

**Division of Wildlife Conservation**  
**Bruce Dale, Acting Director**  
Headquarters  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526



**Alaska Department of Fish and Game**  
**Sam Cotten, Commissioner**  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526  
[www.adfg.alaska.gov](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov)

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: Cathie Harms, 907-459-7231**

### **Most of Winter Fortymile Caribou Season to Close**

The State of Alaska winter hunting season for Fortymile caribou under Registration Hunt RC867 will close on lands accessible from the Steese Highway and Chena Hot Springs Road (the remainder of Zone 1, western Zone 2 and all of Zone 4), at 11:59 p.m. Sunday night, February 22, 2015.

The hunting season remains open only in the northern part of Zone 3 accessible from the Taylor Highway (north of a line that passes through the Fortymile River bridge, Milepost 112.6 of the Taylor Highway, 64° 18.535' N. latitude) and in the eastern portion of Zone 2 in Unit 20E. Up to 50 more caribou may be taken in these portions of Zones 2 and 3 before the season closes on March 31.

The southern portion of Zone 3 remains closed because large numbers of Nelchina Herd caribou are still present. Nelchina caribou may not be legally harvested under registration permit RC867. Southern Zone 3 will open if the Nelchina Caribou Herd leaves the area.

The herd has been primarily accessible from the Steese Highway and Chena Hot Springs Road in Zone 1 during the winter season. "Caribou have been available to hunters and harvest has been slow and steady," said Tok Area Biologist Jeff Gross. The winter harvest quota was 472 caribou. Gross expects the winter harvest to reach 422 by the date and time of this closure, leaving 50 caribou for Zone 3.

The annual cow quota is 250, and 240 have been harvested so far. The quota of 250 cows is likely to be reached by Feb. 22, but cows have shown unusually high survival rates (~98%) so far this winter. As a result, managers plan to leave the bag limit at 1 caribou for the remainder of the season rather than changing the limit to 1 bull.

"A combination of favorable weather and a reduced numbers of wolves in portions of the range used by the herd this winter have likely had a positive effect on winter survival rates," Gross said.

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 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 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> within 15 days of the close of the season.

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.

The Alaska Board of Game endorsed the Fortymile Caribou Herd Harvest Plan as a means of guiding harvest of the herd from 2012 through 2018. Management is designed to allow the Fortymile Herd to continue to grow and expand within habitat limitations into its former range in Alaska and Yukon. At about 50,000 animals, the Fortymile Herd is the largest caribou herd in Interior Alaska.

