

Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council, Wildlife Special Action Request

Issue:

Reduce the caribou harvest limit in Unit 23 to 4 caribou, only one of which may be a cow per year for the remainder of the 2022-24 regulatory cycle.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 23–Caribou

Unit 23—that portion which includes all drainages north and west of, and including, the Singoalik River drainage—5 caribou per day by State registration permit as follows:

<i>Bulls may be harvested</i>	<i>July 1–June 30</i>
<i>Cows may be harvested. However, cows accompanied by calves may not be taken July 15–Oct. 14.</i>	<i>July 15–Apr. 30</i>

Unit 23, remainder—5 caribou per day by State registration permit as follows:

<i>Bulls may be harvested</i>	<i>July 1–June 30</i>
<i>Cows may be harvested. However, cows accompanied by calves may not be taken July 31–Oct. 14.</i>	<i>July 31–Mar. 31</i>

Federal public lands within a 10-mile-wide corridor (5 miles either side) along the Noatak River from the western boundary of Noatak National Preserve upstream to the confluence with the Cutler River; within the northern and southern boundaries of the Eli and Agashashok River drainages, respectively; and within the Squirrel River drainage are closed to caribou hunting except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 23–Caribou

*Unit 23—that portion which includes all drainages north and west of, and including, the Singoalik River drainage— ~~5 caribou per day~~ **4 caribou per year, only 1 may be a cow** by State registration permit as follows:*

Bulls may be harvested *July 1–June 30*

Cows may be harvested. However, cows accompanied by calves may not be taken July 15–Oct. 14. *July 15–Apr. 30*

*Unit 23, remainder— ~~5 caribou per day~~ **4 caribou per year, only 1 may be a cow** by State registration permit as follows:*

Bulls may be harvested *July 1–June 30*

Cows may be harvested. However, cows accompanied by calves may not be taken July 31–Oct. 14. *July 31–Mar. 31*

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Why is this special action needed?

The Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council (NWARAC) is requesting a temporary special action to reduce the caribou harvest limit in Unit 23 to 4 caribou (either 4 bulls or 3 bulls and 1 cow). The Western Arctic caribou herd (WACH) has continued to decline with the most recent estimate being 164000 caribou. The NWARAC is greatly concerned about the precipitous decline of the WACH and feel that immediate action is needed to slow the decline and prevent the herd from reaching a point of no return. The request for a temporary special action will be followed with a proposal for regulatory change during the 2024-2026 Wildlife cycle. The NWARAC feels that the harvest recommendations set forth by the WACH working group would be a starting point for the conservation of the WACH while still allowing some harvest. The NWARAC recognizes that federally qualified subsistence users are already facing food insecurities, but this drastic reduction of caribou harvest is a means to help protect the caribou herd while still allowing some harvest.