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ADVISORY ANNOUNCEMENT

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Fall Mulchatna and Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Hunting Opportunities

(Palmer) – State Caribou Registration permit hunt, RC503, in Game Management Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A and 19B, will open at 12:00 am on August 1, 2020 with a reduced season and bag limit; and State Caribou Registration permit hunt RC501 for the Nushagak Peninsula herd will not be offered this year. Permits for RC503 will be available online (<https://secure.wildlife.alaska.gov/ePermit>), in person at ADF&G offices in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, McGrath, Palmer, Soldotna, and at license vendors within the hunt area beginning Monday, July 20, 2020. Hunters are encouraged to go online to get permits to reduce personal contact in offices.

The department's July 2020 post-calving survey estimated the Mulchatna herd at approximately 13,500 caribou – below the population objective of 30,000–80,000 caribou. This is consistent with the previous population estimate from the summer of 2019. Caribou population objectives are based on the number of animals a given range can sustainably support. Information collected over the previous few years identified good calf productivity with high pregnancy rates and good calf survival indicating that the Mulchatna herd's range is healthy and not limiting.

Since 2011 Mulchatna caribou have been under intensive management to increase the herd's population size and harvest by humans. The management approach has been to limit predation by wolves on caribou calves by specifically targeting core calving areas for wolf removal. In 2017 this area was expanded to the full 10,000 square mile control area designated by the Board of Game encompassing all core calving areas in Unit 17. In August 2019, the department took additional conservation measures by reducing the bag limit from 2 caribou to 1 caribou (EO 04-06-19) and later closing the hunt entirely on January 31, 2020 after stakeholder consultation. Hunters are reminded that completing a hunt report for RC503 regardless of success is critical information for managers as a considerable number of reports have not been received for the 2019–2020 season.

For the fall of 2020, the bag limit for caribou has been set to one bull caribou with season dates of August 1–September 20 only; a limited number of bull caribou are available for harvest. No winter hunting opportunities for caribou will be offered this year.

State caribou hunting on the Nushagak Peninsula under registration caribou hunt RC501 will not be offered

this year to adhere to a joint management strategy with Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. Previous years had offered bag limits of up to two caribou to reduce the herd and have been successful. This does not affect the federal subsistence hunt for Nushagak Peninsula caribou. Federal managers will announce 2020 federal subsistence hunting regulations for Nushagak Peninsula caribou after consultation with the Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Planning Committee.

Additional state caribou hunting opportunities are available under general harvest in Units 9D, 10, 19C and 19D.

RC503 hunt permit reports are due within 5 days of a successful harvest or 15 days after the close of season for unsuccessful hunts or those that did not hunt. It is important that permittees return their hunt reports to provide wildlife managers the information they need to understand harvest by mailing in their paper reports, completing them online at https://secure.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=interperm.enter_report_hunterid, or in person at any Alaska Department of Fish and Game office.

For additional information contact Regional Management Coordinator Todd Rinaldi at todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov or 861-2105.