

Proposal 130

5 AAC 85.025; 92.050. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou; Required permit hunt conditions and procedures.

Make changes to non resident hunt allotment for 40 mile Caribou herd based on harvestable quota as follows:

What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?

When the overall quota is above 1,000, allow nonresident hunting in all zones.

When the quota is between 400 and 1,000, authorize nonresident hunting only in Zone 2 under a limited draw permit hunt. Issue nonresident draw permits equal to 50 percent of the Zone 2 quota. These draw permits would not be subject to emergency closures that may apply to the RC860 registration permit, providing predictable season dates for successful applicants.

When the quota is below 400, prohibit nonresident hunting in all zones.

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

The Fortymile Caribou Herd has continued to decline in recent years, resulting in substantial reductions to the fall RC860 harvest allocation. From 2021 to 2025, the quota decreased from 4,500 to 395, with an average annual reduction of roughly 31%. Throughout this period, the quota was divided among Zones 1, 2, 3, and 4 to distribute hunting pressure and opportunity across the herd's range.

From 2021 through 2024, resident hunters accounted for 75% of the total harvest, with nonresidents accounting for 25%.

In RY2025, this pattern shifted. During the state season, resident harvest fell to 35% while nonresident harvest rose to 65% of the total harvest. In Zone 2, nonresidents represented roughly half of the hunter effort yet accounted for 70% of the harvest. The zone closed early after reaching its quota in early September. Meanwhile, low zone quotas, large caribou concentrations near the Steese Highway, and high harvest during the federal season prevented Zones 1 and 4 from opening to state hunters without exceeding allowable harvest. Zone 3 remained open for the full season but yielded only single digit harvest despite receiving 56% of all hunter effort.

Across all zones over the past five years, nonresidents have averaged only about 17% of the total annual hunter effort and have consistently taken roughly 22% of the annual fall quota. Under low quotas, however, this distribution becomes increasingly consequential. Reduced allocations, short seasons, limited access, and zone closures disproportionately affect resident hunters who depend heavily on road-based opportunities. If the harvestable surplus continues to decline, maintaining reasonable resident opportunity within a registration permit system will require revising when and where nonresident hunting is allowed and restructuring permit approaches to better align harvest opportunity and distribution with available quotas.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

This proposal was developed by the Fortymile Caribou Herd Harvest Coalition, which includes representatives from Advisory Committees (Fortymile-Upper Tanana, Central, Fairbanks, Eagle, Delta, Anchorage, and Matanuska Valley) who represent hunters who have traditionally hunted the FCH. Development of the proposal also included consultation with state and federal agencies and other resource agencies. This proposal is part of an updated Fortymile Caribou Harvest Plan, which will be submitted to the Board.

PROPOSED BY: Fortymile Caribou Herd Harvest Management Coalition (OI-F26-199)
