

**PROPOSAL 155**

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

Increase resident caribou hunting opportunity in Unit 26B Remainder as follows:

Residents **5 caribou** [4 BULLS] July 1 – April 30

No change to nonresident season or bag limit.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Central Arctic caribou herd (CAH) is an identified big game prey population under our Intensive Management (IM) Law important for high levels of human harvest by Alaskans. It has an IM population objective of 28,000 – 32,000 animals.

In 2010, the CAH population was wildly over the population objective at 68,000 animals and hunting was basically unlimited. The CAH then crashed to 22,000 animals in 2016, which led to the Board of Game at their 2017 Region III meeting significantly reducing hunting opportunity for both residents and nonresidents. However, the new bag limits the board levied on residents were much more restrictive than those on nonresidents, and subsequently nonresident CAH hunters began to take the majority of the harvest.

The CAH population began to slowly increase, and the board later increased the resident bag limit to four bulls to give residents more opportunity to put meat in their freezers, leaving the nonresident season and bag limit of one bull the same.

Currently, the CAH population is just over the Intensive Management (IM) population objective at 32,416 animals based on the 2022 photo census estimate, and there is a harvestable surplus of animals. Resident hunting opportunities –especially the opportunity to take cows – can now be expanded back to where they were in the past for this Intensive Management population.

The Department of Fish and Game believes that with the current population and trajectory of the CAH, we can sustainably harvest 350-400 cows annually. When hunting was unlimited, the highest cow harvest seen was 346 in 2011. While we don't believe we need a cow quota based on this information, the board may want to consider giving the department the ability to reduce cow harvests if necessary, as the herd is monitored.

We do not support any increase in the nonresident season or bag limit, or any amendments to this proposal that would increase the nonresident season or bag limit. Information, the board may want to consider giving the department the ability to reduce cow harvests if necessary, as the herd is monitored.

**We do not support any increase in the nonresident season or bag limit, or any amendments to this proposal that would increase the nonresident season or bag limit.**

**PROPOSED BY:** Resident Hunters of Alaska

(HQ-F23-012)

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