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PRESS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Black Bear Hunters Reminded to Register, Report and Refrain from Taking Sows

(Cordova) – Early spring-like weather on the heels of a mild winter means black bears – and bear hunters – will be stirring soon in Prince William Sound's Game Management Unit 6D. But before hunters hit the beaches and hills in search of bruins, there are a few things they must know:

- **Permit required.** Black bears may be hunted in Unit 6D by (RL065) registration permit only. Permits can be obtained online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> or in person at Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices.
- **Eligibility.** Hunters who harvested a black bear anywhere in Alaska during the current regulatory year – that's anytime since July 1, 2015 – are not eligible to participate in this spring's hunt.
- **Bag limit.** The bag limit is one bear; the taking of sows with cubs is prohibited. To conserve Prince William Sound black bears hunters are asked to avoid harvesting sows altogether and to selectively take mature boars only. Selective harvest tips are provided on the Division of Wildlife Conservation webpages at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=blackbearhunting.selecting> and <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bearbaiting.bearchoice>
- **Reporting.** Successful hunters must report their harvests within five days of taking a black bear. Report online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>, in person at a department office, or by phone at (907) 424-3215. Skull and hide, unfrozen with evidence of sex and claws naturally attached, must be sealed within 30 days of kill.
- **Be alert!** The black bear hunting season in Unit 6D will close by emergency order if the department's maximum allowable harvest of 200 bears is reached, or once 50 sows are taken.

Declines in harvest, bears observed, and hunter success rates suggest that black bears may have decreased in Unit 6D. To address this concern, the Alaska Board of Game in 2015 adopted a registration hunt system. Black bear harvests in the area, which encompasses coastal areas surrounding Whittier, Valdez and Cordova, nearly tripled from the late 1990s to 2007 and have fallen steadily since.

Harvests in regulatory years 2012 and 2013 fell 25 percent and 47 percent, respectively, below the previous regulatory year. At the same time, the number of black bear sows taken by area hunters grew. The percentage of sows harvested in Unit 6D increased to more than 40 percent during regulatory years 2011 – 2013, easing to about 28 percent in 2015 when the hunting season was closed early by emergency order.

Anecdotal reports from a diverse group of users suggest a decline in bears over the last decade. Also, exceptional weather during three of the last five years may have impacted black bear behavior, availability and possibly survival. The department will be conducting research projects in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service this summer to better understand these factors.

For more information on black bear hunting in Unit 6, contact Cordova Area Wildlife Biologist Charlotte Westing at (907) 424-3215 or charlotte.westing@alaska.gov.

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