

## ALASKA BOARD OF GAME FINDINGS

### Intensive Management for Unit 13

95-84-BOG

1. Given the long hunting history and importance of Game Management Unit 13, the Board finds that human consumption of moose and caribou is the preferred use of those species in Unit 13.

2. Based upon information provided by the Department and public testimony regarding habitat condition and potential, population characteristics and trends, sustained yield principles and various ecological relationships, the Board has determined the moose population should be between 20,000 and 25,000 animals with an annual human harvest of 1,200 to 2,000. The current moose population is estimated at 18,000, down from a peak of 27,000 as recently as 1987. Last fall's harvest was about 850 and next fall's harvest is expected to be about 650.

3. Based on information described above, the Board has determined the caribou population should be between 35,000 and 40,000 animals with an annual human harvest of 3,000 to 6,000. The population currently is estimated at 44,000. Last season's harvest appears to have been 3,500-4,000.

4. While caribou currently meet population and human harvest objectives, the moose population is depleted and its productivity is low. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the allowable moose harvest.

5. According to information provided the Board, the moose population has been depleted and its productivity reduced through deep snow winters, bear predation on calves and wolf predation. The moose population is approaching, but not yet at what biologists term a "predator pit" which means if present trends continue,

the primary factor limiting the growth and size will be predation.

6. The Board believes it is feasible to enhance the moose population through recognized and prudent management techniques.

7. There is considerable research indicating brown bears are significant predators of moose calves, and the Board concludes the brown bear population should be reduced until there is a consistent and statistically significant increase in moose calf survival. However, the brown bear population must not be reduced below 350 animals in order to maintain a viable brown bear population.

8. According to information provided the Board, in the mid 1980s when the moose population was increasing the ratio of calves to cows was 25-30:100 and the ratio of yearling bulls was 8-10:100. The Board finds brown bear numbers should be reduced until the calf:cow ratio is 30:100 and the yearling bull:cow ratio is 10:100 on a consistent basis. Currently, those ratios are 17:100 and 4:100, respectively.

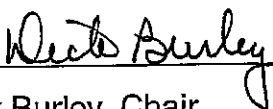
9. Therefore, in order to increase calf survival, improve productivity and increase the moose population, the Board finds it appropriate to adopt regulations allowing hunters to take one brown bear per regulatory year in a season extended to coincide with the opening date of sheep and caribou seasons and to partially overlap the moose season. At its January meeting, the Board waived the \$25 tag fee for brown bear hunters in Unit 13. The Board believes that the combination of a longer season, more liberal bag limit and no tag fee will significantly reduce the brown bear population.

10. There is considerable research indicating wolves are significant predators of moose. The current wolf population objective of 175-225 was set in the late 1980s when the moose population was much higher. In light of the depletion of

the moose population, the Board believes it appropriate to reduce the wolf population objective to 135-165.

11. Department biologists estimate there will be 200 wolves this spring after hunting and trapping end but before pups are born. The Department also provided information indicating hunters and trappers are becoming increasingly effective in harvesting wolves. Given that trend, and given that it appears that the spring wolf population won't be all that much higher than the upper limit of the new population objective, the Board has requested the Department to study whether wolf numbers will be sufficiently reduced through existing seasons, bag limits, methods and means, and to report its conclusions at the Board's fall meeting.

DATE: March 31, 1995

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dick Burley, Chair

VOTE: 5 Favor 0 Oppose 1 Abstain 1 Absent