



## Department of Fish and Game

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
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November 10, 2020

An Agenda Change Request (ACR 7) has been submitted to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 85.025(a)(15) and (20) Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou. The proponent is asking the board to create a targeted hunt for the fall Fortymile caribou season.

With respect to the board's Agenda Change Request (ACR) acceptance criteria (5 AAC 92.005):

- A. The department is unaware of any error in regulation.
- B. The department is unaware of any effects of regulations that were unforeseen when the regulation was adopted.
- C. The department believes that a biological concern could be caused by existing regulations which do not allow a targeted hunt during the most popular portions of the Fortymile caribou hunt. A harvest quota reduction is likely to occur before the 2023 Board of Game meeting, and possibly by fall 2021. When the harvest quota is reduced, a targeted hunt could allow ADF&G to better control harvest so it remains within the quota when caribou congregate near roads and large numbers of hunters respond to these aggregations. Without a targeted hunt option for ADF&G to use any time during the fall and winter hunts, allowable harvest that is otherwise biologically sustainable may be precluded if the harvest cannot be adequately controlled using only registration permits.
- D. The department is unaware of any unforeseen or unexpected events that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses as defined in AS 16.05.258(f).
- E. The department believes that delayed regulatory action may cause an unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest could be precluded. The combination of a reduced harvest quota (once herd size is reduced) and increased hunter participation seen in recent years increases the likelihood that the annual harvest quota would be exceeded if a targeted hunt is not authorized by the board prior to fall 2023.

Fortymile caribou hunting is managed under fall and winter registration hunts, as follows:

- The fall (RC860) season is open to residents and nonresidents during August 10–September 30, with a bag limit of up to 3 caribou for residents and 1 bull for nonresidents. In RY2020, the department set the bag limit for this hunt at 2 caribou.
- The winter (RC867) season is open to residents only during October 21–March 31, with a bag limit of up to 3 caribou. In RY2020, the department set the bag limit for this hunt at 2 caribou.

- Season openings and bag limits for the Fortymile herd registration hunts are managed by discretionary permit authority, while hunt closures are frequently implemented by Emergency Order due to unpredictable caribou and hunter distribution.
- A youth drawing permit hunt takes place in a portion of the hunt area during August 1–21, with a bag limit of 1 caribou per lifetime of the hunter. Up to 30 permits may be issued.
- A targeted hunt to help control harvest within management objectives is authorized during December 1–March 31.

Other regulations relevant to this ACR include the following:

- The board has identified the Fortymile caribou herd as being important for providing high levels of harvest for human consumptive use and established Intensive Management (IM) objectives of 50,000–100,000 caribou and an annual harvest of 1,000–15,000.
- The Fortymile caribou herd has a positive customary and traditional use finding with an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence of 350–400 caribou.

A targeted hunt during winter only (December 1–March 31) was considered and passed by the board at the spring 2012 meeting. The intent was to allow some hunting opportunity when the herd congregated on the Steese or Taylor highways. However, concern about exceeding the harvest quota too quickly for the department to respond precluded opening a registration hunt. A targeted hunt is not available for use during the winter hunt opening in October/November or during the fall hunt, when the majority of hunter interest occurs and overharvest is most likely to occur.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting for Units 12, 20, and 25C regulations is during winter–spring of 2022–2023. If the board accepts this ACR, the department recommends the proposal come before the board at its March 2021 meeting in Fairbanks to allow for more public input.

Sincerely,



Eddie Grasser  
Director  
Division of Wildlife Conservation