



Federal Subsistence Board Fact Sheet



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

Forest Service

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Wildlife Temporary Special Action Request WSA21-01: Units 23 and 26A Caribou and Moose Hunting

Issue: Temporary Wildlife Special Action Request WSA21-01, submitted by the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) in February 2021, requests closing Federal public lands in Units 23 and 26A to the harvest of caribou and moose except by Federally qualified subsistence users from August 1 to September 30, 2021.

The Council submitted the request due to concern about the late migration of caribou through Unit 23. The caribou migration has been delayed in recent years. The effect that transporters and non-local hunters may be having on caribou migration is of particular concern to the Council. They hoped that a closure would reduce activity and traffic, creating an easier path for migrating caribou. The rationale for the closure request for moose was conservation concerns over a declining population.

In June 2021, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) deferred decision-making on WSA21-01 until 2022. The Board requested that the Office of Subsistence Management seek additional input on concerns related to caribou from the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, Federal land-managing agencies, local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Advisory Councils, commercial guides and transporters, and subsistence users. The Board also asked OSM staff to include comparisons of moose harvest by survey area within Unit 23 in their analysis. The Board will further discuss and take action on this request in 2022, and the public will be informed in advance of the Board's meeting to take action. If adopted, the closure would apply to the 2022 hunting season.

Question 1: What is a temporary special action and how long will it last?

Answer: Special actions are temporary changes that affect specific Federal subsistence regulations when unforeseen circumstances arise that warrant regulatory change before the next regulatory cycle. A temporary special action is an interim regulatory change that may be in effect for more than 60 days or is received well in advance of the proposed action. A temporary special action may not exceed one regulatory cycle but is often implemented for a single regulatory year. The Federal Subsistence Board responds to any special action requests that are received and validated.

If Special Action Request WSA21-01 is approved by the Federal Subsistence Board, it will only affect caribou and moose hunting on Federal public lands of Units 23 and 26A from August 1 to September 30, 2022. Permanent changes to caribou and moose hunting regulations would require Federal rulemaking, which would include public notice and multiple opportunities for public comment.

Question 2: How can the public comment on this specific special action request (WSA21-01)?

Answer: Two public hearings are scheduled, one on November 17, 2021, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the second on December 2, 2021, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The purpose of these hearings is to receive public testimony on concerns related to caribou and this special action request.

Public Hearing Information:

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 from 4pm – 6pm (or until the end of public participation)

Teleconference: Toll Free: 888-942-9690

Passcode: 6071806

Thursday, December 2, 2021 from 4pm – 6pm (or until the end of public participation)

Teleconference: Toll Free: 888-390-1184

Passcode: 4410011

Public testimony shared during the hearings will be forwarded to the Federal Subsistence Board for consideration based on Federal regulations covering Special Actions and the associated timelines involved with the process, written comments will not be accepted.

Question 3: If adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board, what Federal public lands would be affected by this special action request?

Answer: For the purposes of this special action request, the following Federal public lands would be affected by the closure:

- Unit 23 — Noatak National Preserve, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, Gates of the Arctic National Preserve, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, and scattered parcels of Bureau of Land Management and Fish and Wildlife Service lands
- Unit 26A — National Petroleum Reserve Alaska, Gates of the Arctic National Preserve

Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Kobuk Valley National Park, and Gates of the Arctic National Park are already only open to hunting by local resident zone communities.

Question 4: Who are Federally qualified subsistence users?

Answer: For the purposes of this special action request, Federally qualified subsistence users are the following:

- Unit 23 Caribou—Residents of Unit 21D west of the Koyukuk and Yukon Rivers, Galena, Units 22, 23, 24 (including residents of Wiseman but not including other residents of the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area), and 26A
- Unit 23 Moose—Residents of Unit 23
- Unit 26A Caribou—Residents of Unit 26, Anaktuvuk Pass, and Point Hope
- Unit 26A Moose—Residents of Unit 26 (excluding the Prudhoe Bay-Deadhorse Industrial Complex), Point Hope, and Anaktuvuk Pass

Question 5: What is the remaining process for this special action request after the Public Hearing?

Answer: The Office of Subsistence Management is currently analyzing the potential effects of this request on caribou and moose populations and the continuation of subsistence uses. The affected Regional Advisory Councils will make recommendations on the updated analysis at their winter 2022 meetings. The Federal Subsistence Board will subsequently consider this Special Action Request prior to the 2022 hunting season. The Board will consider all information provided in the analysis, including public testimony and input from all groups noted by the Board when they deferred WSA21-01. The Board may adopt, adopt with modification, or reject the special action request, or alternatively, defer the request until the next wildlife regulatory cycle.

Question 6. How can I get more information on this special action request?

Answer: Please contact Robbin La Vine, Policy Coordinator at the Office of Subsistence Management, at (907) 786-3353 or (800) 478-1456 or robbin_lavine@fws.gov with questions about Special Action Request WSA21-01, or visit the Federal Subsistence Management Program website (www.doi.gov/subsistence/) for more information about subsistence on Federal public lands and waters.

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