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Advisory Announcement

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Change in Upper Lynn Canal brown bear harvest aims for population recovery

(JUNEAU) — In response to unsustainable levels of human-caused mortality in 2020, biologists with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have announced a change to 2021 harvest management for brown bears in Game Management Unit 1D.

The harvest limit for the spring 2021 hunt (RB051) will be five brown bears, including no more than two females. Once the cap is reached, the season will be closed by emergency order. If two females are harvested, the remainder of the spring and fall (RB050) hunts will be closed by emergency order. All human-cause mortality, including a bear killed in defense of life and property, will count toward these harvest limits.

During 2020, at least 49 brown bears were killed in Unit 1D, which includes the Chilkat Valley, Haines and Skagway areas. Of those bears, 30 were non-hunt kills, such as defense of life and property, or illegal, and 19 were harvested by hunters. Last year saw an increase in bear/human conflict in Unit 1D communities due, in part, to low availability of natural foods and an abundance of unsecured attractants, such as trash, livestock and ripened fruit.

"ADF&G understands the importance of public safety, as well as brown bear hunting and viewing in the communities of Haines, Klukwan and Skagway," ADF&G Wildlife Biologist Carl Koch said, "but this mortality event required ADF&G biologists to reassess and modify brown bear management to stabilize and recover the population."

"The recent level of brown bear mortality is unsustainable and population recovery can only be achieved by limiting hunter harvest and dramatically reducing the number of bears killed for property protection," Koch said.

Spring 2021 harvest limits are part of a larger plan produced by ADF&G which aims to manage for reduced hunting and total mortality. The goal of the plan is to recover the brown bear population in Unit 1D and to provide greater sustainable harvest opportunity in the future. Fall 2021 hunting

opportunity will be evaluated based on any additional human-caused bear mortality during the summer of 2021. Guides and hunters are encouraged to select male bears for harvest to protect the female reproductive potential of the brown bear population. The aforementioned plan, and an executive summary, will soon be available to the public.

ADF&G intends to provide as much brown bear hunting opportunity as possible. Achieving this will require shared sacrifice and cooperation between agencies, brown bear guides and hunters, as well as Haines residents to recover the 1D brown bear population.

The mission of ADF&G, Division of Wildlife Conservation, is protecting, maintaining, and improving wildlife populations, including brown bear, consistent with Alaska's mandated sustained yield principle.

Additional resources:

For more information on selecting for male brown bears in the field, ADF&G has a number of educational materials available, including the "Take a Closer Look" video. This video teaches hunters how to judge the age and sex of brown bears by looking closely at their behavior, size, shape, body characteristics and proportions. Find it on the ADF&G website at <http://adfg.alaska.gov>. Copies of the booklet "Brown Bears: Identifying males and females in the field" is also available at local ADF&G offices or by request.

Conflicts between humans and bears can be reduced through bear education. ADF&G encourages the residents and local governments in Unit 1D to continue proactively working toward securing any potential bear attractants. Electric fences are effective in protecting valuable livestock, fruit trees, vegetable gardens or compost piles, for instance. Trash and freezers should be stored inside a secure structure. Find more resources on living in bear country online at <http://alaskabears.alaska.gov>.

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