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ADVISORY ANNOUNCEMENT

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Mulchatna Caribou and Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Hunting Seasons

(Dillingham) – State and Federal Caribou Registration permit hunts, RC503, for Mulchatna caribou in Game Management Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A and 19B, will not open this regulatory year; and State Caribou Registration permit hunt RC501 for the Nushagak Peninsula herd will not be offered this year.

The department's July 2021 post-calving survey estimated the Mulchatna herd at approximately 12,850 caribou – below the population objective of 30,000–80,000 caribou. This is consistent with the previous population estimate from the summers of 2019 and 2020. Caribou population objectives are based on the number of animals a given range can sustainably support. Recent research has identified good calf productivity with high pregnancy rates and good calf survival indicating that the Mulchatna herd's range is healthy and not limiting.

Since 2011 Mulchatna caribou have been under intensive management 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. Since August 2019, the department and USFWS have taken additional conservation measures by reducing bag limits, shortening seasons, and closing seasons early by EO after stakeholder consultation. Hunters are reminded that completing a hunt report for RC503 regardless of success is critical information for managers as a considerable number of reports have not been received for the 2020–2021 season.

State caribou hunting on the Nushagak Peninsula under registration caribou hunt RC501 will not be offered this year to adhere to a joint management strategy with Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. Previous years had offered bag limits of up to two caribou to reduce the herd and have been successful. This does not affect the federal subsistence hunt for Nushagak Peninsula caribou. Federal managers will announce 2021 federal subsistence hunting regulations for Nushagak Peninsula caribou after consultation with the Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Planning Committee.

Additional state caribou hunting opportunities are available under general harvest in Units 9D, 10, 19C and 19D.

For additional information contact Area Wildlife Biologist Bryan Reiley at bryan.reiley@alaska.gov or 842-2334 and visit:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static-f/hunting/caribouhunting/pdfs/mulchatna_newsletter_summer_2021.pdf