

Proposal 20

# PROPOSAL 20

## Caribou/Unit 23

### Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23

**Proposed by**  
Western Arctic Herd Working Group – *(Identical to proposal 19)*

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- No Action

1

1

Proposal 20

# Current Regulations

## Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23

*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.*

Resident Hunting Season

**Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30**

Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31

2

2

Proposal 20

## Effects of the Proposal

Caribou/Unit 23

- Provide year-round bull caribou harvest opportunity
- Potentially reduce harvest pressure on cow caribou
- Eliminate violations associated with misidentification of young bull caribou

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3

Proposal 20

## Background

Caribou/Unit 23

- Prior to 2016 bull caribou harvest was open year-round
- Between 2003-2016 the WAH declined from nearly 500,000 to 201,000
- The Kotzebue Sound AC proposed a bull closure between Oct 14<sup>th</sup>-February 1<sup>st</sup>
- In 2016 the board adopted the proposal and the current bull closure was enacted

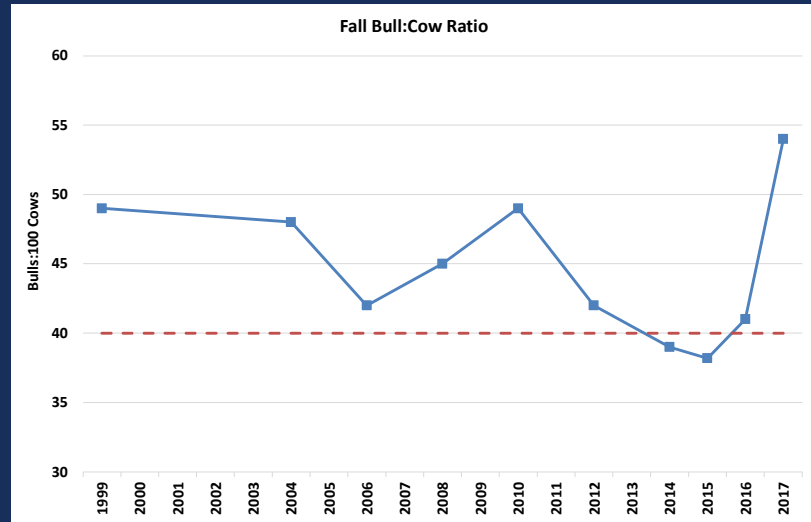
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Bull to cow ratios are above 40:100



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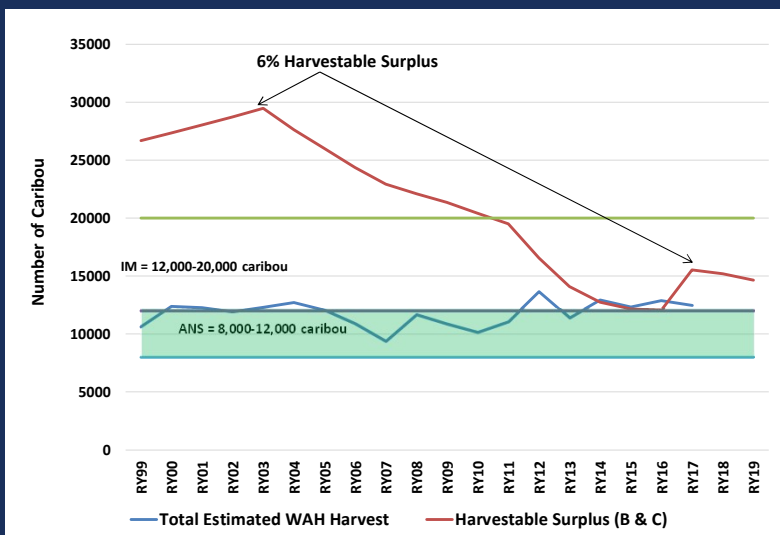
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# Department Position

## Caribou/Unit 23

### Neutral

- A portion of the harvest may shift from bulls to cows
- This may have a positive influence on population trajectory
- No biological concern



6

6

Proposal 20

**PROPOSAL 20** Caribou/Unit 23

**Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**  
Western Arctic Herd Working Group – *(Identical to proposal 19)*

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- No Action

7

7

Proposal 19

**PROPOSAL 19** Caribou/Unit 23

**Open a year-round, resident season for bull caribou harvest in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**  
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Support 15-0

8

8

Proposal 19

## Current Regulations

### Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23

*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.*

Resident Hunting Season

**Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30**

Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31

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9

Proposal 19

## Effects of the Proposal

### Caribou/Unit 23

- Provide year-round bull caribou harvest opportunity
- Potentially reduce harvest pressure on cow caribou
- Eliminate violations associated with misidentification of young bull caribou

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10

Proposal 19

## Background Caribou/Unit 23

- Prior to 2016 bull caribou harvest was open year-round
- Between 2003-2016 the WAH declined from nearly 500,000 to 201,000
- The Kotzebue Sound AC proposed a bull closure between Oct 14<sup>th</sup>-February 1<sup>st</sup>
- In 2016 the board adopted the proposal and the current bull closure was enacted

