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Advisory Announcement

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New Fortymile Caribou Population Estimate and Hunt Quota

(Tok, Alaska) – On June 28th of this summer, the department completed the first successful photocensus of the Fortymile caribou herd since 2017. Preliminary results estimate the herd size to be between 38,000-42,000, and the midpoint of 40,000 caribou was used to develop this year’s quota. This estimate is based on the number of caribou counted in photos and statistical methods that account for caribou that were not photographed.

The herd began to show signs of declining nutritional status after it exceeded 50,000 caribou in 2010. As the herd continued to grow, productivity and survival rates declined due to reduced nutritional status caused by overgrazing of its range. This concerned managers and prompted the department to increase Fortymile harvest quotas and bag limits to reduce the Fortymile herd size to a more sustainable level and decrease the potential for additional long-term impacts to the herd’s habitat. Through a combination of increased harvest and the natural decline of the herd, the department believes herd size is now close to where it needs to be to allow the nutritional condition of individual animals to begin to improve. However, department staff continued to observe low productivity in the herd this spring and above average mortality of newborn calves this summer, indicating continuing nutritional stress and low potential for herd growth.

To allow for hunting opportunity but minimize the risk of reducing the population more than desired, the annual harvest quota for the herd will be set at 1,200 bulls, with a pre-season allocation of 900 to the fall hunt (for all zones) and 300 to the winter hunt. Zone allocations for the fall hunt will be:

Zone	Quota
1 & 4 combined (Steese Hwy area)	420
Zone 2 (Roadless area)	200
Zone 3 (Taylor Highway area)	280

These are reduced quotas from previous years and could result in shorter seasons than hunters have become accustomed to in the past several years. If quotas are met early, season closures could be announced by emergency order on short notice.

The bag limit for resident hunters hunting in the State of Alaska fall registration hunt (RC860) for Fortymile caribou has been changed to 1 bull in all Zones (1–4). The hunt will open in all Zones (1–4) on Wednesday, August 10, 2022, at 12:01 a.m., as specified in the 2022-2023 Alaska Hunting Regulations. Permits are currently available online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> and in person in Tok, Delta Junction, Eagle, Fairbanks, Central, Douglas, Anchorage, and Palmer. The nonresident bag limit remains one bull caribou.

The winter season and bag limit will be reevaluated following harvest analysis of the fall season.

Hunters are reminded to call the Fortymile Caribou Herd Hotline (907) 267-2310 for updates about the hunt quota and bag limit before departing for the field to learn of zone closures.

These seasons and bag limits only apply to state caribou hunts in these areas. Hunters with questions about federal subsistence regulations should call (800) 478-1456.

Successful hunters must report within three days of the kill online at (<http://hunt.alaska.gov>), by phone (907-883-2971), or in person at the ADF&G office in Tok. 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 at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> by October 15.

Hunters are urged to obtain a receipt when they turn in their hunt reports or to mail them by delivery confirmation receipt. Permit holders who fail to report will not be eligible to receive any permits (Draw, Targeted, Tier II, or Registration, including Tier I Nelchina caribou) during the next regulatory year, and may be cited.

