

Proposal 178

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

Modify the nonresident caribou hunting in GMU 26B to a draw tag system with three separate hunts as follows:

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

N- 26B- Draw Tag- Split into 3 Separate tags Aug 1- Aug 15 maximum 20

Aug 16- Aug 31 Maximum 20

Sept 1- Sept 15 Maximum 20

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

There are two issues with 26B. One is the declining herd numbers between the porcupine herd and Central arctic herd. (adfg photocensus information below) The second is an access issue with Nonresidents coming up in non-regulated amounts. This puts additional strain on the caribou herd and pushes the herd away from the DHCMA road access. This would also allow increased revenue for the department with draw hunt applications.

ADFG photocensus:

(Fairbanks) A photocensus of the Porcupine caribou herd (PCH) was completed on July 4, 2025, and resulted in a population estimate of 143,000 caribou. The following day, a photocensus of the Central Arctic caribou herd (CAH) was completed and resulted in a population estimate of 26,600 caribou.

Both herds have declined since their previous photocensus estimates and the declines were expected based on annual monitoring of adult survival, parturition (pregnancy) rates, and calf survival.

Porcupine caribou herd summary The 2025 PCH photocensus estimate of 143,000 caribou is lower than the previous photocensus in 2017. The 2017 photocensus estimate was 218,000 caribou, which was the most caribou ever estimated in this herd since monitoring began in the 1970s. This herd has experienced periods of growth and decline since photocensus efforts began. In 1979, the herd was around 106,000 caribou, grew to 178,000 in 1989, declined to 123,000 in 2001, and then increased to 218,000 in 2017. This current period of decline is steeper than was observed during the decline in the 1990s. A reduction in adult survival, calf survival, and other population metrics since 2017 supports the photocensus results that the herd is in a decline. Future photocensus population estimates and monitoring of the herd will continue to document the nature and duration of this decline. Central Arctic herd summary The 2025 CAH photocensus estimate of 26,600 is lower than the previous photocensus in 2022 which estimated 34,600 caribou. Previously, the CAH experienced a population peak in 2010 at 68,400 caribou and then declined to 22,600 in 2016. Similar to the PCH, reduced adult survival, calf survival, and parturition rates

support the photocensus results indicating that the CAH is no longer growing and has declined since 2022.

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

I developed this on my own based on field observations and ADFG reporting.

PROPOSED BY: Brian Watkins

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