

PROPOSAL 21

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

Reduce the bag limit for caribou in Unit 23 as follows:

Proposal: Limit total harvest per hunter to 5 caribou a day, 25 caribou total annually, this to include no more than 5 females annually. (Also include in this change to regulations provisions and necessary forms for proxy hunting to be allowable.)

Potential good results may be the exact same total number of animals harvested in our region, with increased respect and value placed on each animal. Or, it may also lower the total number of animals harvested and/or wounded or wasted—either of which is still an improvement for ADF&G, local hunters, and all hunters of this herd, and most importantly the herd itself.

Potential negative results: I see none.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the Board of Game (board) to consider reducing the bag limit on caribou in Unit 23 AND to separately reduce the total limit on female caribou each hunter is allowed to harvest annually.

This reduction is in no way a request or attempt to limit any hunters' options for harvesting the number of animals they might need. This request is only to improve things for the herd, and improve things for we hunters of caribou.

Reasons for change: Presently, very liberal bag limits allow hunters in Unit 23 to harvest five caribou per day, 365 days a year, including hundreds of female animals, many of which are pregnant and/or have calves with them and counting on them for survival.

This is a total allowable harvest per hunter of 1,825 caribou per year. While it's likely no one of us here are filling his or her limit, this excessive bag limit is not useful. It's not advantageous to local subsistence hunters who make use of the Western Arctic caribou herd for important traditional source of subsistence caribou and is detrimental to the herd and to the herd's long-term survivability in many ways.

These include: The reality of having a total allowable harvest that exceeds the entire number of animals in the herd hurts the credibility of us all: it makes ADF&G appear to be practicing a hands-off approach to managing, or weak, or just plain confused and inept as resource managers.

This harvest limit--viewed from outside of our region, in places such as Anchorage, Fairbanks, Washington, DC and the world—appears unbelievable, insane, as if it must be a typo of some sort, OR, if believed, makes local subsistence hunters potentially appear wasteful, greedy or demanding to too much. This problem is exacerbated when “Outside” hunters are limited to one animal per year. (Or, as is the case on federal land in Unit 23, all persons living outside the Unit are limited to zero.)

Also, and more importantly, viewed from here, locally, this overly liberal harvest limit sends a strong clear message of “open season” for people to shoot all the caribou they want, whenever they want. This is detrimental to the resource and takes away from our feelings and actions of

responsibility, and in effect makes it appear that our actions don't affect caribou—this actually separates us from being part of the picture, part of the management issue. This sends the message that only outsiders and other forces affect this herd. The end result—however inadvertently—is this excessive bag limit takes we local hunters out of the management picture in this way. This is not a healthy thing.

In addition, being allowed to shoot this many caribou diminishes-or potentially diminishes--the value placed on each animal. This is not a regional response and has nothing to do with race or historical usage—it is simply a patently human response to excess. (Also, separate from just plain excess, as far as regulations, for example: if you or I, as a hunter, were told we legally could shoot 1,825 brown bear per year, what message would that convey? For me, that would say ADF&G feels there are too many bears and shooting any much is a “good” thing.)

Respect is an integral part of protecting this herd, and all herds, and by lowering the bag limit we increase--or potentially increase—respect on all sides. This is simply a good thing to do and need not in actuality limit any hunters' options to harvest the number of animals they individually need to provide for themselves, their family, or their village. This request is only designed to improve things for the herd AND for hunters of caribou.

As far as the hunting of female caribou in Unit 23, the board should look at reducing that number for all of the above reasons, and for the additional reason that the practice of shooting females here often takes place after the rut, in winter, on ice and snow, from motorized vehicles—very often at high speed, with small caliber semi-automatic rifles—and has a higher than normal detrimental effect on the herd, including: more wounded animals per animal harvested; more animals killed if the fetuses in pregnant females are taken into consideration; lower poundage harvested per animal due to more damage to meat on each individual animal (due to herd shooting), and lower poundage also due to females sampling being smaller per kill; and separation of calves from their mothers' also compounding damage to the herd.

PROPOSED BY: Seth Kantner

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