

**Cora Campbell, Commissioner**



Public Communications  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526  
(907) 465-6166

# Alaska Department of Fish and Game

## NEWS

March 31, 2011

CONTACT: Lem Butler (907) 861-2105

### **Wolf Hunting and Trapping Seasons Extended in Units 9 and 10**

The State of Alaska wolf hunting and trapping seasons will remain open in Game Management Units 9 and 10 to allow more opportunity for people to take wolves on the Alaska Peninsula and on Unimak Island.

The season extensions were authorized by Commissioner Cora Campbell in response to caribou population declines in Southwest Alaska that have resulted in several consecutive years of caribou hunting closures throughout the area. The lack of caribou hunting opportunity has made it difficult for residents of this remote area to meet their subsistence needs.

“We have heard from many residents of the region who are frustrated with closed caribou seasons and the fact that few management tools are available to correct the problem,” said Lem Butler, ADFG Management Supervisor.

The Alaska Board of Game adopted regulations extending the wolf trapping and hunting seasons during their meeting in Wasilla, but the new regulations will not go into effect until May. The Commissioner’s action will allow hunting and trapping to continue uninterrupted until the new regulations go into effect.

State biologists investigating caribou population declines identified wolf predation as a major factor limiting calf recruitment and population growth. The lack of recruitment has also reduced the number of bulls in several herds. In the case of Unimak caribou, bull numbers are so low that caribou pregnancy rates and calf production have also decreased.

Another consequence of the prolonged period of poor calf recruitment is that the age structure of the populations becomes skewed towards older-aged individuals. The skewed age structure implies that the many of the remaining animals have a short life expectancy and that the population will decline further if calf recruitment is not improved. The skewed age structure also explains why bulls, which have a shorter lifespan than cows, have declined in number even after caribou hunting seasons had been closed.

Predation management plans have been developed to reduce wolf predation, but the plans have not been implemented due to restrictions on federal lands. Earlier this month the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it selected the “No Action” alternative in an Environmental Assessment that would have allowed state biologists to remove 7 wolves from Unimak Island to reverse the caribou population decline on that island.

With few options remaining to reduce wolf predation on caribou Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Board of Game have authorized the wolf season extensions in an attempt to restore these herds.

The emergency order extending wolf hunting and trapping seasons is being implemented with the knowledge and concurrence of the Alaska Board of Game.

###