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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Prince William Sound Black Bear Declines Prompt Shortened Spring Hunting Season**

(Cordova) – Concerns over a prolonged black bear population decline in Prince William Sound have led area wildlife managers to shorten the 2015 spring hunting season in Game Management Subunit 6D. In an effort to prevent overharvest, the spring black bear season in 6D will close by emergency order on May 27, 2015, at 11:59 p.m., two weeks earlier than usual. This date was determined considering a Maximum Allowable Harvest objective of 200 bears and the date at which that harvest is traditionally met.

“Black bear harvests in the subunit, which encompasses coastal areas surrounding Whittier, Valdez and Cordova, nearly tripled from the late 1990s to 2007 and have steadily declined since”, said Cordova Area Wildlife Biologist Charlotte Westing. She added that harvests in regulatory years 2012 and 2013 fell 25 percent and 47 percent, respectively, below the previous regulatory year.

Another red flag for wildlife managers is the growing number of black bear sows being taken by hunters. “The percentage of females in the harvest has increased to over 40 percent the last three regulatory years and has exceeded management objectives each year since 2006,” said Westing.

Anecdotal reports from a diverse group of users suggest a decline in bears during the last decade. Also, exceptional weather during three of the last five years may have impacted black bear behavior, availability and possibly survival.

The emergency order is the first in a series of actions aimed to reduce the harvest of black bears in Prince William Sound. The Alaska Board of Game recently adopted a regulation to put in place a registration hunt starting in the fall of 2015. Details will be provided at a later date.

For more information on the 6D emergency closure, contact Westing at (907) 424-3215 or [charlotte.westing@alaska.gov](mailto:charlotte.westing@alaska.gov).

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