

Submitter

Office of Subsistence Management
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Issue

This proposal requests changing all Nelchina caribou herd (NCH) hunts to may be announced seasons, delegating authority to Federal in-season managers to manage the NCH hunts, and conducting a \$804 user prioritization analysis for the NCH.

Existing Federal Regulations

Unit 11–Caribou

1 bull by Federal registration permit

May be announced.

Unit 12–Caribou

Unit 12, remainder—1 bull

Sep. 1–20.

Unit 12, remainder—1 caribou may be taken by a Federal registration permit during a winter season to be announced. Dates for a winter season to occur between Oct. 1 and Apr. 30, and sex of the animals to be taken will be announced by the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge Manager in consultation with the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Superintendent, Alaska Department of Fish and Game area biologists, and Chairs of the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council and Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee

Winter season to be announced.

Unit 13–Caribou

Units 13A and 13B—2 caribou by Federal registration permit only (FC1302)

Aug. 1–Sep. 30

Oct. 21–Mar. 31

Unit 13, remainder—2 bulls by Federal registration permit only (FC1302)

Aug. 1–Sep. 30

Oct. 21–Mar. 31

Proposed Federal Regulations

Unit 11–Caribou

1 bull by Federal registration permit

May be announced.

Federal public lands are closed are closed to caribou hunting except by residents of (communities to be determined via a §804 analysis).

Unit 12–Caribou

Unit 12, remainder—1 bull

May be announced between Sep. 1–20.

Unit 12, remainder—1 caribou ~~may be taken~~ by a Federal registration permit ~~during a winter season to be announced.~~

Winter season ~~to~~ may be announced between Oct. 1–Apr. 30.

*~~Dates for a winter season to occur between Oct. 1 and Apr. 30, and sex of the animals to be taken will be announced by~~ The Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge Manager, in consultation with the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Superintendent, Alaska Department of Fish and Game area biologists, **Office of Subsistence Management**, and Chairs of the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council and Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee **may announce season dates, harvest quotas, open/close seasons, and for the winter season, set sex restrictions.***

Federal public lands are closed are closed to caribou hunting except by residents of (communities to be determined via a §804 analysis).

Unit 13–Caribou

Units 13A and 13B— up to 2 caribou by Federal registration permit only (FC1302)

May be announced between Aug. 1–Sep. 30

The Glennallen Field Office Manager, in consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Office of Subsistence Management, Ahnna Intertribal Resource Commission, and Chair of the affected Councils, may announce season dates, harvest quotas, open/close seasons, and set sex restrictions and harvest limits.

May be announced between Oct. 21–Mar. 31

Federal public lands are closed are closed to caribou hunting except by residents of (communities to be determined via a §804 analysis).

Unit 13, remainder—2 bulls by Federal registration permit only (FC1302)

May be announced between Aug. 1–Sep. 30

The Glennallen Field Office Manager, in consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Office of Subsistence Management, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission, and Chair of the affected Councils, may announce season dates, harvest quotas, open/close seasons.

May be announced between Oct. 21–Mar. 31

Federal public lands are closed are closed to caribou hunting except by residents of (communities to be determined via a §804 analysis).

Justification

Regulatory action outside of the normal wildlife regulatory cycle is warranted due to severe conservation concerns for the Nelchina caribou herd coupled with the importance of caribou to local subsistence users. The NCH population has drastically declined and is well below population objectives. No harvestable surplus is currently available, although allowing limited harvest for communities most dependent on the herd as soon as biologically sustainable is important for the continuation of subsistence uses.

Several special action requests (WSA24-02 and WSA24-03) were submitted for the 2024/25 regulatory year requesting a §804 user prioritization analysis for the Nelchina herd. Conducting §804 analyses as part of a special action request is difficult due to the limited timeline and opportunities for input. It is imperative that affected Councils be given the opportunity to provide their recommendations on the §804 analysis and that the public be given the opportunity to provide testimony at the Council meetings. It is also critical that affected Tribes and ANCSA Corporations be given additional opportunity for consultation on the §804 analysis.

Submitting this proposal as part of the fisheries regulatory cycle allows adequate opportunity for comment, provides more regulatory options and flexibility, and enables more timely regulatory action rather than waiting an additional year for the wildlife regulatory cycle and processing additional special action requests.