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Advisory Announcement

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Winter Seasons Closed for Nelchina Caribou Hunts RC561, RC562, CC001, & DC485

(Glennallen) – Winter hunting seasons for Nelchina caribou Tier I hunts RC561, RC562, and CC001 as well as the drawing permit hunt DC485 are closed by emergency order.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s summer 2022 estimate for the Nelchina herd was approximately 21,000 caribou, which is well below the fall population objectives of 35,000–40,000 caribou. The department determined that fall harvest opportunity for up to 615 bull caribou could be offered for state hunts without negatively impacting the reproductive potential of the herd. Fall quotas were announced in July. Quotas were determined to allow each permitted hunt fall hunting opportunity until that hunt reached its quota, following Board of Game guidance. Each hunt was impacted by different variables including weather, herd location, water levels, day that the hunt opened, and overall hunter effort.

Hunt	Number of 2022 Permits	2022 Fall Harvest	2022 Season Length
YC495	200	35	5 days
DC475	0	N/A	N/A
DC485	499	48	32 days
RC561	2,449	161	8 days
RC562	2,839	205	13 days
CC001	827	66	42 days
Federal		To be determined	
		515	

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s fall 2022 estimate for the Nelchina herd is approximately 17,433 caribou with an adult sex ratio of 26 bulls to 100 cows. Adult cow and adult bull estimates are well below the fall objectives. To protect the reproductive potential of the herd while numbers are low, no winter hunt opportunity will be offered. Fall hunting seasons are less impactful on caribou than are winter seasons, when animals are navigating an increase in stressors such as limited nutritional availability, cold temperatures, snow and ice, and potential pregnancy in females. Hunting activities cause stress for all animals in a targeted group, rather than the target animal itself. Additionally, the majority of the Nelchina herd typically migrates out of Unit 13. Small, localized groups remaining in Unit 13 are protected from overharvest with the closure of all state winter hunting seasons.

For the 2023 hunting season no draw hunts will be offered. Subsistence hunting opportunities for Nelchina caribou are offered through RC561, RC562, and CC001, which must be applied for during the

November/December application period prior to the fall hunting season. These hunts were implemented by the Board of Game to provide opportunity for users who wish to hunt moose and caribou in Unit 13 only. At this time we can expect that harvest quotas for Nelchina caribou will be low for the 2023 fall hunting season and there may not be a winter season. Hunters are encouraged to consider this likelihood when deciding whether to apply for a Nelchina subsistence hunt opportunity.

All RC561, RC562, CC001 and DC485 permit holders for the 2022/23 season are required to report. Permit holders can file hunt reports online at <http://adfg.alaska.gov>, by phone at (907) 822-3461, or in person at the Glennallen or Palmer Fish and Game offices.

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