



December 29, 2017

An Agenda Change Request (ACR 3) has been submitted to the Alaska Board of Game requesting to change 5 AAC 85.025 Hunting seasons and bag limits for the Fortymile caribou herd in units 12, 20B, 20D, 20E, 20F, and 25C. The proponent is asking for the Fortymile caribou seasons to be extended and bag limit increased.

With respect to the board's Agenda Change Request (ACR) acceptance criteria (5 AAC 92.005):

- A) The department believes there is a potential for a conservation concern if the herd growth is not slowed in accordance with the management plan. It is not clear whether population growth can be slowed with the existing seasons and bag limits. In addition, harvest opportunity could be lost if regulations remain the same.
- B) The department is unaware of any error in regulation.
- C) The department is unaware of any unforeseen effects of regulations.

The department is further evaluating the likely benefits from an intensive management program intended to grow the herd to increase levels of caribou for high levels of human consumptive use and to help meet subsistence needs. The Fortymile herd has been identified as important for high levels of harvest for human consumptive use, with an Intensive Management Population Objective of 50,000–100,000 and Harvest Objective of 1,000 – 15,000. There is a positive Customary and Traditional use finding for Fortymile caribou in Units 12, 20D, 20E, and 25C, with an amount necessary for subsistence (ANS) of 350–400.

Harvest is currently guided by the 2012-2018 Fortymile Caribou Herd Harvest Plan, which was developed by a coalition of 7 - Fish and Game Advisory Committees in cooperation with numerous agencies and user groups in Alaska and Yukon. The primary goal of this plan is to *"Promote continued growth and restore the herd to its historic range in both Alaska and Yukon to the extent possible without compromising herd health."*

The Department has been trying to complete a photocensus of the herd since the last successful census in 2010, when 51,000 caribou were counted. Poor early summer herd aggregations due to inadequate weather and insect conditions, and several years with persistent heavy smoke from large fires precluded the department from completing a photocensus until the summer of 2017. The 2017 minimum population count of over 71,000 was higher than expected. The management plan calls for a reduction in growth when the population approaches the mid-point of the population objectives. The season was accordingly extended by EO this year. In addition, the department has been monitoring the herd's

nutritional condition since the late 2000s to evaluate whether a few years of poor nutritional performance are simply due to stochastic weather effects or density dependence.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting for the Fortymile Herd is during winter/spring of 2019/2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Dale", is centered below the word "Sincerely,". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Bruce Dale
Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation