

PROPOSAL 78

5 AAC 85.025. Hunting seasons and bag limits for caribou.

Extend the caribou season in Unit 16B as follows:

Open Season: August 10 - October 15

Alternative Open Season: August 10 - October 10

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Extend caribou season until October 15. For many years the caribou season was open well into October and many years ago it was open much of the winter. Due to the wolf predation issue many years ago the season was cut back and in 2005 was extended to September 30. The climates have been changing to the point we are all seeing moose and caribou ruts seemingly taking place later and later in the year. Finally some biologists are admitting to researching and discussing how hunting seasons and animal behavior is changing. The biggest and oldest bulls are not coming down to lower elevations and gathering cows anywhere near as early in the year as they used to. Snows are not driving them down as the winters are coming later. The best harvest for the herd is the older bulls, animals that are at the tail end of their life anyways. Quality of mature bulls has fallen historically in my opinion as well as numbers harvested. Before 2005 when the season changed to September 30 there was only a handful of caribou harvested in as the season closed September 20 in Unit 16B. In the last five years a total of 68 caribou have been harvested in Unit 16 with all but one of those taken in 16B. 2019 was the most with 22 harvested and it is also the coldest and best snow year in many we have had. We recognize the concern over rutted meat with late season caribou, however for many years we dealt with that and the law requires us to take the meat. I donated lots of caribou meat to the native hospital last season per their request through the Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA). I followed the delivery and pick-up of this meat. I also followed up to inquire of there satisfaction with it as well as how to cook and prepare it as late season caribou can be prepared differently. The feedback was fantastic and they are looking for more this next season. The additional hunting time in the field would allow trophy sport hunters (both resident and nonresident) the opportunity to spend more time in the field. License and tag sales would be beneficial to ADF&G and the general economy would benefit if more tourism was in place later in the season. There has not been much interest or money spent in Units 16 or 19 the last many years on caribou populations. The additional Pittman Robinson match may be helpful in accomplishing this. I do not believe going back to the historical later season dates will negatively impact the population, as most hunters this time of year are after bigger older bulls.

If the season is left as is, the older bulls that are not seen during the hunting season will just die of old age and no-one benefits, except maybe a slow cow or two!

PROPOSED BY: Steven Perrins

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