11

11

Proposal 19

## Background Caribou/Unit 23

- Bull to cow ratios are above 40:100

Year	Bulls:100 Cows
1999	49
2000	48.5
2001	48
2002	47.5
2003	47
2004	47
2005	45
2006	42
2007	43
2008	45
2009	47
2010	49
2011	45
2012	42
2013	40
2014	39
2015	38
2016	41
2017	54

12

12

Proposal 19

## Department Position

*Neutral*

- A portion of the harvest may shift from bulls to cows
- This may have a positive influence on population trajectory
- No biological concern

## Caribou/Unit 23

Year	Total Estimated WAH Harvest	Harvestable Surplus (B & C)
RY99	11,000	27,000
RY00	12,000	28,000
RY01	12,000	29,000
RY02	12,000	29,000
RY03	12,000	30,000
RY04	12,000	28,000
RY05	12,000	26,000
RY06	12,000	24,000
RY07	12,000	23,000
RY08	12,000	22,000
RY09	12,000	21,000
RY10	12,000	20,000
RY11	12,000	18,000
RY12	12,000	16,000
RY13	12,000	14,000
RY14	12,000	13,000
RY15	12,000	13,000
RY16	12,000	13,000
RY17	12,000	15,000
RY18	12,000	14,000
RY19	12,000	14,000

13

13

Proposal 19

# PROPOSAL 19

## Caribou/Unit 23

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

**Proposed by**  
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Support 15-0

14

14

Proposal 21

# PROPOSAL 21

Caribou/Unit 23

**Reduce the Unit 23 resident bag limit to 25 caribou annually, of which only 5 may be cows**

**Proposed by**  
Public

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Opposed 0-15

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Proposal 21

# Current Regulations

Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23

*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.*

Resident Hunting Season

*Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30*  
*Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31*

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16



Proposal 21

## Effects of the Proposal

### Caribou/Unit 23

- Harvest in general, and cow harvest specifically, may be reduced
- High harvesters and the households they provide for would be impacted

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Proposal 21

## Background

### Caribou/Unit 23

- Unit 23 bag limit has been 5 caribou per day for 30+ years
- Harvest up to 15 caribou per day has been allowed under federal regulations
- RY15 the board adopted an annual bag limit of 20 caribou in Unit 22
- Federal regulation was reduced to match state regulations of 5 caribou per day

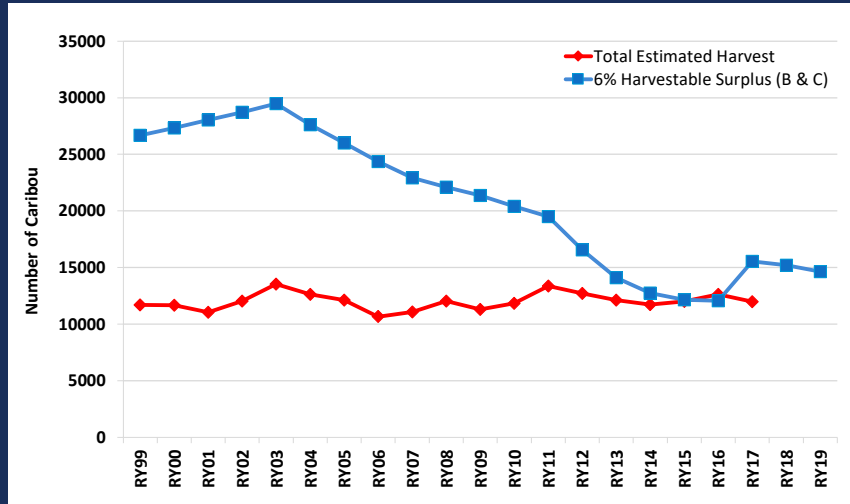
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- WAH harvest has been fairly static since the late '90s
- Insensitivity in the harvest model makes it difficult to understand when harvest exceeds surplus

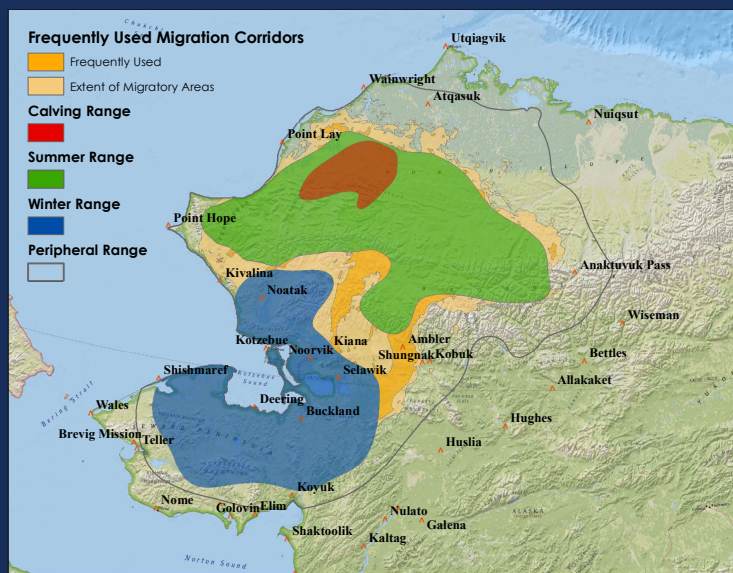


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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23



