

Applicant contact information:

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Issue:

Katmai National Park and Preserve requests the harvest limit for the fall hunt (Aug. 1-Sep. 30) be increased to “up to 2 caribou” for the 2026 season. For this change to be fully effectuated, authority to set harvest limits would also need to be delegated to the Federal in-season manager.

Proposed change to current authorizing language:

Unit 9C—Caribou

*Unit 9C, that portion within Katmai National Preserve – **up to 2 ± caribou by Federal registration permit during the 2026 fall hunt.***

OR

1 caribou by Federal registration permit during the 2026/27 winter hunt.

Season may be announced between Aug. 1 – Sep. 30 or Nov. 1 – Mar. 31

Federal public lands are closed to the taking of caribou except by residents of Igiugig and Kokhanok hunting under these regulations.

Justification for the request:

The caribou population that currently occupies Katmai National Preserve is locally referred to as the Kukalek Shelf Caribou population. Since 2020 the National Park Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) have documented a significant expansion of the Kukaklek Shelf caribou population from approximately 300 animals in 2020 to more than 1200 in 2025. The most recent calf to cow (37.8:100) and bull to cow (44.8:100) ratios indicate a healthy and fast growing population.

Local communities (Kokhanok and Igiugig), ADF&G, and the National Park Service agree that the population's growth and corresponding potential impacts to habitat are a concern. The State of Alaska is currently planning to open a winter registration hunt on this population in Unit 9C on lands adjacent to Katmai National Preserve with an "up to 2" caribou harvest limit with permits only available in local communities. ADF&G has also expressed intentions of submitting a Federal special action request to change the harvest limit within Katmai National Preserve to "up to 2" caribou by State registration permit for the winter 2026/27 hunt in order to align State and Federal regulations. Doing so would help coordinate hunting objectives for this population across jurisdictions. It would position State and Federal managers to better achieve their objective of slowing the growth rate and maintaining a moderate density that has less potential to have detrimental impacts on habitat.

This in turn would help maintain this important subsistence resource in the region at sustainable levels and provide for harvest over the long term. Doing so would go a long way towards helping to address food security issues in remote communities throughout the region. Local community and Tribal representatives voiced their support for this harvest limit change for both the fall and winter hunts during recent meetings on herd and hunt management.

Thank you for your consideration.