



November 9, 2018

An Agenda Change Request (ACR 5) has been submitted to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 85.025(a)(8) Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou in Unit 13. The proponent is asking the board to allocate some amount of harvestable surplus of Nelchina caribou to winter hunters annually.

With respect to the board’s Agenda Change Request (ACR) acceptance criteria (5 AAC 92.005):

- A. The department is unaware of any error in regulation.
- B. The department is unaware of any effects of regulations that were unforeseen when the regulation was adopted.
- C. The department does not believe that there is a biological concern or a threat to meeting objectives for this population.
- D. The department is unaware of any unforeseen or unexpected events that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses as defined in AS 16.05.258(f).
- E. The department is unaware of any unexpected resource situations that would cause a biologically allowable resource harvest to be precluded by delayed regulatory action. The department currently manages caribou in Unit 13 in compliance with the sustained yield principle.

In February 2018 the Alaska Board of Game established the following hunt structure for state harvest of Nelchina caribou in Unit 13 (seasons may be changed by Emergency Order):

Bag Limit (Sex to be announced annually)	Resident Open Season	Nonresident Open Season	
1 caribou per household every regulatory year by Community subsistence permit (CC001)	Aug. 10–Sept. 20 Oct. 21–Mar. 31 (subsistence hunt)	No open season	Maximum of 400 caribou may be harvested every regulatory year under community subsistence permits
1 caribou per household every regulatory year by Tier I subsistence permit (RC561)	Aug. 10–Aug. 31 Oct. 21–Mar. 31 (subsistence hunt)	No open season	
1 caribou per household	Sept. 1–Sept. 20	No open season	

every regulatory year by Tier I subsistence permit (RC562)	Oct. 21–Mar. 31 (subsistence hunt)		
1 caribou every regulatory year by draw permit (DC485)	Aug. 20–Sept. 20 Oct. 21–Mar. 31	Aug. 20–Sept. 20*	*Nonresident draw hunt will only be advertised when the herd is within or above population objectives. Up to 50 permits may be issued when the herd is within objectives, and up to 200 permits may be issued when the herd is above objectives.
1 caribou every regulatory year by youth draw permit (YC495)	Aug. 1–Aug. 5	No open season	Up to 200 permits may be issued when harvestable surplus is predicted to be above 1,000 caribou.

There is a positive customary and traditional use finding for caribou in Units 12 and 13 (Nelchina herd) and an amount reasonably necessary of 600–1,000 caribou.

In many years, the Nelchina caribou herd migrates out of Unit 13 to access wintering grounds in Units 11, 12, 20, or Canada. Timing of this migration varies annually and cannot be predicted, but generally occurs sometime between late August and early November. After the majority of the herd migrates out of Unit 13, there remains little or no harvest opportunity for Unit 13 caribou hunters for the remainder of that season. Unit 13 hunting opportunity for Nelchina caribou is managed to provide maximum harvest opportunity during the fall season, before the herd leaves the unit. If harvestable surplus remains after the close of the fall seasons, the remainder is made available through winter quotas. Should a portion of the harvestable surplus be reserved for the winter hunt in any given year, it is possible that the herd will leave Unit 13 before the winter season opens. No winter caribou seasons were open to Unit 13 state hunters during RY72-80, RY86, RY90, RY98-99, RY03-04, RY07-08, or RY13. Winter seasons for state subsistence hunters were closed early by Emergency Order in RY01-02, RY06, and RY10-11. Prior to RY11, winter caribou harvest opportunity was available for state draw hunters in Unit 13 during only one winter season (RY95).

The next regularly scheduled board meeting for Unit 13 is during winter/spring of 2020/2021. If the board accepts this ACR, the department recommends the proposal come before the board at its March 2019 meeting in Anchorage because it is easier for the impacted residents and hunters to get to Anchorage than Petersburg, thus allowing for more public input.

Sincerely,



Bruce Dale
Director

Division of Wildlife Conservation