

**ALASKA BOARD OF GAME FINDINGS**  
**Unit 18 Caribou**  
**95-88-BOG**

In recent years, the western Alaska caribou herd has rapidly expanded its size and range. The herd population is approaching 500,000 animals, and in recent years portions of the herd have moved into Unit 18 north of the Yukon River.

The existing bag limit of one caribou and season of Feb. 1--March 31 are inadequate to provide maximum hunting opportunity when the Western Arctic herd moves into Unit 18 north of the Yukon River.

In order to take advantage of the periodic but temporary abundance of western Arctic caribou in northern Unit 18, the Board believes there must be flexibility in the season and bag limit.

Given the growing population of the Western Arctic herd, a year-round season with a bag limit of one caribou per day is reasonable. During times when large numbers of Western Arctic caribou move into northern Unit 18, the bag limit can be increased even more, providing maximum opportunity without jeopardizing the health of the herd.

The Board, therefore, authorizes the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to increase by emergency order the bag limit up to five caribou per day when large numbers of Western Arctic caribou move into northern Unit 18. Prior to issuing an emergency order increasing the bag limit, the Commissioner will poll the Board for approval.

Given the cyclic nature of caribou populations, the Board recognizes that liberal seasons and bag limits associated with the Western Arctic caribou herd are likely to be temporary and limited in length. In no way should this temporary abundance be considered as the benchmark for future regulatory decisions.

Likewise, in recent years the Mulchatna caribou herd has rapidly expanded its size and range. The herd population is approaching 200,000 animals, and in recent years portions of the herd have moved into Unit 18 south of the Yukon River.

The existing bag limit of one bull caribou by registration permit and season of Sept. 1--30 are inadequate to provide maximum hunt in opportunity when the Mulchatna herd moves into Unit 18 south of the Yukon River.

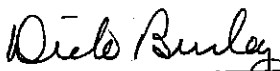
In order to take advantage of the periodic, but temporary, abundance of Mulchatna caribou in southern Unit 18, the board believes there must be flexibility in the season and bag limit.

Unit 18 south of the Yukon River also encompasses the home range of the Kilbuck caribou herd. The Kilbuck herd is a recovering population, managed by a cooperative plan to ensure its continued protection. The, a bag limit of one bull by registration permit during the month of September is reasonable. However, during times between Oct. 1--March 30 when large numbers of Mulchatna caribou move into southern Unit 18, the bag limit can be increased to provide maximum opportunity without jeopardizing the health of either the Mulchatna or Kilbuck herds.

The Board, therefore, authorizes the Commissioner to increase the bag limit to two caribou and open a season between Oct. 1--March 30 by emergency order when large numbers of Mulchatna caribou move into southern Unit 18.

Given the cyclic nature of caribou populations, the Board recognizes that liberal seasons and bag limits associated with the Mulchatna caribou herd are likely to be temporary and limited in length. In no way should this temporary abundance be considered as the benchmark for future regulatory decisions.

DATE: March 31, 1995

  
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Dick Burley, Chair

VOTE: 6 Favor 0 Oppose 1 Absent