

## **Kotzebue Area Proposals – Unit 23**

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### **PROPOSAL 19**

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

Open a year-round, resident season for caribou bull harvest in Unit 23 as follows:

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

Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS: that portion north of and including the Singoalik River drainage:

5 caribou per day, by registration permit only, as follows:

up to 5 bulls per day; July 1 – **June 30** [OCT. 14 - FEB. 1] however, calves may not be taken;

up to 5 cows per day; Sept. 1 - Mar. 31, however, calves may not be taken

Remainder of Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

5 caribou per day, by registration permit only, as follows:

up to 5 bulls per day; July 1 – **June 30** [OCT. 14 - FEB. 1] however, calves may not be taken;

up to 5 cows per day; Sept. 1 - Mar. 31, however, calves may not be taken

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** During the recent downturn in the Western Arctic caribou herd population, the local advisory committees considered supporting a variety of different regulations for conservation purposes. One of these was to limit the bull season from the former year-round to an abbreviated season that closed from October 14 until February 1. The thought was that mature bulls were rutting during the first half of this period and then were in recovery mode during the second half. Given that local people generally avoided mature bulls during this time it was thought to have little impact on traditional harvesting activities, but still provide some conservation benefit. It was also the case that for decades these mature bulls were targeted and very much accessible for harvest during their annual southern migration in September, so this season would still allow ample opportunity for bull harvest opportunities. However, in the last couple of years, the migration has stalled out during September with the main body of caribou becoming “stranded” in the middle of the Baird Mountains where they remain inaccessible to hunters from the major rivers in Unit 23. By the time the caribou resume their migration the season for bulls has already closed, this has caused harvest pressure to shift to cows. If the bull season remains open year-round, many hunters would take young bulls during the currently closed period, because they do not get rutted and stink like the mature bulls, which would relieve some pressure on the cows. For the conservation of the herd it would be more desirable to take bulls than cows and even in those cases where a hunter may have a difficult time telling a young bull from a cow, both would be open for harvest, so there would be no compliance issue, which currently may happen from time to time. Notably the decline of the herd has stabilized and may in fact be on the road to increasing, this would only be helped by putting in place regulations that encourage the harvest of bulls when either sex is open to take.

**What will happen if this problem is not solved?** The fall harvest in Unit 23 is likely to be unnecessarily cow heavy in years like the last couple when mature bulls are hard to come by and

when the season closes for bulls when young bulls would be selected for harvest in lieu of cows by many.

**What solution do you prefer?** Year-round bull season.

**Does your proposal address improving the quality of the resource harvested or the products produced?** It creates an opportunity and incentive for the harvest of young bulls in lieu of cows, contributing to the long-term growth and conservation the Western Arctic caribou herd.

**Who is likely to benefit if your solution is adopted?** Those who want a stable and growing Western Arctic Caribou Herd and local people who may inadvertently take a young bull during the current cow only fall season.

**Who is likely to suffer if your solution is adopted?** None.

**List any other solutions you considered and why you rejected them.** None.

**PROPOSED BY:** Kotzebue Sound Fish & Game Advisory Committee (EG-F19-041)  
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**PROPOSAL 20**

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

Open a year-round, resident season for caribou bull harvest in Unit 23 as follows:

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

Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS: that portion north of and including the Singoalik River drainage:  
5 caribou per day, by registration permit only, as follows:  
up to 5 bulls per day; July 1 - **June 30** [OCT. 14 - FEB. 1] however, calves may not be taken;  
up to 5 cows per day; July 15 – April 30, however calves may not be taken.

Remainder of Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

5 caribou per day, by registration permit only, as follows:  
up to 5 bulls per day; July 1 – **June 30** [OCT.14 - FEB.1] however, calves may not be taken;  
up to 5 cows per day; Sept. 1 - Mar. 31, however calves may not be taken.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** At its meeting on December 13, 2018, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (WACHWG) voted unanimously to support a proposal by the Kotzebue Advisory Committee (AC) to remove the seasonal closure on caribou bull harvest in Unit 23.

