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# Alaska Department of Fish and Game

## NEWS

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### **Fortymile Caribou Herd Winter Hunt to Open South of Birch Creek**

After delaying the opening in Zone 1 near Fairbanks for five weeks, the winter hunting season for Fortymile caribou will open in most of Units 20B and 25C.

The portion of Unit 20B south of the Chatanika River drainage and the portion of Unit 25C south of the mainstem of Birch Creek including the Crooked Creek Fork in the upper reaches of Birch Creek (not to be confused with the Crooked Creek that flows into Birch Creek east of Central) will open Wednesday January 5 at 12:01 am.

The season will remain open until the quota of 205 caribou is taken or until February 28, 2011.

Hunters who have taken a caribou in Alaska since July 1, 2010 are not eligible for this Fortymile winter season.

The open hunt area in Zone 1 is 10-20 miles from the Steese Highway. Hunters must be prepared to travel through and hunt in rugged terrain.

“It’s challenging,” said Management Coordinator Roy Nowlin. “We’re trying to allow hunters the opportunity to harvest caribou without substantially going over the quota. In the past, opening the season near the road when so many caribou were present near the road resulted in one- or two-day seasons. We chose to postpone the opening date until caribou were more dispersed to reduce the chance of an overharvest, but the caribou haven’t moved.”

Nowlin said the remainder of Zone 1 adjacent to the Steese Highway will be opened by emergency order if the caribou disperse more widely. “With nearly two months remaining in this winter season, there is a chance this could happen,” Nowlin said.

ADF&G staff have been monitoring caribou locations and movements since last November by tracking satellite GPS collars and, when weather allows, flying to locate radio collars.

The entire Fortymile Caribou hunt area is divided into three zones. Zone 2 and the northern portion of Zone 3 opened on December 1, but Zone 1 has remained closed because thousands of caribou gathered near the Steese Highway in late November and have remained there for more than a month. ADF&G staff delayed the opening of the hunting season in Zone 1 (the area accessible from the Steese Highway) to avoid exceeding the harvest quota.

Areas in Zone 3 accessible from the Taylor Highway south of Milepost 60 remain closed at this time. Large numbers of Nelchina caribou are present in the area and may not be taken under the state Fortymile permit hunt.

Nowlin said ADF&G staff have worked with the Department of Law to make sure the season complies with state law. "We have been exploring many different ideas to open this season. Ideas to limit the number of permits, to allow a few hunters chosen by a drawing, or to limit access to nonmotorized ground transportation have not been approved due to legal constraints," Nowlin said.

Hunting for Fortymile caribou is regulated by joint state-federal registration permit hunt RC867. The season for federally-qualified subsistence hunters remains open on federal land in the area.

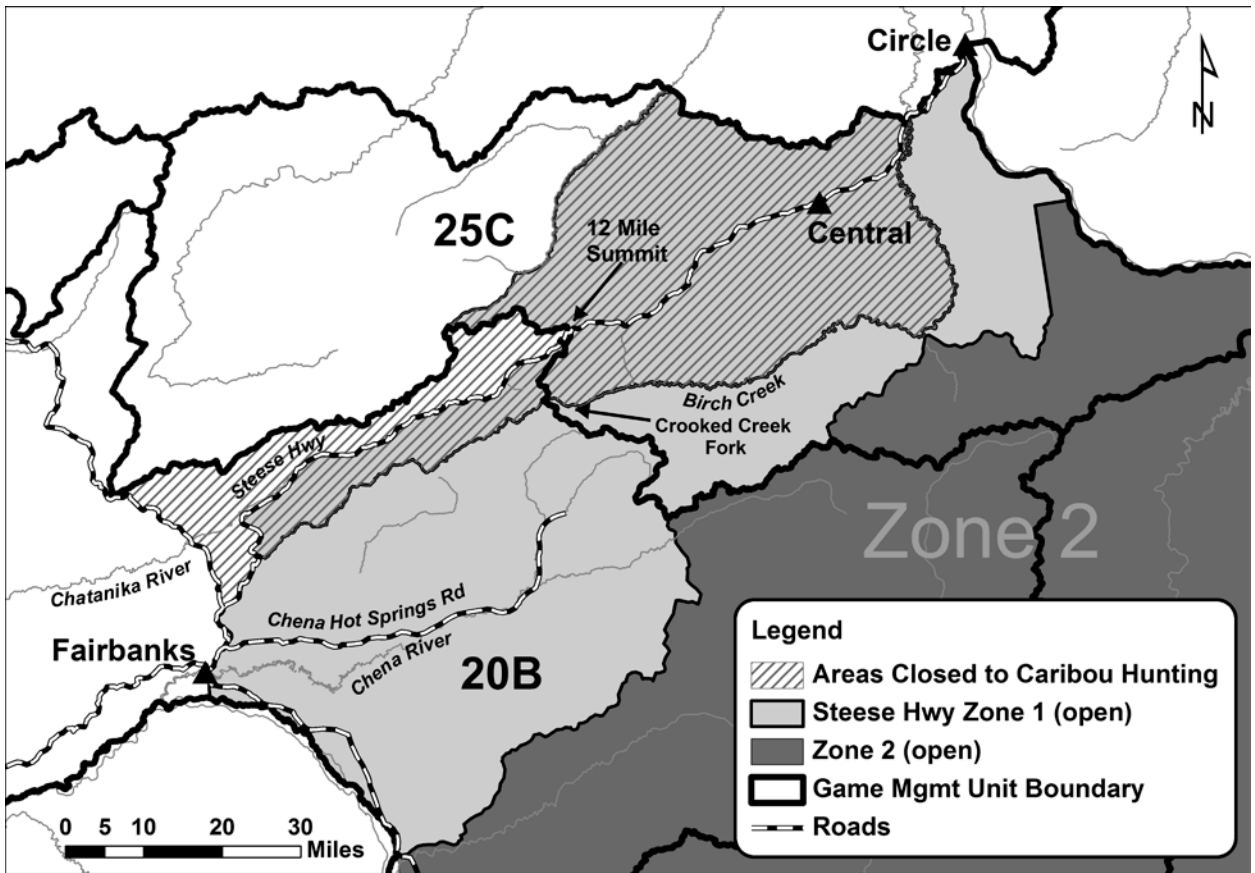
Successful hunters must report within three days of the kill on the internet at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>, or in person or by phone to the ADF&G office in Tok (883-2971). Hunters who report by phone must also mail their permit reports to the Tok ADF&G office or drop them off at any other ADF&G office. Unsuccessful hunters must return their reports to the Tok office or report online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> by March 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 II permits next year, and may be cited for a violation of the Alaska hunting regulations.

Management of the Fortymile Herd is designed to allow it to continue to grow and expand into its former range in Alaska and Yukon. At about 51,000 animals, the Fortymile herd is the largest caribou herd in Interior Alaska.

Hunters with questions about the state season should call the Fortymile Hotline at (907) 267-2310.

Hunters with questions about federal subsistence regulations should call (800) 478-1456.



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