

PROPOSAL 8

5 AAC 92.990(a)(21). Definitions.

Clarify that hunting feral reindeer in Unit 10, Umnak Island, is allowed under the current caribou hunting regulations as follows:

We are seeking clarification that reindeer hunting is currently allowed on Umnak Island under current regulations. If that is not the Board of Game's determination, then we are seeking to declare an open season through the deleterious exotic wildlife regulations. The intent is to provide harvest opportunity on the herd, and to develop an economically viable business opportunity for the Chaluka Corporation. We can provide further input on suggested seasons, bag, and possession limits, etc. We would also recommend that the regulations note the need to respect the land ownership rights of each corporation, and that hunters contact the appropriate corporation to seek permission prior to accessing their land.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reindeer were introduced to Umnak Island in 1923 for the benefit of island residents. The herd size is now estimated at over 5,000 animals following an aerial survey conducted in 2022.

In reviewing the hunting regulations, it appears the best regulatory comparison is to that of Kodiak Island, where hunting feral reindeer existed with no limits and no closed season until roughly 2008, when the Board of Game adopted a new proposal to implement a hunting season of August 1 – January 31, with a limit of one bull per season. This was done out of a conservation concern. No such Board of Game proposals or regulations exist for Umnak Island.

We are seeking clarification regarding the regulations that should apply to feral reindeer on Umnak, and confirmation that hunting feral reindeer is allowable under current regulations.

Umnak Island is located in the Aleutians about 900 miles from Anchorage. The island is divided into a patchwork quilt of roughly eight landowners, including Chaluka Corporation (Nikolski), the U.S. wildlife refuge, St. George Tanaq Corporation (St. George) and TDX Corporation (St. Paul). There is also a cattle ranch which has operated on leased land, as well as some military land too. The only residents on the island live in Nikolski.

There is a history of reindeer ownership on Umnak Island which pre-dates ANCSA. Our understanding is that sometime after ANCSA in 1971, two Alaska Native Corporations applied for and reportedly acquired ownership of reindeer on the island. However, the herd has since spread throughout the Island and established itself elsewhere, including heavy concentrations of animals on land more than 25 miles away which is owned by the Chaluka Corporation (village corporation with land holding near Nikolski). Local residents, a key landowner (Chaluka Corporation) and tribal leadership have advised that there have been no efforts to manage the herd for at least 25 years.

The herd is now considered a nuisance and a habitat/conservation risk by local residents given its size and the risk of overgrazing.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? We have developed this proposal with some guidance from the Department of Fish and Game.

PROPOSED BY: Chaluka Corporation

(HQ-F24-022)