- Harvest is largely based on availability, which is limited by access
- Caribou movements can be highly variable
- Availability can be highly seasonal and brief for some communities

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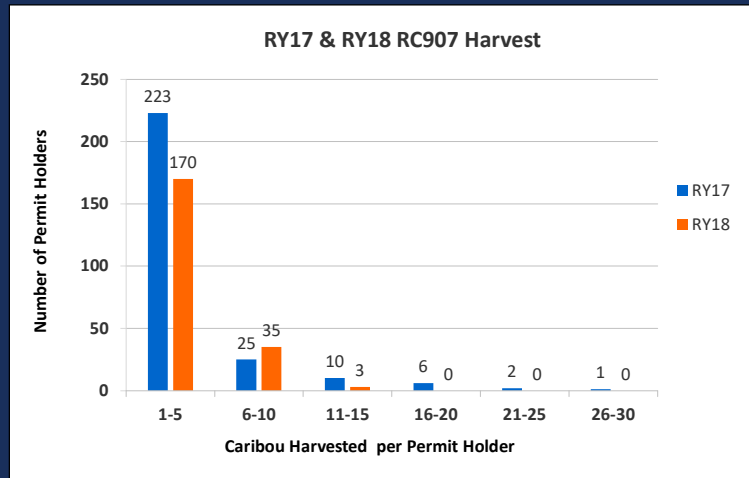
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

RC907 data from 2017-2018 suggest:

- A small portion of hunters harvest >25 caribou
- These high harvesters are often providing for others within the community

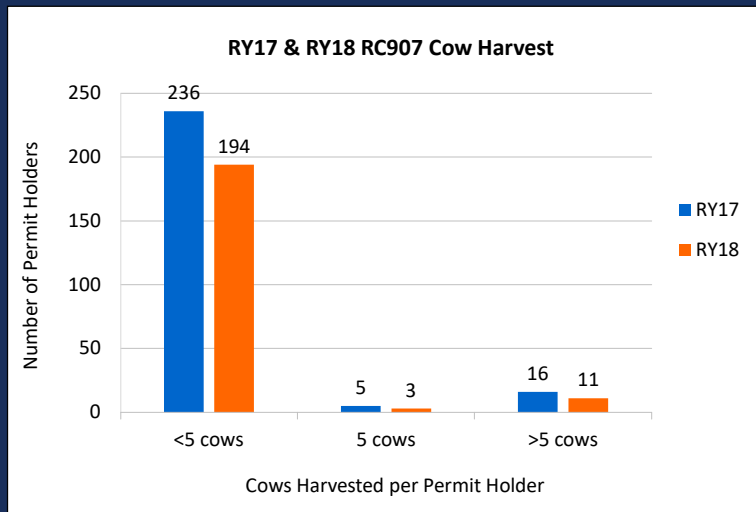


# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

RC907 data from 2017-2018 suggest:

- Only a small portion of permit holders, harvest >5 cows per year

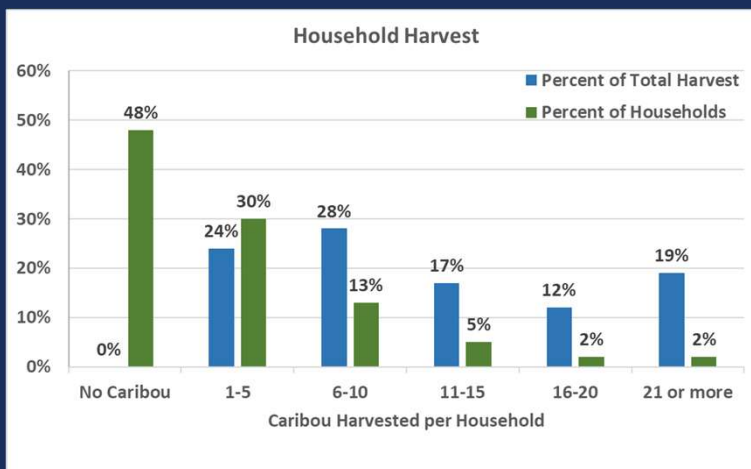


# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

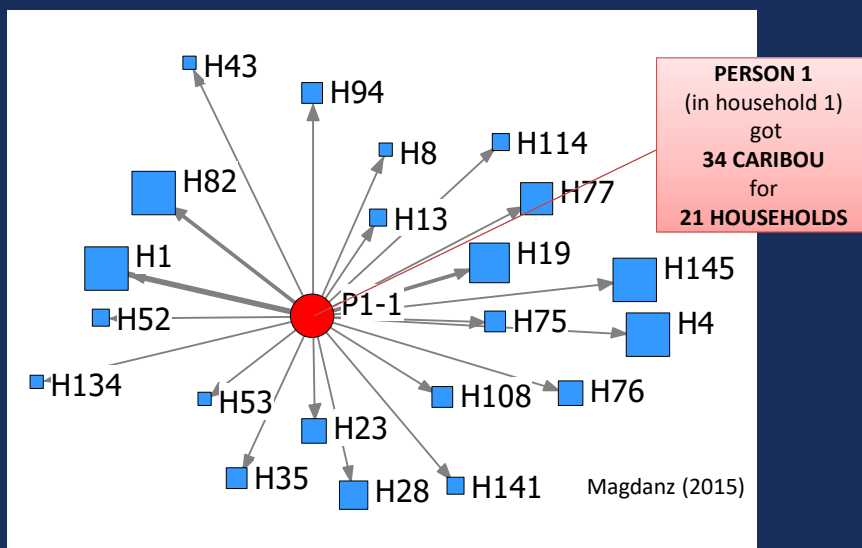
Household harvest data from 1998-2013 suggest:

