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Advisory Announcement

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New Fall Fortymile Caribou Bag Limit and Harvest Quota Announced

(Fairbanks) – The State of Alaska Fortymile Registration Hunt (RC860) will open as scheduled this fall on August 10, 2020 in all hunt zones, with the following changes:

The resident bag limit has been increased to 2 caribou (either sex) in all Zones to help achieve an increased harvest objective for 2020. Hunters can obtain two RC860 Registration Permits and will be allowed to harvest both caribou on the same day, provided they have a separate permit for each caribou. The nonresident bag limit will remain one bull caribou.

The fall Fortymile harvest quota is 5,000 caribou, including 3,000 in Zones 1 and 4 combined (Steese Highway/Chena Hot Springs Road), 1,700 in Zone 3 (Taylor Highway) and up to 300 in Zone 2 (roadless area). Zone quotas may be adjusted between the road accessible Zones 1, 3 and 4 once the hunt begins to help extend season length in Zones with the highest harvest.

“Caribou are readily available along the Steese Highway now,” said Fortymile caribou manager, Jeff Gross. “With a larger quota and multiple bag limit this year, we hope to provide hunters with a longer season and excellent harvest opportunity.”

“We are asking hunters for their help and patience by allowing department staff to take samples from their harvested caribou if we contact them in the field,” said Gross. “Such samples will help us better understand what’s going on with the herd and help provide the best harvest opportunity for all hunters now and in the future.”

If a hunter already harvested one caribou in another hunt area in Alaska, a second caribou can be harvested under the RC860 hunt this year. Hunters with questions about harvesting multiple caribou in Alaska can refer to the 2020–2021 State of Alaska Hunting regulations or contact the department for further clarification before heading to the field.

These changes affect only State of Alaska seasons and bag limits and do not affect federally-qualified subsistence users hunting under federal regulations. Changes to Federal seasons and bag limits will be announced by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). For more information about federal seasons and bag limits, contact Eastern Interior Assistant Field Manager John Haddix at (907) 474-2350 or jahaddix@blm.gov.

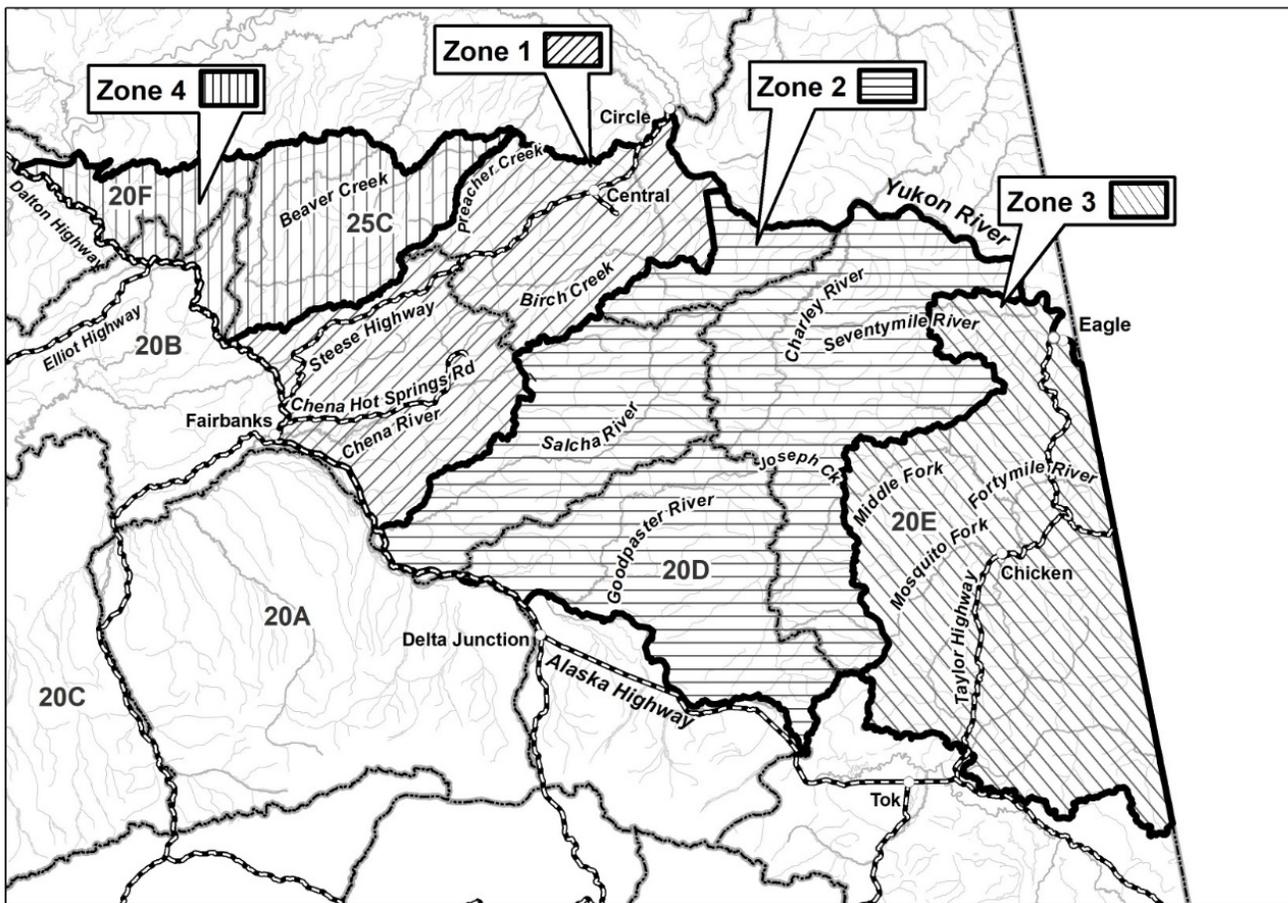
Successful hunters must report within three days of the kill on the internet at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>, or in person or by phone to the ADF&G office in Tok (883-2971). Hunters who report by phone must also mail their permit reports or drop them off to the Tok ADF&G office. Unsuccessful hunters must return their reports to the Tok office or report online by October 15. Permit holders who fail to report will not be allowed to obtain

registration, drawing, or tier I and II permits next year, and may be cited for a violation of the Alaska hunting regulations.

Biologists will continue to carefully monitor herd nutritional status, natural mortality and effects of increased harvest on the herd size. To do this, department staff will be in the field during the first few days of the season collecting biological samples from harvested caribou.

Based on indices of poor nutritional condition and population models, the Fortymile caribou herd is likely at the beginning of a herd decline due to reduced nutritional status caused by overgrazing of its range. To decrease the potential for additional long-term impacts to the habitat, the best management strategy is to quickly reduce the herd to a size that will allow the nutritional condition to improve. Once the fall hunt is over, the department will reassess the herd’s nutritional condition before setting the winter harvest quota.

The Fortymile herd began showing signs of reduced nutritional status as it approached and exceeded 50,000 caribou, and likely experienced a peak population size of about 80,000 in 2017. Although environmental conditions have not been adequate to complete a population census since 2017, population models indicate the herd may have already declined by as much as 20-30% since 2017.



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