



Federal Subsistence Board News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Forest Service

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Federal Subsistence Board Closes Federal Public Lands to Caribou Hunting by All Users in Units 11, 12, and 13 for 60 days

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) approved WSA23-06 to close Federal public lands to caribou hunting by all users in Units 11, 12, and 13 for 60 days due to conservation concerns. The closures in Units 11 and 12 extend from Oct. 1-Nov. 29, 2023. The closure in Unit 13 extends from Oct. 21-Dec. 19, 2023.

Emergency Wildlife Special Action WSA23-06, submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), requested these 60-day closures due to a dramatic decline in the Nelchina caribou herd population. ADF&G and the Alaska Board of Game also submitted temporary special actions, requesting closure for the entire winter seasons, which are still being processed.

The Board approved WSA23-06 based on the most recent population information, which indicates the Nelchina Caribou Herd is in serious decline with no harvestable surplus. The July 2023 estimate was 8,823 animals, a 50% reduction from the fall 2022 estimate and well below the State management objective of 35,000–40,000 caribou. Additionally, the July 2023 composition metrics are concerning, with a calf:cow ratio of 13:100 and a bull:cow ratio of 23:100, both of which are well below the management objective of 40:100 for each. ADF&G has closed the State Nelchina caribou hunts, and it is prudent that Federal lands be closed in unison. The Board acknowledges the hardship this action will have on Federally qualified subsistence users but recognizes such a closure is consistent with ANILCA Section 816(b) and is needed to assure the continued viability of the Nelchina Caribou Herd and to provide for the continuation of subsistence uses of caribou in the long-term.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

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