- That even though few individuals harvest >25 caribou
- They account for a significant portion of the harvest



# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23



Proposal 21

## Department Position Caribou/Unit 23

*Neutral*

- Proposal is not likely to have a significant effect on overall resident harvest
- Accommodations may need to be made to allow high harvesters to continue to provide for communities
- Refined harvest information would provide a better understanding of harvest

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Proposal 21

## PROPOSAL 21 Caribou/Unit 23

**Reduce the Unit 23 resident bag limit to 25 caribou annually, of which only 5 may be cows**

**Proposed by**  
Public

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Opposed 0-15

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Proposal 22

## PROPOSAL 22

Caribou/Unit 23

**Extend the season for taking cow caribou in Unit 23  
Remainder an additional 15 days from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April  
15<sup>th</sup>**

**Proposed by**  
Northern Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Oppose 0-15

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27

Proposal 22

## Current Regulations

Caribou/Unit 23

Remainder of Unit 23

*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken.*

Resident Open Season

*Bulls: July 1 - Oct 14 & Feb 1 - Jun 30*

*Cows: Sept 1 - Mar 31*

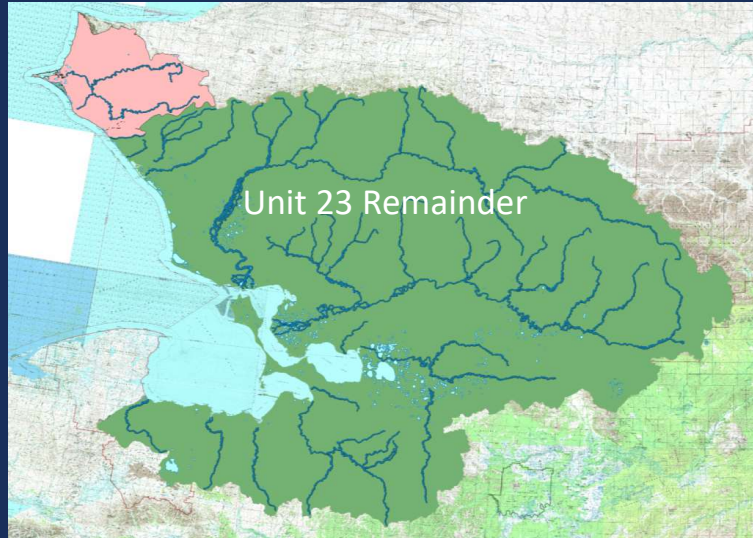
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28

# Current Regulations

Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23 (pink)  
Remainder (green)



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# Effects of Proposal

Caribou/Unit 23

- Some increase in the harvest of cows may occur
- Provide additional harvest opportunity
- Additional harvest of pregnant cows is likely

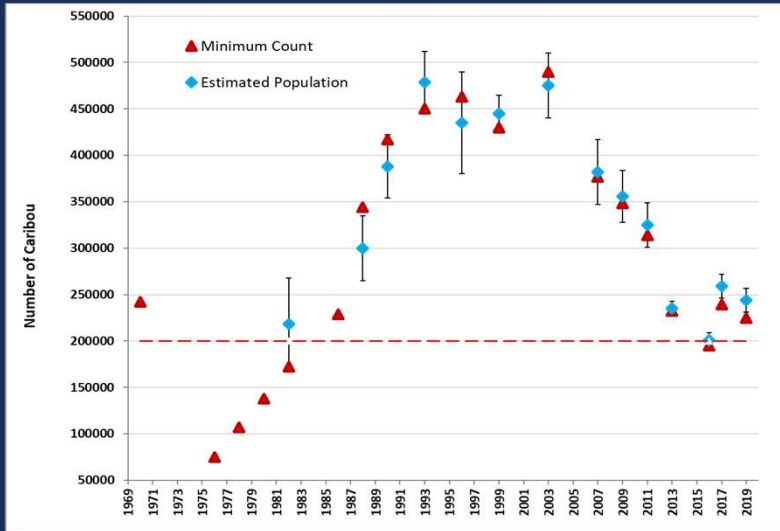
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- 2003-2016 the WAH population declined from nearly 500,000 to 201,000
- Cow season shortened from May 15 to Mar 31 (RY15)
- 2017 census 259,000
- 2019 census 244,000



