

Proposal 13

5 AAC 85.025(a). Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Eliminate the cow caribou season for the Western Arctic Herd (WAH) in Units 22, 23 and the SW portion of 26A, as follows:

5 AAC 85.025(a)(17) is amended to read:

Open Season Units and Bag Limits	Resident (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(17) Unit 22(A), that portion north of the Golsovia River drainage RESIDENT HUNTERS: 15 <u>bulls</u> [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	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 bull Unit 22(B), that portion west of Golovnin Bay, and west of a line along the west bank of the Fish and Niukluk Rivers to the mouth of the Libby River, and excluding all portions of the Niukluk River drainage upstream from and including the Libby River drainage	Aug. 1 - Sept. 30	

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 - APR. 30]

Oct. 1 - Apr. 30

up to 5 **bulls** [CARIBOU] per day
during the period May 1 -
Sept. 30, a season
may be announced by
emergency order[; COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN
APRIL 1 - AUG 31]

(Season to be announced
by emergency order)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull; during the period Aug.
1 - Sept. 30, a season may be
announced by emergency order

(Season to be
announced by
emergency order)

Remainder of Unit 22(B)

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

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull;

Aug. 1 - Sept. 30

Unit 22(D), that portion in
the Pilgrim 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 - APR. 30]

Oct. 1 - Apr. 30

up to 5 **bulls** [CARIBOU] per day;
during the period
May 1 - Sept. 30, a season
may be announced by
emergency order[; COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN
APRIL 1 - AUG. 31]

(Season to be announced by
emergency order)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull; during the period
Aug. 1 - Sept. 30, a season
may be announced by
emergency order

(Season to be
announced by
emergency order)

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,
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

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull

Aug. 1 - Sept. 30

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

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull Aug. 1 - Sept. 30

Remainder of Unit 22

RESIDENT HUNTERS:
5 **bulls** [CARIBOU] per day; by registration permit only, during the period Feb. 1 – Oct. 14[(Season to be announced by emergency order); COW
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN
APR. 1 - AUG. 31; BULL
CARIBOU MAY NOT BE TAKEN
OCT. 15 - JAN. 31]

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:
1 bull; during the period Aug. 1 - Sept. 30 (Season to be announced by emergency order)

5 AAC 85.025(a)(18) is amended to read:

Open Season	Resident	
	(Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
Units and Bag Limits		

(18)

(B) on or after July 1, 2025, the hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou in Unit 23 are as follows:

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

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

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull, by drawing permit only,
up to 300 permits may be issued
in combination with the
remainder of Unit 23

Aug. 1 - Sept. 30

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 JULY 1 - AUG. 31 OR
APR. 1 - JUNE 30]

July 1 - June 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull, by drawing permit only,
up to 300 permits may be issued
in combination with that portion
of Unit 23 north of and
including the Singoalik
River drainage

Aug. 1 - Sept. 30

5 AAC 85.025(a)(21) is amended to read:

Open Season	Resident	
Units and Bag Limits	(Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season

(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

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 bull

July 15 - Sept. 30

...

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

The Western Arctic caribou herd (WAH) has historically been the largest caribou herd in Alaska and has provided subsistence opportunity for up to 40 rural communities and other Alaskans across the state. This herd has a positive intensive management (IM) finding and a population objective of at least 200,000 caribou, and a harvest objective of 12,000-20,000 caribou. The WAH has been below the IM objective since 2021 (188,000 caribou). The long-term historical harvest for this herd has been estimated at 12,000+ caribou annually and the estimated harvestable surplus (HS) has been below 12,000 animals since 2020.

Despite regulatory changes that decreased bag limits and attempted to reduce the harvest of cows across Units 22, 23 and the western portion of 26A that took effect July 1, 2024, the WAH population has continued to decline. The HS for the WAH has decreased concurrently with the population decline and is estimated at 5,800 bulls and zero cows based on the 2025 census (121,000 animals). It is estimated that the annual harvest of cows is approximately 4,000 at present.

The HS is nearing the lower end of the combined amount reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (ANS) of 8,000-12,000 caribou from the WAH and Teshekpuk (TCH) herds, (5AAC 99.025). Continued decline from either or both of these herds will likely lead to an inability to provide for the ANS in the near future. Elimination of cow harvest has been identified as necessary step towards slowing the population decline.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F26-028)
