest during spring bear hunting, benefiting prey species in the area.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Over the past three years we have observed an increase in the wolf population and an associated increase in predation on moose resulting in a drop in the overall moose population in the area. The Porcupine Caribou Herd has had an increased presence in these areas in the early fall through late spring, bringing with them more wolf packs. Liberalizing the wolf season to allow harvest during spring bear hunting would increase the harvest of wolves in these areas.

**PROPOSED BY:** Luke Tyrrell

(EG-F23-269)

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## **PROPOSAL 151**

### **5 AAC 85.056. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf.**

Increase the hunting bag limit for wolves in Units 24 and 25 as follows:

Wolf - Unit 24 Ten wolves August 1 - June 30

Wolf - Unit 25 Ten wolves August 1 - June 30

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Predation on moose and sheep have been high in recent years since the crash of the snowshoe hare population. Lengthening the wolf season in the spring will result in more incidental wolf harvest during spring bear hunts and help recovery of ungulate populations.

**PROPOSED BY:** Jonah Stewart

(EG-F23-183)

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## **PROPOSAL 152**

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

### **5 AAC 92.044. Permit for hunting bear with the use of bait or scent lures.**

Increase the resident bag limit for brown bear in Units 24C and 24D, and open a fall bait season in Units 21B and 24B as follows:

Establish a resident two bear bag limit for residents (5AAC 85.020) in Units 24C and 24D.

Establish a fall bear baiting season (5AAC 92.044) in Unit 21B and 24B.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** This proposal seeks to increase the harvest opportunity from one brown bear per regulatory year to a two brown bear bag limit for residents in Units 24C and 24D and allow harvest of brown and black bears from August 1 –September 30 at registered bear bait stations in Units 21B and 24B. Resident hunters that take brown bears are low in number and should be afforded additional harvest opportunity with a two brown bear limit. Units 21 and 24B already has a two brown bear limit for residents and this would align bag limits with nearby Units.

Adding fall bear baiting in Units 21B and 24B would align brown bear baiting with surrounding units. The Board of Game first approved harvest of brown bears at black bear bait stations in Unit 21D in 2012, Units 24C and 24D in 2014 spring bear baiting in Unit 21C in 2017 and spring bear baiting in 2020.

The 20-year trend in the harvest data indicated that brown bear harvest was stable even though bag limits, seasons and methods were liberalized. Males were harvested at a higher rate than females and average ages of the harvested bears remained stable indicating that the population was not over exploited.

**PROPOSED BY:** Koyukuk River Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(HQ-F23-069)

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**PROPOSAL 153**

**5 AAC 85.057. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolverine.**

**5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.**

Lengthen the wolverine hunting and trapping seasons in Unit 21 by one month to end on April 30 as follows:

Wolverine hunting and trapping season ends April 30th.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Extend wolverine hunting and trapping seasons to include through April. Wolverine have always been harvested during April by rural hunters and trappers when traditional beaver trapping season. Many wolverine are harvested for traditional potlatch. It is against our cultural beliefs to not accept what we believe has been provided. Most rural residents are not even aware the season is closed in April.

**PROPOSED BY:** Gilbert Huntington

(EG-F23-248)

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