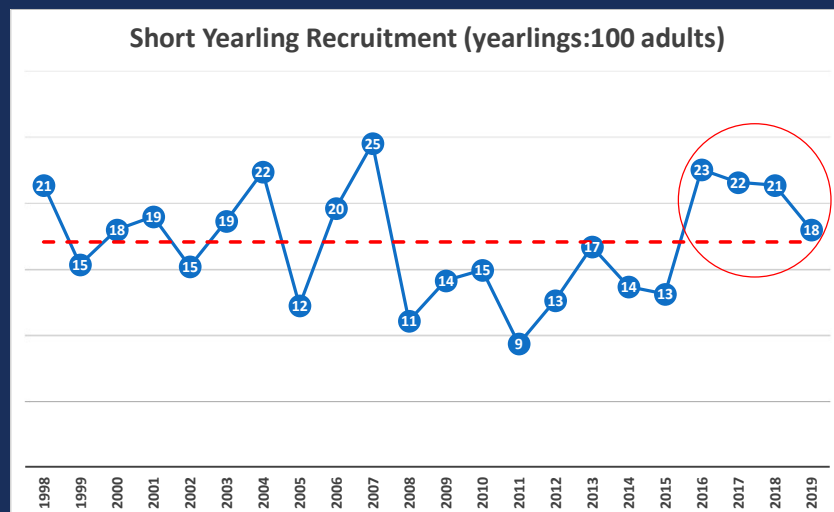
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Recruitment rates have been above average for the past 4 yrs.



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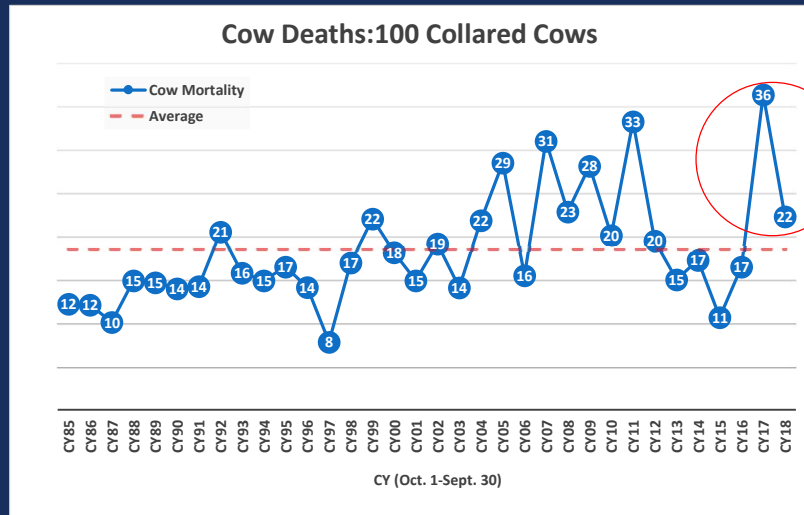
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Higher than average adult female mortality over the past 2 yrs.



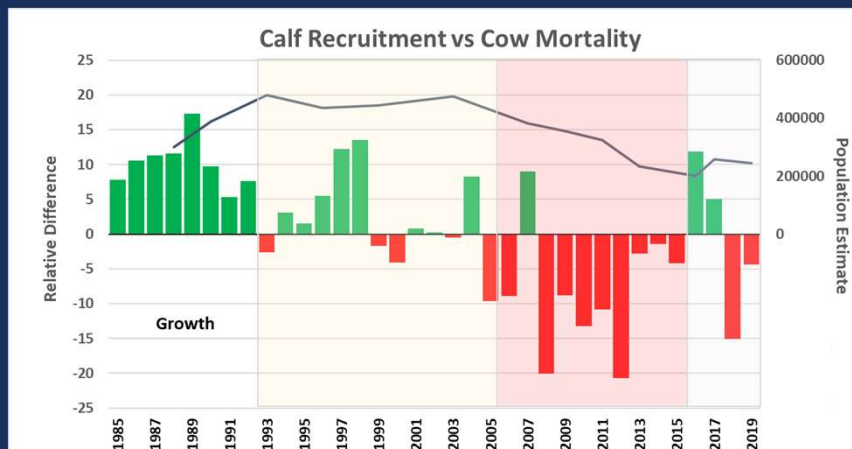
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- The combination of these trends may indicate relative stability in the population



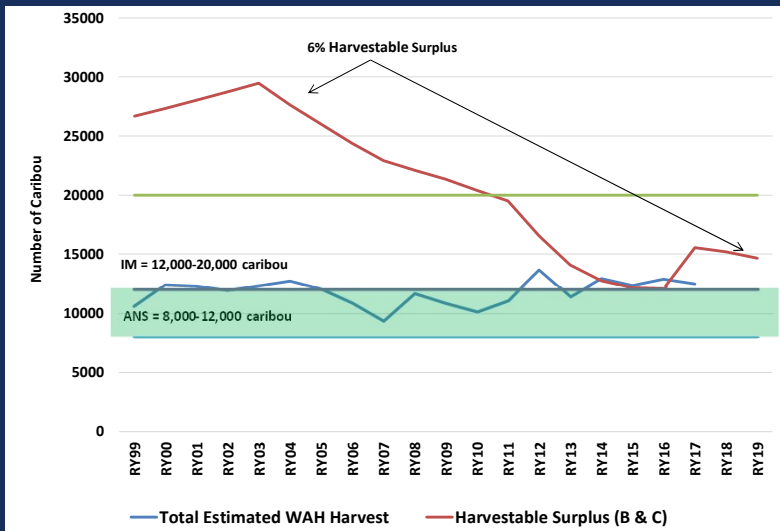
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Current harvest levels appear to be at or below harvestable surplus



