



# Federal Subsistence Board News Release



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Forest Service

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## **Federal Subsistence Board Closes Federal Public Lands to Caribou Hunting by all Users in Units 11, 12 remainder, and 13 for 2024-2025**

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) approved Wildlife Special Action WSA24-02 with modification. The approved action closes Federal public lands to caribou hunting by all users in Units 11, 12 remainder, and 13 for the 2024/2025 regulatory year due to conservation concerns. The modification to WSA24-02 provides exceptions for traditional religious ceremonies and cultural/educational program permit harvest and postpones a decision on the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 804 user prioritization analysis (Section 804 analysis) to the February 2025 Board fisheries regulatory meeting through consideration of Wildlife Proposal WP25-01. No action was taken on WSA24-03.

WSA24-02, submitted by the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission, requested closure of all Federal caribou hunts on the Nelchina herd in Units 11, 12 remainder and 13 to all users for the 2024/2025 regulatory year, which begins July 1, 2024 and ends June 30, 2025. It also requested a Section 804 analysis be conducted for the Nelchina Caribou Herd. WSA24-03, submitted by the Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Field Office, made the same request. Both requests were due to continued decline of the Nelchina caribou herd population.

The Board stated that conservation concerns warrant a closure to caribou hunting on Federal public lands in Units 11, 12 remainder, and 13 by all users. The Nelchina Caribou Herd population has declined precipitously to only 6,983 caribou in October 2023, far below population objectives of 35,000-40,000 caribou. Removing harvest pressure will aid in the recovery of the herd. Although this closure will reduce opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users this year, it will help ensure the long-term viability of the Nelchina Caribou Herd and subsistence opportunity in the future. This closure is consistent with ANILCA Section 816(b), and support for the closure was indicated during Tribal and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporation consultations and public hearings.

The Board additionally stated that allowing caribou harvests for memorial potlatches and cultural programs is essential for cultural continuation and to ensure transfer of knowledge through generations. The potential harvest of a few caribou for this purpose will not pose a conservation concern but will provide a meaningful opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users to maintain connection with caribou. The Board also supported the Section 804 analysis going through the full regulatory process to allow time for input from the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils and the public. Taking action at the February 2025 Board meeting will ensure the results of the

Section 804 analysis will be available to utilize in management decisions in time for the next Nelchina Caribou hunt season if there is any harvestable surplus that would allow for a limited subsistence harvest opportunity.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at [www.doi.gov/subsistence](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence) or by visiting [www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska](http://www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska).

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