

Subsistence hunt approved for moose; caribou season extended

by Mike Hinman
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The Federal Subsistence Board reversed its earlier decision and will now allow a subsistence moose hunt on the Kenai Peninsula.

The board reversed the decision of May 3, 1996, in establishing the Aug. 18 to Sept. 20 hunt. The special season is only applicable to federal lands within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Unit 15(A) and excludes the Skilak Loop Wildlife Management Area, which remains closed to all moose hunting.

Last year, only one moose was taken under a federal subsistence permit in Unit 15(B) and (C), according to Thomas Boyd, deputy assistant regional director for subsistence with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The federal Fish and Wildlife service administers subsistence on federal lands.

There is no anticipated number of animals expected to be harvested, according to Boyd.

"We don't have a history on this (hunt) yet," said Boyd, adding that this is the first year that Unit 15(A) has been opened.

Units 15(B) and (C) are only in their second year of having a subsistence season, according to Boyd.

The standard size limitations for antlers: spike-fork, fifty-inch antlers or three or more brow tines on one side of the antlers.

Participating hunters must have a federal registration permit. Previously issued permits for subsistence moose seasons in Units 15(B) and (C) are valid for the Unit 15(A) hunt.

Residents of Ninilchik, Nanwalek, Prot Gtrahm and Seldovia are allowed one moose.

In another ruling the board extended the caribou season in Unit 13.

The action is taken to try and curb the growth of the Nelchinba Caribou Herd.

The herd has grown at about seven percent a year after predation factors are taken into account, according to Jim Leib, a biologist with the state Division of Wildlife Conservation.

The estimates of the size of the herd have been 51,000 and 49,000 the past two years, well above what is considered optimal for the herd and its' habitat, around 40,000 animals, according to Leib.

The hunt has been expanded to a Tier One subsistence hunt on state lands to try to trim the herd size.

The Federal Subsistence Board extended the seasons by over two months. The season is now open from Aug. 1-Sept. 30 and Oct. 21-March 31. The previous opening dates were Aug. 10 and Jan. 5.

The new federal subsistence regula-

tions for the harvesting of fish and game are available with effective dates of Aug. 1 through June 30, 1997.

If you would like the board to reconsider any regulation changes, you have until Sept. 30 to submit a request in writing.

For more information or a copy of the federal regulations, call 1-800-478-1456 or in the Anchorage area at 786-3888.