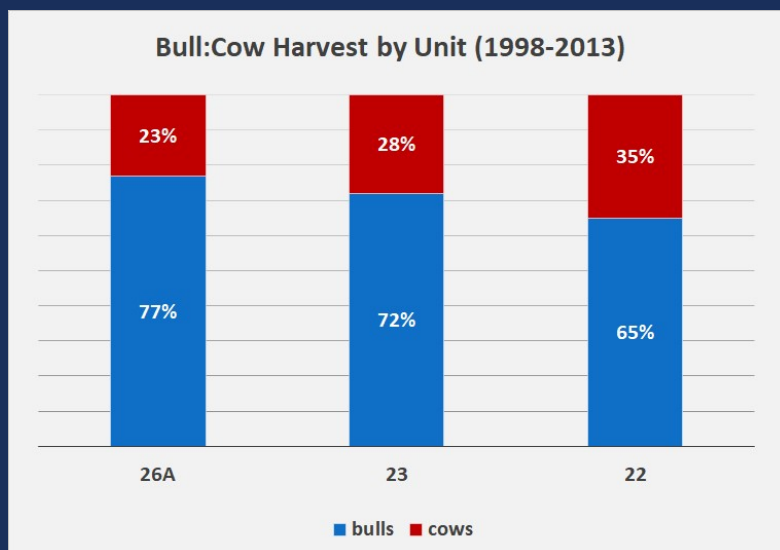
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Long-term bull cow harvest composition



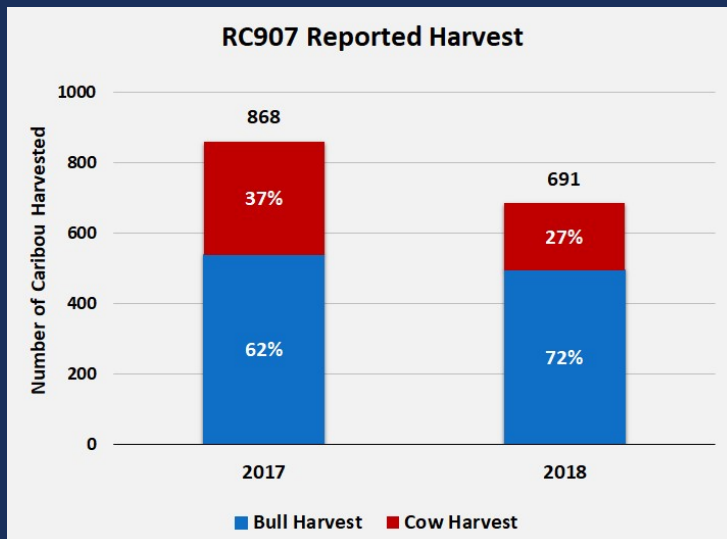
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Annual variation in harvest composition Unit 23/26A (RC907)



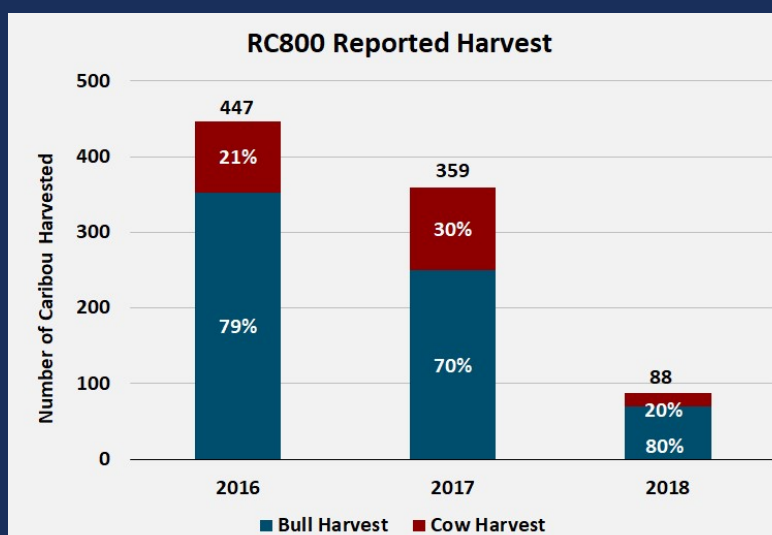
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Annual variation in harvest composition Unit 22 (RC800)



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38

Proposal 22

## Department Position Caribou/Unit 23

*Neutral*

- The population is slightly above the intensive management population of 200,000
- Overall harvest may be sustainable; high proportions of cows would be a concern
- Data on the harvest of cows is limited
- The bull season remains open during the cow closure

