**ACR #3** – Shorten the caribou hunting season from August 10 – March 31 to August 10 – October 31 in portions of GMU 24A and 25D.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

**CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.**

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

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.**

Harvest of the Hodzana Hills caribou herd (HHH) during the winter in GMUs 24A and 25D has the potential to exceed the harvestable surplus due to the following circumstances:

The HHH, which spans GMU 24A south of the South Fork Koyukuk River and that portion of GMU 25D drained by the west fork of the Dall River west of 150º W. Long., is a small, non-migratory herd of 400-600 animals, which is below the Department's management objective of 700–800 caribou. Since the HHH was first GPS collared in 2014, the Central Arctic Herd (CAH) and Porcupine Herd (PCH) have intermixed with the HHH and several collared animals from the HHH joined these larger herds and left the HHH geographic range. As a result, in total, the HHH has decreased in size by nearly 50% since 2014. Hunters have limited accessibility to the HHH due to the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area which prohibits motorized access within and across the corridor for hunting. Therefore, access to the HHH for hunting primarily occurs by hunters using highway vehicles and walking from the Dalton Highway or by hunters using airplanes. Despite a reduction in population for the HHH since 2014 and the population being below management objective, limited access still allowed for some harvest that was within harvestable surplus. The HHH has a harvestable surplus of approximately 20 animals per year depending on the most recent population count. Since 2020, an average of 8.7 HHH caribou have been harvested per year. Harvest levels below the harvestable surplus can be attributed to the limited accessibility of the HHH, with 90.4% of successful hunters accessing the herd from the Dalton Highway using a highway vehicle.

In the spring of 2026, the Department of the Interior conveyed land along the Dalton Highway Corridor, including land within GMUs 24A and 25D, to the State of Alaska. Alongside this land conveyance, a Commissioner's Finding was issued by the Department of Natural Resources authorizing winter snowmachine use from November 1 – April 15, annually, on RS 2477 trails through the Dalton Highway Management Area. Due to this change in land access coupled with the recent reduction in HHH abundance, harvest of HHH animals could exceed the harvestable surplus during the winter portion of the hunt in GMUs 24A and 25D. The board has not made a customary and traditional use determination for this herd, and should plan to do so at its next in-cycle Region 3 meeting. However, this does not preclude the board from taking action on this ACR before then for conservation purposes if it deems that this proposal meets the ACR criteria.

**WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?**

This proposal seeks to shorten the caribou hunting season from August 10 – March 31 to August 10 – October 31 in the portion of GMU 24A south of an east-west line extending from the point at the south bank of the South Fork Koyukuk River at the Dalton Highway crossing near N67º 01.104', W150º 17.352', and that portion of GMU 25D drained by the west fork of the Dall River west of 150º W. Long.

**STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

**To correct an error in regulation.**

Not applicable

**To correct an effect of a regulation that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.**

Not applicable

**Does the request identify a biological concern for the population or a threat to meeting objectives for the population?**

Yes, biological concern, potential for overharvest.

**Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected event or effect that would otherwise restrict or reduce a reasonable opportunity for customary and traditional wildlife uses, as defined in AS 16.05.258(f)?**

Unknown; the board has not made a customary and traditional use finding for the HHH.

**Does the request identify an unforeseen, unexpected resource situation where a biologically allowable resource harvest would be precluded by delayed regulatory action and such delay would be significantly burdensome because the resource would be unavailable in the future?**

Yes, potential exists for overharvest of the resource due to changes in access.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?**

The number of harvested caribou could exceed the harvestable surplus for the Hodzana Hills caribou herd and reduce the long-term availability of this resource.

**STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.**

The ACR is being submitted for conservation reasons only.

**IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.**

**STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

**STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING.**

This ACR has not been considered before.