

**ACR 19** – Modify the hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou in Unit 22.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Charles Lean

**MEETING ACR SUBMITTED FOR:** 2016 Statewide Regulations Meeting

**CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.**

5 AAC 85.025 (17) Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.**

1. Regulations enacted in 2015 encourage the harvest of breeding female caribou in a time of declining population levels.
2. The unanticipated result of the separation of the bull and cow season has resulted in numerous violations by hunters who mistakenly shot the wrong sex caribou. Some animals were wasted when the hunter realized their mistake and did not want to take responsibility.
3. The current harvest is estimated using community survey methods which are believed to yield poorer quality harvest estimates.

**WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?** We would like to see each resident hunter issued 20 either-sex caribou harvest tags, with a daily limit of five caribou. We would like to see the resident hunting seasons in GMU 22 revert to the 2014 standard as well. In other words, the resident season would read:

22A north of the Golsovia	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	July 1 to June 30
22A remainder	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22B	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	July 1 to June 30
22B remainder	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	July 1 to June 30
22C	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22D Pilgrim River drainage	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	Oct. 1 to April 30
22 D Kuzitrin River (excluding Pilgrim and the Agiapuk River drainages.)	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	July 1 to June 30
22D remainder	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22E east of a including the Sanaguich River drainage.	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	July 1 to June 30
22E remainder	5 Caribou/day, calves may not be taken	May be announced

The non-resident season would read

22A north of the Golsovia	One bull, calves may not be taken	Aug 1 to Sept 30
22A remainder	One bull, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22B	One bull, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22B remainder	One bull, calves may not be taken	Aug 1 to Sept 30
22C	One bull, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22D Pilgrim River drainage	One bull, calves may not be taken	May be announced
22D Kuzitrin River (excluding Pilgrim and the Agiapuk River drainages.)	One bull, calves may not be taken	Aug 1 to Sept 30
22D Remainder	One bull, calves may not be taken	May be announced

22E east of a including the Sanaguich River drainage.	One bull, calves may not be taken	Aug 1 to Sept 30
22E remainder	One bull, calves may not be taken	May be announced

The board will note there are several subunits with discretionary seasons. The reindeer herds in these areas present special management issues which require coordination with wildlife managers and reindeer owners. On years when the caribou do not migrate to the subunits there is no action needed.

This would address the confusion and waste issue and the concerns mentioned in proposal 85 on page 71 of the proposal book.

**STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.**

**a) for a conservation purpose or reason:** The current regulation encourages the GMU hunters with the highest cow harvest in the WACH range to take more. The intent of the directed cow season was intended to prevent the harvest of rutty bulls and to maintain a 40 bull: 100 cow ratio. Certainly, in October the quality of bull meat suffers, but as time progresses younger animals and even the mature bulls lose the hormones and fatten. GMU 22 hunters are generally aware of this.

The 40:100 ratio is the highest bull:cow ratio in state caribou management. 30:100 is more common. Local hunters question the directed hunt on breeding cows on conservation grounds. The current status of the population of the WACH is approaching the “preservative range” in the management matrix. In keeping with that possibility, these regulation changes are expected to result in about a 35% cow harvest and a 7% decline in overall GMU 22 harvest. Furthermore, harvest data is anticipated to improve because GMU 22 hunters have shown a willingness to participate in other hunting and fishing permit systems.

**b) to correct an error in regulation:** N/A

**c) to correct an effect on a hunt that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:** The WACH migrated to the central Seward Peninsula in October and were within the range of accessibility for the communities of the southern Seward Peninsula by November. This herd is mobile and unpredictable, so a number of hunters took advantage of this accessibility. Many found it difficult to distinguish the young males from cows. A number of citations were issued and there were abandoned carcasses. To be positive of a caribou’s gender a rear view is best, unfortunately this more often than not means the herd is in stampede mode. Placing a humane shot is difficult in that situation. The hunters are in the position of forgoing harvest or spray and pray. The current rules result in crippling loss and abandonment, not an efficient use of the resource.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?** The breeding females of the WACH will suffer increased mortality due to poorly thought out regulation, encouragement of wasteful hunting practices, and unnecessarily hamstrung harvest monitoring.

**STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.** This proposal would reduce the harvest by GMU 22 hunters to the harvest rate recommended by ADF&G managers for the WACH over its entire range. It reduces waste and helps to preserve the breeding stock. A few hunters who take more than 20 caribou will be impacted for a small portion of their take.

**IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.** N/A

**STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.** I am the community of Nome's representative on the WACHWG and I am the chair of the NNSAC. I am a lifelong Alaskan and a 40+ year resident of Western Alaska, mostly Nome. And I am a caribou hunter.

**STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING.** Proposal 85 at this meeting speaks to the harvest ticket requirements which are part of this ACR. Otherwise, this ACR speaks to conservation aspects not considered in any other proposal to be heard at this meeting. The seasons for the subunits with reindeer and the 5 caribou/day limit in existing regulation are well thought out and proven regulations that address the particular needs of GMU 22. The annual limit of 20 caribou is a response to the dependence of local households on this still abundant food resource. Only a minority of hunters take that many animals, but without those productive hunters many households would be without this important food source. University and ADF&G staff provided this information at the WACHWG meeting in mid-December.