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NEWS

Thursday, February 17, 2011

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Fortymile Caribou Season Opened on Steese Highway

The State of Alaska winter hunting season for Fortymile caribou (RC867) in areas accessible from the Steese Highway and Chena Hot Springs Road will open at 12:01 am Saturday morning, February 19, 2011 and remain open until the quota is reached. The portion of the White Mountains caribou hunt (RC879) within the Chatanika River Drainage (north of the Steese Highway) will also re-open at 12:01 am Saturday morning, February 19, 2011.

"We flew over the area on Wednesday. Caribou are moving, but there are plenty left for hunters," said Tok Area Biologist Jeff Gross. "We're hoping to give hunters a chance to harvest more caribou this winter."

Hunters have reported taking 110 caribou in Zone 1 out of an original quota of 205. The remaining quota in Zone 3 (lands accessible from the Taylor Highway) is 90 caribou, but Gross believes the herd won't make it back to the Taylor Highway by the end of the season. An additional 70 animals from the Zone 3 quota will be transferred to Zone 1 for the remainder of the season, bringing the remaining quota in Zone 1 up to 165 caribou.

Gross noted that the last few Yukon Quest mushers are expected to be past the hunt area by Saturday. ADF&G staff have talked with Quest officials to keep them posted on hunt plans. "We're encouraging hunters to be on the lookout for mushers to be on the safe side. Everyone should be careful," Gross said.

The winter hunting season for Fortymile caribou was scheduled to open December 1, but large numbers of caribou gathered near the Steese Highway and remained in the area for months. Portions of Zone 1 and the Chatanika River drainage have been closed to prevent an overharvest.

Hunting for Fortymile caribou is regulated by joint state-federal registration permit hunt RC867. The season for federally-qualified subsistence hunters has remained open on federal land in the area.

The State of Alaska hunt for Fortymile caribou will reopen in Zone 1 as shown on the attached map. Zone 1 includes lands accessible from the Steese Highway and Chena Hot Springs Road in Units 20B and 25C.

State and federal hunting seasons for Fortymile caribou remain open in Zone 2 (located in parts of Unit 20B, 20D north of the Tanana River, and western 20E) and in Zone 3 (on lands accessible from the Taylor Highway) north of milepost 60.

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 end 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 II permits next year, and may be cited for a violation of the Alaska hunting regulations.

Management is designed to allow the Fortymile herd to continue to grow and expand into its former range in Alaska and Yukon. At about 51,000 animals, the Fortymile herd is the largest caribou herd in Interior Alaska.

Hunters with questions about the state season should call the Fortymile Hotline at (907) 267-2310.

Hunters with questions about federal subsistence regulations should call (800) 478-1456.

