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PRESS RELEASE

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Parts of Unit 20B Moose Season to be Shortened By 5 Days

The bull moose hunting season in a portion of Game Management Unit 20B will be 5 days shorter this fall. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued an emergency order to reduce the hunting season length in that portion of Unit 20B in the Salcha River drainage downstream from Goose Creek and upstream from and including Butte Creek, southeast of the Moose Creek dike within a half mile of each side of the Richardson Highway (except Birch, Harding, and Lost Lake closed areas), and the portion called "20B remainder" in the Alaska Hunting Regulations. This includes a majority of the road accessible areas in Unit 20B.

This fall, residents of Alaska will be allowed to hunt bull moose during September 1-15 in these areas and nonresidents can hunt September 5-15. These season changes will be published in the 2018-2019 Alaska Hunting Regulations that will be available to the public beginning July 1.

The bull moose season is being shortened to season dates that were in place for many years prior to 2011 because the bull-to-cow ratio has now declined to 17 bulls per 100 cows, well below the department's management objective of 30 bulls per 100 cows.

"This bull-to-cow ratio has been declining for the last several years and is likely due to a harvest rate that is too high for this population", said Tony Hollis, Fairbanks Area Management Biologist.

"Reducing the season length will help the ratio recover".

Unit 20B historically had a 15-day moose season, but during 2009–2017, the bull moose season was 20 days long. In 2009, the moose population was estimated at 18,000-20,000 moose, well above the management objective of 12,000-15,000 and too many moose for the available habitat. To lower the population to levels within habitat capabilities, the department expanded moose hunting opportunity. This included increasing the bull moose season by 5 days.

The fall 2017 moose population estimate of approximately 12,871 moose indicates that the moose population has now been reduced to an appropriate level for the amount of available habitat; however the bull:cow ratio is below the objective of 30 bulls per 100 cows.

The ratio of 30 bulls per 100 cows is desirable to provide good opportunity for moose hunters in the area. "While we were working to reduce the population, this level of bull harvest was sustainable," said Hollis. "Now it's not."

Moose hunting season dates will not change in other portions of Unit 20B this year, including the

Minto Flats Management Area, the Fairbanks Management Area, and the Middle Fork of the Chena River and Salcha River upstream of Goose Creek. Those are areas have more difficult access and fewer moose are harvested annually. “The reduction in season length targets that portion of Unit 20B that has the best access, the most hunting pressure and the highest moose harvest”, said Hollis.

Hollis urges all hunter that hunt moose in Unit 20B to read the 2018-2019 Alaska Hunting Regulations before they head out hunting and make sure they know the season dates in the area they plan to hunt.

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