

Division of Wildlife Conservation  
Doug Vincent-Lang, Acting Director  
Kotzebue Area Office  
PO Box 689  
Kotzebue, AK 99752-689



Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Cora Campbell, Commissioner  
PO Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526  
www.adfg.alaska.gov

## PRESS RELEASE

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**CONTACT: Charlotte Westing, Area Biologist  
(907)-442-1712; [charlotte.westing@alaska.gov](mailto:charlotte.westing@alaska.gov)**

### **State closes next muskox Tier II Hunt TX107 in Unit 23 due to illegal harvest**

Kotzebue – Today, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) announced that the next State Tier II subsistence muskox hunt (TX107) in Unit 23, north and west of the Noatak River will be closed for the regulatory year starting July 1, 2013 at 12:01 a.m. The harvest quota for TX107 has been exceeded by recent illegal harvest and the hunting season in the next regulatory year is being closed to conserve the Cape Thompson muskox population. This closure does not affect the State Tier II muskox hunts that occur on the Seward Peninsula during 2013-2014.

Acting on a report, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers investigated and confirmed at least 5 cow muskoxen from the Cape Thompson population in Unit 23 were shot illegally and left un-salvaged sometime during January or February 2013. This wanton waste of muskox is additive to the harvests by subsistence hunters who completed their hunts by March 2013.

The Cape Thompson muskox population primarily occupies the portion of Unit 23 north and west of the Noatak River. The spring 2013 population estimate in the traditional survey area was 227 muskoxen, showing recent stability in the population that has declined 34% from its highest level documented in 2005. Since the inception of hunt TX107, a conservative harvest management strategy has been adopted to allow for the combined goals of herd growth and hunt opportunity. To achieve these goals, a bull-only harvest rate of  $\leq 3\%$  has been applied to the population to establish harvest quotas for subsistence hunting opportunity in regulatory year 2013-2014. This approach of reducing harvest is very important now that the population may be declining.

The harvest quota for 2013-2014 Tier II muskox hunt TX107 in Unit 23 north and west of the Noatak River is 6 bull muskoxen. Since illegal take has removed at least 5 cow muskoxen from the population, the harvest quota for this hunt area has been achieved. The illegal take of cows is additive to the Tier II harvest of 5 bulls taken during the 2012-2013 season and affects the future growth potential of the muskox population. Conservation of the herd requires closure of the next TX107 hunting season.

No further harvest from the Cape Thompson muskox population is warranted during regulatory year 2013-2014.

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