The following responses to questions were provided by the Kotzebue AC regarding this proposal:

**What is the problem you would like the Board to address?** “During the recent downturn in the Western Arctic caribou herd population, the local ACs considered supporting a variety of different regulations for conservation purposes. One of these ways was to limit the bull season from the former year-round to an abbreviated season that closed from October 14 until February 1. The thought was that mature bulls were rutting during the first half of this period and then were in recovery mode during the second half. Given that local people generally avoided mature bulls during this time it was thought to have little impact on traditional harvesting activities, but still provide some conservation benefit. It was also the case that for decades these mature bulls were targeted and very much accessible for harvest during their annual southern migration in September, so this season would still allow ample opportunity for bull harvest opportunities. However, in the last couple of years, the migration has stalled out during September with the main body of caribou becoming “stranded” in the middle of the Baird Mountains where they remain inaccessible to hunters from the major rivers in Unit 23. By the time the caribou resume their migration the season for bulls has already closed, this has caused harvest pressure to shift to cows. If the bull season remains open year-round, many hunters would take young bulls during the currently closed period, because they do not get rutted and stink like the mature bulls, which would relieve some pressure on the cows. For the conservation of the herd it would be more desirable to take bulls than cows and even in those cases where a hunter may have a difficult time telling a young bull from a cow, both would be open for harvest, so there would be no compliance issue, which currently may happen from time to time. Notably the decline of the herd has stabilized and may in fact be on the road to increasing, this would only be helped by putting in place regulations that encourage the harvest of bulls when either sex is open to take.”

**What will happen if this problem is not solved?** “The fall harvest in Unit 23 is likely to be unnecessarily cow heavy in years like the last couple when mature bulls are hard to come by and when the season closes for bulls, when young bulls would be selected for harvest in lieu of cows by many.”

**What solution do you prefer?** “Year-round bull season.”

**Does your proposal address improving the quality of the resource harvested or the products produced?** “It creates an opportunity and incentive for the harvest of young bulls in lieu of cows, contributing to the long-term growth and conservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.”

**Who is likely to benefit if your solution is adopted?** “Those who want a stable and growing Western Arctic Caribou Herd and local people who may inadvertently take a young bull during the current cow only fall season.”

**Who is likely to suffer if your solution is adopted?** “None.”

**List any other solutions you considered and why you rejected them.** “None.”

**PROPOSED BY:** Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (EG-F19-013)  
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## **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 (EG-F19-113)  
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**PROPOSAL 22**

**5 AAC 85.025 Hunting Seasons and bag limits for caribou.**

Extend the season for taking cow caribou in Unit 23 Remainder as follows:

Extend the cow caribou hunting season in Unit 23 Remainder as follows:

September 1 through **April 15** [MAR. 31]

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** We have been and continue to experience climate change as all fish and wildlife are migrating earlier than normal and staying later than usual. For this reason, we request that the cow season in Unit 23 Remainder be extended to April 15 from March 31.

**PROPOSED BY:** Northern Seward Peninsula Fish & Game Advisory Committee (EG-F19-073)  
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**PROPOSAL 23**

**5 AAC 92.080(4)(B). Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.**

Restrict the use of snowmachines for taking caribou in Unit 23 as follows:

Change regulations to read similar to those in Unit 17:

A snowmobile may be used to assist in the taking of a caribou and caribou may be shot from a stationary snowmobile. “Assist in taking of a caribou” means a snowmobile may be used to approach within 200 yards of a caribou or caribou herd at speeds under 15 mph, in a manner that does not involve repeated approaches or that causes a caribou to flee. A snowmobile may not be used to contact an animal or to pursue fleeing caribou.

Results: This will be a change here, a needed one, and will change hunting practices in a good way. Fewer animals will be wounded, chased, and less meat damaged by herd-shooting and poor hits, and people will have increased self-respect. The end result will not be less caribou harvested, only less caribou wounded and wasted.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** I would like the board to address the practice of chasing animals with snowmobiles, and change regulations to make high-speed chasing of animals unlawful.

The practice of chasing caribou with snowmobiles, over the course of the last 50 years in Unit 23, has grown to be common, normal, and a standard hunting practice when snow is on the ground. In that time, the last half century, snowmobiles have “evolved” to be in all practical purposes, personal rocket ships of the tundra and ice; meanwhile other technological hunting aides including clothing, GPS, Cell phones, semi-automatic rifles, etc., have also changed rapidly. Caribou have not had such advantageous changes—basically they are the same animals we hunted 50 years and more ago.

