

Proposal 8

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

Reduce the bag limit for taking caribou in Units 22, 23, and southwest portion of 26A to four caribou per year per hunter, only one of which can be a cow as follows:

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

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RESIDENT HUNTERS: Four caribou [FIFTEEN CARIBOU] total, only one of which may be a cow.

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

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH) was once the largest caribou herd in Alaska, but over the past two decades it has declined by nearly 70 percent. Data from Alaska Fish & Game biologists document a continual downward trend, with the July 2025 photo census estimating the herd at 121,000 caribou, an approximately 20 percent decline from 2023. Without harvest restriction management actions, continual population decline will remain a significant issue.

At its annual meeting, the WACH Working Group assigned the management level “Critical, Declining” to the herd based on a population less than 130,000 and adult cow survival rate less than 80%. This status indicates that management and harvest actions are necessary to allow for the herd populations to recover.

The WACH Working Group identifies the need to address the current herd decline by limiting the harvest of both bulls and cows for herd stabilization and recovery. In the units identified above, the current bag limit is set at 15 caribou total during the open periods for bulls and cows. The WACH Working Group proposes changing regulations to 4 caribou per person per year, with no more than one cow allowed.

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

This proposal was developed by the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group. The Working Group consists of Alaska Native subsistence users from communities within the range of the herd, other Alaskan hunters, guides, transporters, conservationists, and reindeer herders. Since its formation in 1997, the Working Group has submitted numerous advisory recommendations to government agencies, regulatory boards, and other bodies to support decisions that will ensure the long-term conservation of the WACH.

PROPOSED BY: Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (OI-F26-118)