39

39

Proposal 22

## PROPOSAL 22 Caribou/Unit 23

**Extend the season for taking cow caribou in Unit 23  
Remainder an additional 15 days from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April  
15<sup>th</sup>**

**Proposed by**  
Northern Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Oppose 0-15

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Proposal 23

## PROPOSAL 23

Caribou/Unit 23

### Restrict the use of snowmachines for taking caribou in Unit 23

**Proposed by**  
Public

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Oppose 0-15

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41

Proposal 23

## Current Regulations

Caribou/Unit 23

- The current regulation was crafted during a special session of the 2014 Board of Game meeting in Kotzebue and subsequently adopted the following day
 

*You may not take game by a motorized land vehicle, unless the motor has been shut off and the progress from the motor's power has ceased, EXCEPT:*

  - *A snowmachine may be used to position a caribou for harvest, and a caribou may be shot from a stationary snowmachine in Unit 22, 23, and 26A*
- Federal regulation: "a snowmachine may be used to position a hunter" to select individual caribou for harvest provided that the animals are not shot from a moving snowmachine.

42

42

## Effects of the Proposal

## Caribou/Unit 23

Provide a more precise definition of what is allowable under “positioning” and align with regulations addressing similar issues in Unit 17

(B) Motorized land vehicle may be used as follows:

(viii) in Unit 17, a snow machine may be used to assist in the taking of a caribou and a caribou may be shot from a stationary snow machine. “Assist in the taking of caribou” means a snowmachine may be used to approach within “300 yards” of a caribou at speeds under 15 miles per hour, in a manner that does not involve repeated approaches or that causes a caribou to run. A snowmachine may not be used to contact an animal or to pursue a fleeing caribou.

43

43

## Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- Harvest typically occurs by boat in fall or snowmachine during the winter and spring
- Snowmachines allow access to caribou when migratory routes do not favor harvest by boat
- Cow caribou make up a large proportion of winter harvest
- Reported issues and public concern include concerns over wasteful and unethical harvest
- Local councils have issued guidelines on winter caribou hunting

44

44

Proposal 23

## Department Position Caribou/Unit 23

- Additional guidelines may alleviate local concerns with wasteful and unethical harvest practices
- Although overall harvest rates appear to be sustainable, cow harvest remains a concern
- At lower abundance levels, the harvest and harassment of pregnant cows could be a concern

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Proposal 23

## PROPOSAL 23 Caribou/Unit 23

**Restrict the use of snowmachines for taking caribou in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**  
Public

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Oppose 0-15

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46

Proposal 24

# PROPOSAL 24

## Caribou/Unit 23

### Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23

**Proposed by**  
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Support 15-0

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47

Proposal 24

# Current Regulations

## Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23

**Resident Hunters:**  
*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken*

**Non-Resident Hunters:**  
*One bull, however calves may not be taken*

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Proposal 24

## Effects of the Proposal

### Caribou/Unit 23

- The incidental and intentional harvest of caribou calves would be allowed
- Anecdotal information suggests that calf harvest prior to the prohibition was minimal
- Allowing calf harvest is of no biological concern to the WAH
- Proposal will align calf harvest regulations with other herds in the state

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Proposal 24

## Background

### Caribou/Unit 23

- Several instances of orphaned or wounded calves following local caribou harvest
- Kotzebue AC proposed removing calf restriction to allow harvest for human consumption
- Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group submitted an identical proposal (25)

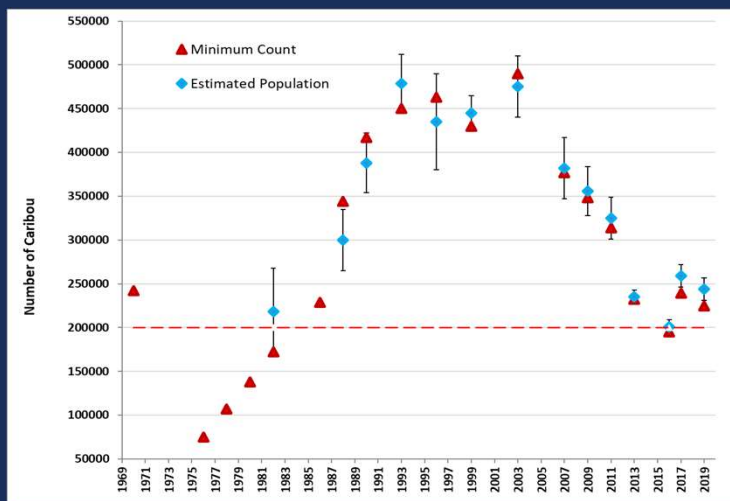
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- From 2003 to 2016 the WAH population saw a steady decline



