



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

## Department of Fish and Game

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May 22, 2026

Mr. Thomas Baker  
Chair, Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council  
1011 E. Tudor Rd.  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Mr. Thomas Baker:

I appreciate your letter on behalf of the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) requesting the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) issue a closure to the harvest of cow caribou in Game Management Units (GMU) 22, 23, and southwest 26A for the 2026-2027 season.

Despite regulatory changes that decreased bag limits and attempted to reduce the harvest of cow caribou across GMU 22, 23, and western portion of 26A, the Western Arctic caribou herd (WAH) population has continued to decline. Harvestable surplus for the WAH has decreased concurrently with the population decline and is estimated at 5,800 bulls and zero cows based on the 2025 census of 121,000 animals. Elimination of cow harvest has been identified as a necessary step towards slowing the population decline.

We are currently in the process of finalizing an emergency order to close GMU 22, 23, and 26A within the Colville River drainage upstream from the Nuka River and drainages of the Chukchi Sea south and west of and including the Kuk and Kugrua River drainages (registration permits RC800 and RC907) to the harvest of cow caribou for the 2026-2027 season.

We take very seriously this reduction in harvest opportunity but also recognize the necessity of proactive measures to ensure the sustainability of WAH for the future. Coordinated management is the best chance at successful implementation of conservation measures and we would ask the Council to strongly encourage the Federal Subsistence Board to adopt the same prohibition on the harvest of cow caribou at their upcoming meeting, consistent with Council's modification noted in your letter, on June 3rd when they are considering the WAH special actions WSA26-01, 02 and 03.

Thank you again for reaching out and providing us with the council's recommendation and support. The WAH is an important resource for many Alaskans and the department is committed to our monitoring and engagement efforts. We look forward to continuing the conversation on

alternative/additional management measures that may help the Western Arctic caribou herd recover.

Sincerely,



Doug Vincent-Lang  
Commissioner

cc: Ryan Scott, Director, Div. of Wildlife Conservation  
Ben Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, ADF&G