

Proposal 56

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

Allow the take of caribou from a motor driven boat in GMU 18 as follows:

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

Allow the take of caribou from a motor driven boat in GMU 18.

5 AAC 92.080. Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.

The following methods of take are prohibited:

(4) unless otherwise provided in this chapter, from a motor-driven boat or a motorized land vehicle, unless the motor has been completely shut off and the progress from the motor's power has ceased, except that a

(A) motor-driven boat may be used as follows:

(i) *in Units 23 and 26 to take caribou;*

(ii) *notwithstanding any other provision in this section, in Unit 22 to position hunters to select individual wolves for harvest;*

(iii) *under authority of a permit issued by the department;*

(iv) IN UNIT 18 TO TAKE CARIBOU (AND MOOSE*)

Moose is being addressed through a separate proposal
Moose is being addressed through a separate proposal

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

The take of caribou from a motor driven boat under power is a common and customary practice throughout Unit 18. The requirement to shut off a boat's motor before shooting is often impractical and unsafe. Currently, State and Federal regulations differ in allowing the take of caribou from a motor driven boat in Unit 18. This creates regulatory complexity for hunters and puts local people at risk of breaking the law, getting citations, and personal injury when carrying out traditional hunting practices.

Safety concerns are the primary reason for seeking this regulatory change. Water and weather conditions throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (YKD) are highly variable and can change rapidly when out hunting. Fall storms are increasing in severity, and these storm surges create higher than normal water and faster currents, adding to the concerns. Having full control of the boat is of utmost importance for safety. If a driver has to shut off the motor, they can no longer effectively navigate obstacles that may pop up such as rocks, sweepers, or sandbars, nor can they keep the boat positioned appropriately in the current, which can often be strong.

As mentioned, hunting from a boat under power is a longstanding practice in Unit 18, similar to how residents of Units 23 and 26 harvest caribou in this manner and have been able to legally do so for decades. Customary and traditional methods and means, such as hunting from a motor driven boat, are characterized by efficiency and economy of effort. Starting and stopping a boat motor is not efficient, requires unnecessary effort, and can put hunters at a safety risk.

YKD residents grow up riding in and hunting from boats from a young age. To ensure safety when hunting from a boat, it is customary to select a designated shooter and for them to be positioned in the bow of the boat facing away from any other passengers and toward the shore. When an animal is spotted, the boat driver slows down and positions the boat for a safe and effective shot by the shooter. The requirement to shut off the boat's motor prevents this safe practice from occurring.

Adoption of this proposal would help make traditional hunting methods legal and reduce regulatory complexity. Hunting parties would still have the choice to shut off their boat motor if they deemed it to be safer in their given conditions. As this method of hunting is already practiced, there is no expected increase in hunting accidents. Rather, it would reduce the likelihood of accidents due to the safety concerns with shutting off boat motors as previously stated.

Statewide Federal regulations do not require a boat's motor to be shut-off to take an animal, but do require forward momentum from the boat's motor to have ceased unless otherwise allowed in Unit specific regulations. The take of caribou from a boat moving under power has been legal in Unit 18 under Federal subsistence regulations since 2000.

The YKDRAC is submitting two proposals to the Alaska Board of Game this cycle seeking to align State regulations with Federal ones and allow the take of caribou and moose from a boat moving under power and legalize this longstanding practice.

Legalizing this method of take will not lead to increased harvest of caribou. There is currently no open season for caribou in Unit 18 and the YKDRAC fully supports continued conservation and rebuilding of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.

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

The YKDRAC is comprised of 13 representatives from across the YKD region in Unit 18, many who also serve on their local Fish and Game Advisory Committees. The issue of take of moose and caribou from a boat moving under power was discussed at two separate YKDRAC public meetings and resulted in development of two BOG proposals seeking to legalize this common way of hunting.

PROPOSED BY: Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (OI-F26-114)
