



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
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Federal Subsistence Board News Release



Forest Service

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Federal Subsistence Board approves partial closure of Federal public lands to caribou hunting in Unit 23

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) has approved Temporary Special Action Request WSA17-03 with modification to close all Federal public lands within a 10 mile wide corridor (5 miles either side) along the Noatak River from the western boundary of Noatak National Preserve upstream to the confluence with the Cutler River; within the northern and southern boundaries of the Eli and Agashashok River drainages, respectively; and within the Squirrel River drainage to caribou hunting except by Federally qualified subsistence users for the July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018 regulatory year. The Board supports a more targeted closure at this time and would prefer to leave the question of a closure of all Federal public lands in Unit 23 to be addressed through the 2018-2020 regulatory cycle. The Board believes that the request, as modified, is a reasonable compromise for all users.

Closure of some Federal public lands for the continuation of subsistence uses is warranted. Continued complaints about conflicts surrounding the Noatak, Eli, Agashashok and Squirrel River drainages and the apparent benefit of the 2016-2017 Federal closure to Noatak residents, as evidenced by letters and public testimony, support the closure of Federal public lands in these areas. Additionally, the short-term effects of aircraft on caribou behavior can negatively affect hunting success and harvest. However, closure of all Federal public lands in Unit 23 represents an unnecessary restriction on non-Federally qualified users.

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

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