



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Contact: Kenton Moos
(907) 842-1063 or 1-800-817-2538
kenton_moos@fws.gov

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MULCHATNA CARIBOU SEASONS CLOSED ON FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS THROUGHOUT RANGE OF THE MULCHATNA CARIBOU HERD

The Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager, under authority delegated by the Federal Subsistence Board, will close caribou hunting at 11:59 pm on December 31, 2019 on Federal public lands to all hunters under Registration Permit RC503 in the following areas:

Units 9A, 9B, that portion of Unit 9C draining into the Naknek River from the north, and Graveyard Creek and Coffee Creek, all drainages west of Right Hand Point in Unit 17A, 17B, 17C east of the east banks of the Wood River, Lake Aleknagik, Agulowak River, Lake Nerka, and the Agulupak River, 18, 19A, and 19B.

This closure does not affect caribou hunters under Registration Permit RC501 in Unit 17A east of Right Hand Point or in Unit 17C west of the east banks of the Wood River, Lake Aleknagik, Agulowak River, Lake Nerka, and the Agulupak River, or caribou hunters under FC1702 in that portion of Unit 17A and 17C consisting of the Nushagak Peninsula south of the Igushik River, Tuklung River and Tuklung Hills, west to Tvativak Bay.

Justification:

The summer 2019 population estimate of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd was approximately 13,500, which is about half of the estimated herd size from the previous five years. This population estimate is well below the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's minimum population objective of 30,000. As a result of this decline, the Federal Subsistence Board reduced the bag limit from two to one caribou, restricted the harvest to bulls only in Units 18, 19A and 19B, and delegated in-season management authority to the Togiak Refuge Manager. Since receiving management authority, the Togiak Refuge staff, working with staff from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, determined there is no harvestable surplus that would allow herd growth. As of December 16, 2019, 79 caribou have been reported harvested and an additional 7 caribou were known harvested but not reported. Thus, in the interest of allowing herd recovery, no additional harvest is warranted. The federal in-season manager consulted with and has concurrence from affected Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils and other federal land managers.

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