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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Previous Illegal Harvest Closes Unit 23 Tier II Muskox Hunt TX107**

Nome – Today, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) issued an emergency order that closes the State Tier II subsistence muskox hunt (TX107) for Unit 23, north and west of the Noatak River, for regulatory year 2013-2014 which begins July 1, 2013. This closure is the regulatory action that establishes ‘no open season’ in response to the illegal harvest of cow muskox reported by the department on May 15, 2013.

Hunting is closed because the harvest quota for the next season has been reached through the earlier incident of illegal harvest and no additional harvest is warranted. This closure only affects Hunt TX107 does not affect the State Tier II muskox hunts on the Seward Peninsula during 2013-2014.

As reported on May 15, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers investigated and confirmed at least 5 cow muskoxen from the Cape Thompson population were shot illegally and left un-salvaged sometime during January or February 2013. This illegal take of cow muskox was additive to the legal harvest of bull muskox by subsistence hunters who completed their hunts in March 2013. The over-quota illegal take of cows has filled the next available harvest quota requiring closure of the TX107 season in regulatory year 2013-2014.

The Cape Thompson muskox population 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 at a level that has declined 34% from its highest level documented in 2005. Due to population reduction, a conservative harvest management strategy has been adopted to allow for the combined goals of herd growth and hunt opportunity. A bull-only harvest rate of 2.5 % has been applied to the population yielding a quota of 6 bulls for subsistence hunting opportunity in regulatory year 2013-2014.

The take of cows significantly affects the future growth potential of the muskox population. Conservation of the herd is needed and managers will continue to monitor the population to determine the timing of the next available quota for subsistence hunting.

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