

PROPOSAL 23

5 AAC 92.080(4)(B). Unlawful methods of taking game; exceptions.

Restrict the use of snowmachines for taking caribou in Unit 23 as follows:

Change regulations to read similar to those in Unit 17:

A snowmobile may be used to assist in the taking of a caribou and caribou may be shot from a stationary snowmobile. “Assist in taking of a caribou” means a snowmobile may be used to approach within 200 yards of a caribou or caribou herd at speeds under 15 mph, in a manner that does not involve repeated approaches or that causes a caribou to flee. A snowmobile may not be used to contact an animal or to pursue fleeing caribou.

Results: This will be a change here, a needed one, and will change hunting practices in a good way. Fewer animals will be wounded, chased, and less meat damaged by herd-shooting and poor hits, and people will have increased self-respect. The end result will not be less caribou harvested, only less caribou wounded and wasted.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like the board to address the practice of chasing animals with snowmobiles, and change regulations to make high-speed chasing of animals unlawful.

The practice of chasing caribou with snowmobiles, over the course of the last 50 years in Unit 23, has grown to be common, normal, and a standard hunting practice when snow is on the ground. In that time, the last half century, snowmobiles have “evolved” to be in all practical purposes, personal rocket ships of the tundra and ice; meanwhile other technological hunting aides including clothing, GPS, Cell phones, semi-automatic rifles, etc., have also changed rapidly. Caribou have not had such advantageous changes—basically they are the same animals we hunted 50 years and more ago.

The practice of chasing caribou—with these changes in our equipment, and without laws to protect the animals from these advances in technology—is detrimental to the herd, and, potentially, to our respect for individual animals, and to our own self-respect. Allowing all out high-speed chasing of groups of caribou is simply not a good thing, physically or mentally--for caribou or for us. When I was younger, it was known as unlawful to chase caribou. People did it, but less often than now, and with concern for the legal consequences. In the past 25 years we have moved in the opposite direction--making this practice basically legal with the present regulation allowing “positioning” of animals, but not defining what “positioning” means.

Each year here more and more local people say chasing is not good, especially when it separates calves from their mothers, which we’ve seen a lot of and has been posted on Facebook and made public knowledge in other ways. We here in this region (residents of Unit 23) know it’s not a good thing. Also, many people here worry that subsistence and subsistence hunting potentially will be damaged by this practice, especially as potential future public awareness of this practice increases.

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