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ADVISORY ANNOUNCEMENT

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Mulchatna Caribou Hunt Bag Limit Changes to One Caribou

(Dillingham) – State Caribou hunters under Registration Permit RC503 in Game Management Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A and 19B will be limited to harvesting one caribou only this hunting season. In a response to a population decline in the Mulchatna caribou herd, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued an emergency order changing the bag limit from two (2) caribou to one (1) caribou only under RC503.

The department's July 2019 post-calving survey estimated the Mulchatna herd at approximately 13,500 caribou – below the population objective of 30,000–80,000 caribou. Caribou population objectives are based on the number of animals a given range can sustainably support. Too many caribou can over-graze a herd's range leading to malnutrition or starvation. Sometimes caribou will leave over-grazed areas expanding their range for areas of better forage. Information collected over the previous few years identified good calf productivity with high pregnancy rates and above average calf survival indicating that the Mulchatna herd's range is healthy and not limiting.

Since 2011 Mulchatna caribou have been under intensive management in an effort to increase the herd's population size and harvest by humans. The management approach has been to limit predation by wolves on caribou calves by specifically targeting core calving areas for wolf removal. In 2017 this area was expanded to the full 10,000 square mile control area designated by the Board of Game encompassing all core calving areas in Unit 17.

The season will continue to run through March 31, 2020. Hunters are reminded that only one caribou per regulatory year can be taken under a state permit in Unit 17 this year. Additional state caribou hunting opportunities are available on the Nushagak Peninsula (RC501) and under general harvest in Unit 19C and 19D.

Successful hunters can provide wildlife managers the information they need to closely track in-season harvest by filling hunt reports online at https://secure.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=interperm.enter_report_hunterid, or in person at any Alaska Department of Fish and Game office. Hunts may be closed by emergency order to avoid overharvest.

For additional information contact Area Wildlife Biologist Lauren Watine at lauren.watine@alaska.gov or 842-2334 or Todd Rinaldi at todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov or 861-2105.