

## **Proposal 175**

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

Central Arctic Caribou Herd Reduce nonresident bag limit to one bull with a season Aug 1 – Sept 15. Eliminate the opportunity for residents to take cows as follows:

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

Reduce nonresident bag limit to one bull with a season Aug 1 – Sept 15. With the herd in decline and increasing nonresident participation, nonresidents should be limited to 1 bull only.

Eliminate the opportunity for residents to take cows. With the herd in decline, we should not allow any cow harvests until the population increases. Even a limited cow harvest can affect growth of the herd.

#### **26B Remainder Caribou**

**Resident season July 1 – April 30**

**Bag Limit: 5 Bulls**

**Nonresident season Aug 1 – Sept 15**

**Bag Limit: 1 Bull**

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

**Decline in Central Arctic Caribou Herd**

**Increasing Nonresident Participation**

**Crowding Issues Along Rivers**

The 2025 photocensus estimate of Central Arctic Herd (CAH) caribou showed a population of 26,600 animals, a decline of 8,000 caribou from the previous estimate in 2022. The current population estimate is below the Intensive Management (IM) population objective of 28,000 – 32,000 animals.

The chart below from ADFG shows a significant increase in the number of nonresident hunters hunting the Central Arctic caribou herd in Unit 26B.

| Year | Number of hunters |           |
|------|-------------------|-----------|
|      | Nonresidents      | Residents |
| 2010 | 373               | 1424      |
| 2011 | 278               | 1361      |
| 2012 | 310               | 1244      |
| 2013 | 461               | 1087      |
| 2014 | 465               | 1029      |
| 2015 | 472               | 842       |
| 2016 | 351               | 794       |
| 2017 | 266               | 358       |
| 2018 | 198               | 310       |
| 2019 | 256               | 329       |
| 2020 | 209               | 501       |
| 2021 | 457               | 479       |
| 2022 | 570               | 580       |
| 2023 | 753               | 799       |
| 2024 | 1034              | 1127      |
| 2025 | 1001              |           |

Along with increasing nonresident hunters, there has been an increase in the number of transporters catering to nonresident hunters, with airboat transporters flooding the Ivishak and other rivers with hunters, resulting in crowding and conflicts and numerous complaints.

Residents have a much longer season (July 1 – April 30) than nonresidents and are currently allowed to take five caribou, one of which may be a cow. In 2024 (data not available for 2025 yet) 228 cows were taken from the declining CAH by residents.

Nonresidents have an Aug 1 – Sept 15 season and a 2-bull bag limit. As the chart below shows, nonresidents harvested 50% of the CAH in 2024

| residency                     | Number of caribou taken/hunter during 2024 |     |     |    |   |    |               |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|---|----|---------------|
|                               | 0                                          | 1   | 2   | 3  | 4 | 5  | total caribou |
| Nonresident hunters           | 497                                        | 501 | 36  |    |   |    |               |
| caribou taken by nonresidents |                                            | 501 | 72  |    |   |    | 573           |
| resident hunters              | 716                                        | 290 | 92  | 22 | 2 | 5  |               |
| caribou taken by residents    |                                            | 290 | 184 | 66 | 8 | 25 | 573           |

The CAH is important for feeding Alaskans and is below the IM population objective. There should be no cow harvests allowed until the herd increases. The nonresident bag limit should be reduced.

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

Thanks to Department staff for the charts and data!

**PROPOSED BY:** Resident Hunters of Alaska

(OI-F26-091)

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