# Background

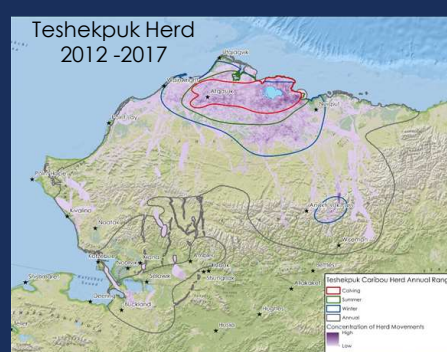
## Caribou/Unit 23

- In RY15 regulations were adopted in attempt to minimize harvest impact while meeting hunter needs:
  - Shortened bull season
  - Shortened cow season
  - Prohibition on the take of calves

## Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

The prohibition on calf harvest occurs only within the range of the Western Arctic and Teshekpuk Herds; 26A, 24B & C, 23, 22 and 21D



The harvest of calves is allowed in all other Alaska caribou herds

53

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## Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- RC907 permit does not report animal age class
- Difficult to determine if calf harvest affects calf recruitment
- Future permit could capture calf harvest
- Adult female survival is the main driver of population change
- Meaningful conservation should focus on reduction of cow harvest

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Proposal 24

## Department Position

Caribou/Unit 23

### Neutral

- Calf harvest largely incidental and compensatory in nature
- Likely minimal calf harvest prior to the prohibition
- Consider extending any change to all WAH units

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Proposal 24

## PROPOSAL 24

Caribou/Unit 23

### Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23

**Proposed by**  
Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC- Support 15-0

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56

Proposal 25

**PROPOSAL 25** Caribou/Unit 23

**Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23**

**Proposed by**  
Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group – *(Identical to proposal 24)*

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC – No Action

57

57

Proposal 25

**Current Regulations** Caribou/Unit 23

Unit 23

**Resident Hunters:**  
*Five caribou per day, by registration permit only; however, calves may not be taken*

**Non-Resident Hunters:**  
*One bull, however calves may not be taken*

58

58

Proposal 25

## Effects of the Proposal

### Caribou/Unit 23

- The incidental and intentional harvest of caribou calves would be allowed
- Anecdotal information suggests that calf harvest prior to the prohibition was minimal
- Allowing calf harvest is of no biological concern to the WAH
- Proposal will align calf harvest regulations with other herds in the state

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Proposal 25

## Background

### Caribou/Unit 23

- Several instances of orphaned or wounded calves following local caribou harvest
- Kotzebue AC proposed removing calf restriction to allow harvest for human consumption

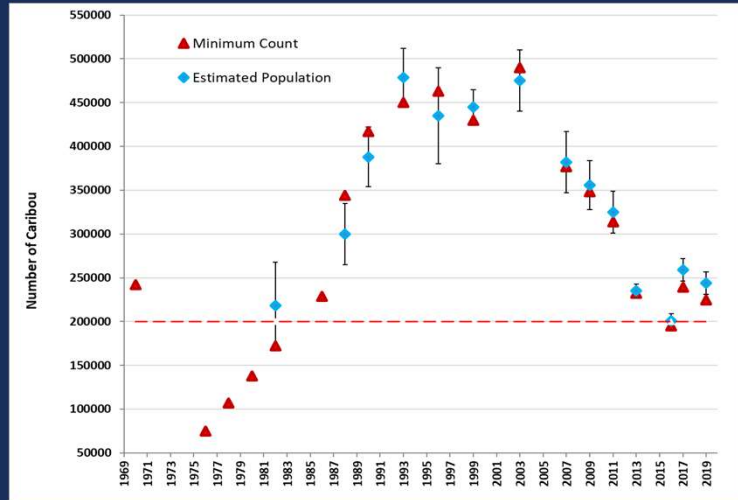
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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- From 2003 to 2016 the WAH population saw a steady decline



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# Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- In RY15 regulations were adopted in attempt to minimize harvest impact while meeting hunter needs:
  - Shortened bull season
  - Shortened cow season
  - Prohibition on the take of calves

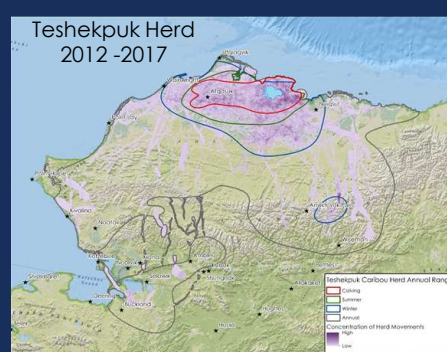
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## Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

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The harvest of calves is allowed in all other Alaska caribou herds

63

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## Background

## Caribou/Unit 23

- RC907 permit does not report animal age class
- Difficult to determine if calf harvest affects calf recruitment
- Future permit could capture calf harvest
- Adult female survival is the main driver of population change
- Meaningful conservation should focus on reduction of cow harvest

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Proposal 25

## Department Position

Caribou/Unit 23

Neutral

- Calf harvest largely incidental and compensatory in nature
- Likely minimal calf harvest prior to the prohibition
- Consider extending any change to all WAH units

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Proposal 25

## PROPOSAL 25

Caribou/Unit 23

### Allow for the take of caribou calves in Unit 23

**Proposed by**  
Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group – *(Identical to proposal 24)*

**Department Recommendation**  
Neutral

**AC Recommendations**  
Kotzebue Sound AC – No Action

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