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Advisory Announcement

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Fortymile Caribou Hunt along the Steese Highway and White Mountains to Close September 1, 2021-September 15, 2021

(Tok, Alaska) – The State of Alaska fall registration hunt (RC860) for Fortymile caribou in Zone 1, accessible from the Steese Highway and Chena Hot Springs Road, and in Zone 4 (White Mountains) will close on Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. Zones 1 and 4 will reopen on Thursday, September 16, 2021 at 12:01am. State hunting seasons for Fortymile caribou opened on August 10 in all zones.

Zones 1 and 4 encompass areas with a low-density moose population. The moose population could be negatively impacted if the opportunity to hunt caribou attracted a high number of hunters during the 1–15 September moose season. Therefore, zones 1 and 4 will be closed during this period and will reopen on 16 September. Typically, the RC860 harvest quota has been met for zones 1 and 4 by the end of August, but this year the quota has not been met so this temporary closure is necessary. The state caribou hunting season (RC860) is scheduled to remain open in Zones 2 and 3.

Caribou are abundant in Zone 2 (located in roadless portions of Game Management Units 20B, 20D north of the Tanana River, and western Unit 20E) and widely scattered throughout zones 1 and 3. ADF&G staff will be monitoring the hunt carefully to minimize chances that the quota is exceeded.

Caribou movements during fall are largely unpredictable, and seasons may be closed in other zones to keep the harvest within the harvest quota. Hunters are advised to call the Fortymile Caribou Hotline at 907-267-2310 before departing for the field to obtain the most current information on status of the hunt. Hunters must obtain the RC860 registration permit before hunting caribou in these areas.

These changes only apply to state caribou hunts in these areas. The federal caribou hunt on federal lands is not affected by these changes. Hunters with questions about federal subsistence regulations should call (800) 478-1456.

Successful hunters must report within three days of the kill online at (<http://hunt.alaska.gov>), by phone (883-2971), or in person at the ADF&G office in Tok. Hunters who report by phone must also mail their permit reports or drop them off to the Tok ADF&G office. Unsuccessful hunters must return their reports to the Tok office or report online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> by October 15.

Hunters are urged to obtain a receipt when they turn in their hunt reports or to mail them by delivery confirmation receipt. Permit holders who fail to report will not be allowed to obtain registration, drawing, or tier I and II permits next year, and may be cited for a violation of the Alaska hunting regulations.

Based on nutritional indices and population modeling using survival and birth rates, the Fortymile caribou herd has likely declined from its peak population size of about 80,000 in 2017 due to reduced nutritional status caused by overgrazing of its range. The Fortymile herd began showing signs of reduced nutritional status as it approached and exceeded 50,000 caribou. To decrease the potential for additional long-term impacts to the range, the current management goal is to quickly reduce the herd to a size that will allow the nutritional condition to improve. Once the fall hunt is over, the department will reassess the herd's nutritional condition before setting the winter harvest quota.

Hunters should be aware of local ordinances and restriction aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. Please respect any local restrictions, wear face coverings and practice social distancing when in communities in or near the hunt area. Hunters may want to call ahead to find out if local communities have supplies available for sale.

