

Proposal 171

5 AAC 85.025 (a)(19) and (21). Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Create a registration hunt for cow caribou in units 24A and 26B for residents, to allow a limited harvest of cows to be taken when available, with season dates and bag limit to be announced as follows:

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

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(19) ...		
Unit 24(A) Remainder		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 10 caribou	July 1 – Apr. 30	
<u>Up to 2 cows may be taken by registration permit only, during a season to be announced from July 1 – April 30</u>	<u>TBA</u>	
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 2 bulls		Aug 1 – Sept. 30
(21) ...		
Unit 26(B) Remainder		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 5 caribou	July 1 – Apr. 30	
<u>Up to 2 cows may be taken by registration permit only, during a</u>	<u>TBA</u>	

season to be announced
from July 1 – April 30

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

2 bulls

Aug 1 – Sept. 15

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

The 2025 Central Arctic Herd (CAH) population estimate indicated there was a decrease in the population from 2022 (34,642 caribou, 95% CI 32,419–36,866) to 2025 (26,621 caribou, 95% CI 25,466 – 27,775). The 2025 population estimate is below the intensive management objective for this herd of 28,000–32,000 caribou. The CAH range primarily encompasses Units 26B and Unit 24A.

To decrease harvest pressure on the reproductive component of the herd, the department recommends in a separate proposal that the bag limits for units 24(A) and 26(B) be changed from either a 10 caribou or 5 caribou bag limit to a 5 bull only bag limit, which will continue to be administered as a general season harvest ticket hunt. At the current population size and trend, there is no longer a harvestable surplus of cow caribou to support the current any caribou bag limits. However, The CAH population has fluctuated regularly above and below the intensive management objective over the past 25 years. This has resulted in the department seeking regulatory changes to either liberalize or restrict harvest opportunity at most Interior Region Board of Game meetings. This proposal seeks to implement an adaptive regulatory structure for cow caribou to maximize harvest opportunity when harvestable surplus exists or restrict harvest during times of conservation. In addition, a registration permit would allow the department to determine an in-season quota to prevent over-harvest of cows when warranted.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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