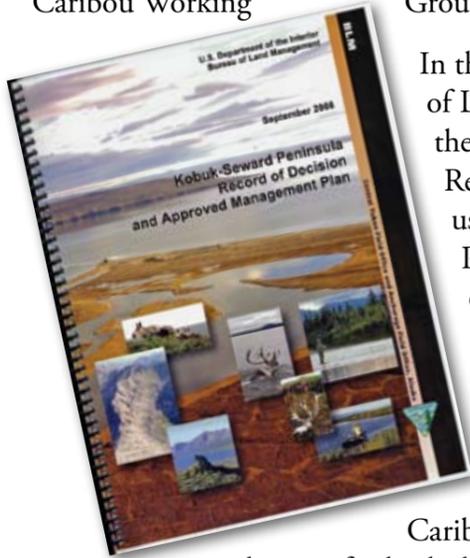


CARIBOU BITS

MAKING SENSE OF ALPHABET SOUP

DNR, BLM, EIS, RMP, NPR-A, ROD What's a caribou hunter to do!

It can be as intimidating as learning a new language, but just as we have mastered other terms and abbreviations that once were new—like hp, .30-06, V-8, cc's—we can learn this new language, too. Fortunately, the Caribou Working Group has gotten a head start.



In the past several years the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have written land use plans and Resource Management Plans (RMP) that will guide development on the lands they manage. Sometimes these plans also require that they produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before the final Record of Decision (ROD) is reached. The

Caribou Working Group met with planners for both these agencies, and provided extensive oral and written recommendations on how these lands should be managed so as not to impact the Western Arctic Herd.

In some cases the group feels they were effective in getting protections for caribou habitat included, but in too many cases the group remains concerned that resource development interests have outweighed those of caribou. But the Caribou Working Group maintains strong relationships with these agencies and will continue to monitor the progress of these plans. The group will also alert you when your personal comments are needed to protect caribou.

Stay tuned. And stay in touch with your Caribou Working Group representative.

POINT HOPE INCIDENT TO BE DISCUSSED

Given the extensive—and sometimes inflammatory—coverage by the press, most people are aware that this past July a number of caribou were shot outside of Point Hope but not all were completely salvaged. There have been conflicting reports of number of caribou killed, and the investigation by the Alaska State troopers is still on-going.

Point Hope's mayor, Steve Oomittuk, was quoted in the Anchorage Daily News as saying, "We were taught to respect our animals. We don't like it when something like this happens," he said. "There was a lot that were cut up and the meat was taken, but there were some that only some meat was taken and there were some that hadn't even been touched."

What exactly happened, who is responsible, and how the situation will ultimately be handled is yet to be determined. Nonetheless, the Caribou Working Group will discuss the incident at its upcoming Dec. 10-11 meeting in Anchorage. Roy Ashenfelter, chair of the Caribou Working Group, feels that this is an important issue for the group to tackle. He explains, "The point will not be to put anybody in a defensive position, but rather to give them an opportunity to speak. The group needs to open themselves up to a dialog, as well as develop a process where we can react more quickly to any unforeseen management issues affecting the herd."



A National Park Service study found airborne contaminants in Burial Lake in the Noatak Preserve, and Matcharak Lake in Gates of the Arctic National Park.



GENERALLY—BUT NOT ENTIRELY—GOOD NEWS

Between 2002 and 2007 the NPS conducted the Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Project (WACAP), described in Caribou Trails in 2005. Researchers sampled and analyzed air, snow, lichen and lake fish from eight western parks, looking for the presence of pesticides, industrial compounds, and contaminant metals carried on global air currents. While results show that in many cases northwest Alaska parks are less contaminated than in the Lower 48, there is still some cause for concern.

HIGH LEVELS OF PESTICIDES AND MERCURY IN LAKE TROUT

The average amount of mercury found in lake trout from Burial Lake exceeded the amount considered safe for human consumption. Mercury is a toxin that can cause neurological problems in fetuses, infants and children. Researchers note that some of this mercury may result from natural bacterial action in the surrounding wetlands, but still has a negative effect on human health. Lake trout live with year-round exposure to mercury, unlike migrating salmon, which remain very healthy to eat.

Results also show that lake trout in both Burial Lake and Matcharak Lake have enough contamination from the pesticide dieldrin to increase the risk of cancer, birth defects and reproductive problems in some people. However, researchers emphasize that the risk to human health is only for those eating lake trout regularly over the course of a lifetime, and does not apply to eating salmon, which remain an extremely healthy food source for people.

CARRIED ON THE WIND

Most of the contaminants found in Alaska have been carried on global air currents from as far away as industrial sources in Europe, Asia and the Lower 48. The study did not test for contaminants from other sources.

Want to know more?

For more information visit:

www.nature.nps.gov/air/Studies/air_toxics/wacap.cfm

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