

17 March 2024

AK Board of Game Meeting  
Interior and Eastern Arctic Region Meeting- March 15-22, 2024  
Fairbanks- Pike's Waterfront Lodge

RE: Request for Extension of a 30-day Notice of Public Comment for Proposed Action to construct and operate a radar simulator site on the Macomb Plateau RC 835 Controlled Use Area

The purpose of this Public Comment is to provide time-sensitive "Situational Awareness" of a US Airforce (USAF) proposed action to construct and operate a radar simulator sites along the Richardson Highway corridor to include on the Macomb Plateau. These Radar Simulation Sites would include vegetation clearing, access road construction, electrical utility development, operation pad development, attendant activities, and radar site operation after construction is completed. The purpose of these sites is to improve 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft training. The local community of Dry Creek was notified of this proposal this past week. We subsequently contacted the State of Alaska Wildlife Biologist responsible for managing RC 835 Caribou Hunt who was not aware of this proposed action.

On March 15, 2024 an article by Alaska Beacon's Yereth Rosen in the Anchorage Daily News and the Fairbanks Daily News Miner published a story on "Caribou Declines Causing Angst for Alaska Hunters are part of the Wider North America Trend." This timely report as it relates to the USAF Radar Simulation Target Proposal details steep and nearly simultaneous declines in caribou herds across the circumpolar North American caribou herds. As reported, Alaska herds are in dramatic decline. This includes the Western Arctic herd which has declined by two-thirds since the early 2000's, the Mulchatna herd, which has declined 94% since the 1990's and the Nelchina herd which has declined 83% in the same period.

Regardless of whether these declines are natural or manmade, small satellite herds of caribou such as the Macomb Plateau (population 600-800) provide not only important local and traditional hunting opportunities but more importantly on the issue of broader issue of population declines, these small herds may prove vital in repopulating declining herds and act as genetic reservoirs to help sustain caribou.

Various Federal, State, Local and Tribal entities cannot realistically provide technical comments to help the USAF achieve its mission of developing radar simulation sites in the next 20+ business days — particularly as it relates to the critical caribou calving area on the Macomb Plateau.

This writer seeks to more widely disperse this notice and request the Game Board to work through appropriate channels so as obtain a longer period of Public Comment for technical reviews.

Respectfully,

Danita Koehler