The practice of chasing caribou—with these changes in our equipment, and without laws to protect the animals from these advances in technology—is detrimental to the herd, and, potentially, to our respect for individual animals, and to our own self-respect. Allowing all out high-speed chasing of groups of caribou is simply not a good thing, physically or mentally--for caribou or for us. When I was younger, it was known as unlawful to chase caribou. People did it, but less often than now, and with concern for the legal consequences. In the past 25 years we have moved in the opposite direction--making this practice basically legal with the present regulation allowing “positioning” of animals, but not defining what “positioning” means.

Each year here more and more local people say chasing is not good, especially when it separates calves from their mothers, which we’ve seen a lot of and has been posted on Facebook and made public knowledge in other ways. We here in this region (residents of Unit 23) know it’s not a good thing. Also, many people here worry that subsistence and subsistence hunting potentially will be damaged by this practice, especially as potential future public awareness of this practice increases.

**PROPOSED BY:** Seth Kantner

(EG-F19-112)

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## **PROPOSAL 24**

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

Remove the restriction on caribou calf harvest in Unit 23 as follows:

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

Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS, that portion north of and including the Singoalik River drainage: 5 caribou per day, by registration permit only, as follows: up to 5 bulls per day; Oct. 14 – Feb 1, [HOWEVER CALVES MAY NOT BE TAKEN]; up to 5 cows per day; Sept. 1 – Mar. 31, [HOWEVER CALVES MAY NOT BE TAKEN].

Remainder of Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

5 caribou per day, by registration permit only, as follows: up to 5 bulls per day; Oct. 14 - Feb. 1, [HOWEVER CALVES MAY NOT BE TAKEN]; up to 5 cows per day; Sept. 1 - Mar. 31, [HOWEVER CALVES MAY NOT BE TAKEN].

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Removing the calf harvest prohibition would allow for calves to be harvested in those circumstances where they have lost their mother and are wandering unattached to the herd or where their mother may have been accidentally harvested. Nobody is targeting calves, but there are rare circumstances where it may make sense to harvest a calf and there is no reason to prohibit this, since making rules based on the exception is not good policy making. Allowing the incidental take of abandoned or orphaned calves would become food for human consumption instead of feeding predators.

**What will happen if this problem is not solved?** Abandoned/orphaned calves will continue to become food for predators, instead of being able to be used for human consumption.

**What solution do you prefer?** Removal of calf harvest prohibition.

**Does your proposal address improving the quality of the resource harvested or the products produced?** It allows for abandoned calves to be utilized for human food instead of feeding predators.

**Who is likely to benefit if your solution is adopted?** Those who come across abandoned calves and would otherwise have to leave them for the predators.

**Who is likely to suffer if your solution is adopted?** None.

**List any other solutions you considered and why you rejected them.** None.

**PROPOSAL 25**

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

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Unit 23

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The following responses to questions were provided by the Kotzebue AC regarding this proposal:

**What is the problem you would like the Board to address?** “Removing the calf harvest prohibition would allow for calves to be harvested in those circumstances where they have lost their mothers and are wandering unattached to the herd or where their mother may have been accidentally harvested. Nobody is targeting calves, but there are rare circumstances where it may make sense to harvest a calf and there is no reason to prohibit this, since making rules based on the exception is not good policy making.”

**What will happen if this problem is not solved?** “Abandoned/orphaned calves will continue to become food for predators, instead of being able to be used for human consumption.”

**What solution do you prefer?** “Removal of calf harvest prohibition.”

**Does your proposal address improving the quality of the resource harvested or the products produced?** “It allows for abandoned calves to be utilized for human food instead of feeding predators.”

**Who is likely to benefit if your solution is adopted?** “Those who come across abandoned calves and would otherwise have to leave them for the predators.”

**Who is likely to suffer if your solution is adopted? “None.”**

**List any other solutions you considered and why you rejected them. “None.”**

**PROPOSED BY:** Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (EG-F19-014)  
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