

PROPOSAL A - 5 AAC 85.025 (a)(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou; and **5 AAC 92.540 (9)(A)(ii) Noatak Controlled Use Area.** This proposal requests the Board of Game to 1.) shift the effective dates of the Noatak Controlled Use Area to a later period during September, and 2.) increase the nonresident caribou bag limit to two caribou per regulatory year in portions of Unit 23 removed from traditional subsistence hunting areas.

5 AAC 85.025(a). Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
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(18)

**Unit 23, that portion in
Guide Use Areas 1, 4 and 6**

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

5 caribou per day; however cow caribou may not be taken from May 16-June 30	July 1 - June 30
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 caribou <u>total</u> ; however, cow caribou may not be taken from May 16-June 30	July 1 - June 30
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Remainder of Unit 23

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

<u>5 caribou per day; however cow caribou may not be taken from May 16-June 30</u>	July 1 - June 30
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NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

<u>2 caribou total; however, cow caribou may not be taken from May 16-June 30</u>	July 1 - June 30
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5 AAC 92.540. Controlled use areas

(9) Unit 23

(A) the Noatak Controlled Use Area:

(i) the area consists of that portion of Unit 23 in a corridor extending five miles on either side of, and including, the Noatak River, including the river, beginning at the mouth of the Noatak River, and extending upstream to the mouth of Sapun Creek;

(ii) the area is closed from **September 9 through September 30** [AUGUST 25 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15] to the use of aircraft in any manner for big game hunting, including transportation of big game hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of big game; however, this provision does not apply to the transportation of big game hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of big game to and between public airports.

ISSUE: A Unit 23 Working Group met in Kotzebue on April 23-24, 2008 to address conflicts among users in Unit 23 during the fall hunting season. The group consists of agency staff (Department of Fish and Game, Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, National Park Service, and Borough of Land Management); representatives of the Federal Subsistence Board, Board of Game, and Big Game Commercial Services Board; Unit 23 Advisory Committee representatives from Lower Kobuk, Noatak/Kivalina, North Seward Peninsula, and Kotzebue; Northwest Regional Advisory Council (RAC) chair; Alaska Professional Hunters Association; the Northwest Arctic Borough; Kotzebue IRA; NANA Corporation; and Maniilaq Association. Members of the public also participated in this meeting. Two issues became apparent during the meeting. First, some local residents were not able to harvest enough caribou in recent years. All participants agreed this was at least partly because caribou have begun migrating south later during the fall than in previous years. Additionally, local residents felt that fall caribou movements may be hindered or deflected by densely placed camps of visiting hunters located within migration corridors used by caribou. Second, the group agreed that increasing the nonresident caribou bag limit to two caribou/year in areas away from important subsistence hunting areas might attract nonresident hunters out of areas of local concern and conflict. This approach would provide areas where commercial operators and nonresident hunters could benefit from higher bag limits.

The areas where the nonresident caribou bag limit would be increased to two caribou per year would be:

Guide Use Area 2: that portion of the Noatak River drainage upstream of and including the Kelly River drainage, downstream of and including the Anisak River drainage, and downstream and west of Lake Kangilipak.

Guide Use Area 3: that portion of the Noatak River drainage upstream of and excluding the Anisak River, upstream and east of Lake Kangilipak, and excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park. This area is also defined as Unit 23.

Guide Use Area 5: that portion south of the north bank of the Kobuk River and Melvin Channel downstream of the Kobuk Valley National Park boundary below the Kallarichuk River mouth, the Selawik River drainage, the Kauk River drainage, and Baldwin Peninsula.

Guide Use Area 7: that portion of Unit 23 on the Seward Peninsula west of and including the Buckland River drainage.

The areas where the nonresident caribou bag limit would remain one caribou would be:

Guide Use Area 1: that portion of the Noatak River drainage upstream of and excluding the Eli River, downstream of and excluding the Kelly River drainage, and all lands except Cape Krusenstern National Monument located north and west of this portion of the Noatak River.

Guide Use Area 4: that portion of the Kobuk River drainage upstream of the Kobuk Valley National Park boundary near Ambler excluding Gates of the Arctic National Park.

Guide Use Area 6: that portion of the Kobuk River drainage north of the north bank of the Kobuk River and Melvin Channel downstream of the Kobuk Valley National Park boundary below the Kallarichuk River mouth, the Noatak River drainages downstream from and including the Eli River drainage, and excluding Cape Krusenstern National Monument.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE? Residents of Unit 23 will continue to experience difficulty meeting their subsistence needs for caribou. Nonresident hunters will not receive the opportunity to harvest an additional caribou in specified areas of Unit 23. Commercial operators will lose potential revenue from nonresident hunters. Conflicts among users will not be reduced in areas used by local hunters.

WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED? Visiting hunters may experience a higher quality experience if crowding is reduced in high-use areas.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? Residents of Unit 23, other resident hunters of Unit 23 as well as commercial operators and nonresident hunters.

WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER? Local residents will suffer if increasing the nonresident caribou bag limit only serves to attract additional hunters into Unit 23. Waste of meat could increase if the nonresident caribou bag limit is increased and hunter education efforts that address meat handling are less effective than the working group anticipates. Conflicts will increase if the effective period of the Noatak CUA is shifted later and caribou begin migrating in late August as they did during the 1990s.

OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED? Maintain the status quo. The working group rejected this because the Noatak Controlled Use Area is now in effect during a period when caribou are scarce and little hunting occurs. Also, the status quo does not provide an incentive for nonresidents to hunt in areas away from subsistence use areas. The working group hopes that increasing the nonresident caribou bag limit to two per year in areas far from traditional subsistence hunting areas will help reduce competition for caribou and places to hunt within local areas of concern and conflict.

PROPOSED BY: Unit 23 Working Group
