

Findings for the Alaska Board of Game
2011-189-BOG
Subunits 9C and 9E (Northern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd)
Intensive Management Supplemental Findings
March 30, 2011

The Board of Game finds as follows, based on information provided by Department staff, Alaska residents and other users of caribou in Subunits 9C and 9E. These findings are supplemental to the findings set forth in 5AAC 92.108 and 5AAC 92.125.

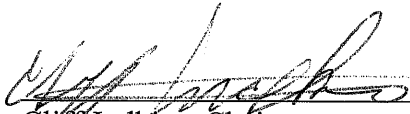
1. The Northern Alaska Peninsula (NAP) caribou herd in Subunits 9C and 9E has been identified by the Board as a herd that is important for providing high levels of human consumptive use. The Board established an intensive management population objective of 6,000 - 15,000 caribou and an intensive management harvest objective of 800 - 1,500 caribou annually for the NAP.
2. The population size of the Northern Alaska Peninsula (NAP) caribou herd in Subunits 9C and 9E is currently estimated to be 2,000 – 2,500 caribou, which is lower than the intensive management population size objective of 6,000 – 15,000 caribou. The population size objective had not been achieved during the past 8 years.
3. The harvestable surplus of NAP caribou in Subunits 9C and 9E, as described in 5 AAC 92.106(3)(A), is currently estimated at zero, which is less than the harvest objective of 800 – 1,500. The harvest objective has not been achieved during the last 14 years.
4. The NAP caribou population in Subunits 9C and 9E remains depleted due, in part, to poor calf survival. Since 2007 more than 60% of the caribou calve on Refuge lands managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The remaining 40% of the caribou calve on state lands that are traditional calving areas for the NAP herd. The poor survival of calves on all lands has resulted in low calf recruitment, which is measured in the fall using calf:cow ratios. Fall calf:cow ratios in the NAP have ranged between 7 to 18 calves per 100 cows since 2003.
5. The low NAP caribou calf recruitment in Subunits 9C and 9E has resulted in a low bull:cow ratio (25 bulls per hundred cows), a lack of harvestable caribou, and a complete hunting closure since 2005. The absence of caribou harvest from the NAP has resulted in a failure to provide for human needs including subsistence needs.
6. Recovery of the NAP in Subunits 9C and 9E will be prolonged unless action is taken to improve calf survival and recruitment. Because the majority of calves are born on Refuge lands managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service management actions designed to significantly increase calf survival should be conducted on both state and Refuge lands.

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7. The population and harvest objectives have not been achieved, at least in part, because wolf and brown bear predation have been important causes of mortality in the population. Objectives are unlikely to be achieved in the foreseeable future unless predator control is conducted.
8. Increases in caribou recruitment and abundance in the NAP are achievable utilizing the recognized and prudent active management technique of predator control, as has recently been shown for the adjacent Southern Alaska Peninsula caribou herd.
9. Reducing predation can reasonably be expected to achieve a sex and age structure that will sustain the population, provide for harvest, and allow growth toward objectives.
10. Recent actions by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to prevent the State of Alaska from exercising its authority to manage wolf predation on Unimak Island on US Fish and Wildlife Service lands that are part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge to correct the severe population decline of the Unimak Caribou Herd demonstrate the likelihood that the US Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to prevent the State of Alaska from actively managing wolf predation to restore subsistence harvest opportunity on Refuge lands and prevent the State of Alaska from fulfilling its mission to conserve, protect, and enhance wildlife resources within the State of Alaska.
11. Given the importance the NAP for subsistence use and human consumptive use and the lack of cooperation demonstrated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to restore harvest opportunity on Unimak Island, the Board requests that the Department act as quickly as possible to reduce wolf predation on caribou on all lands in the range of the NAP herd including lands in Subunits 9C and 9E.
12. Because active management to reduce wolf predation using fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters is limited to state lands and any efforts on Refuge lands are likely to be ground based efforts by hunters and trappers under general hunting and trapping regulations, the program is not expected to achieve the same level of success in increasing caribou survival and recruitment compared to the implementation of a program to actively manage wolf predation on both state and Refuge lands.
13. Despite the reduced expectation of success in improving the overall calf survival and recruitment in the herd if active management of wolf predation is limited to state lands, an increase in caribou survival and recruitment may be achieved for a group or groups of caribou while occupying state lands.
14. The objective of the Northern Alaska Peninsula predation management program is to achieve a sex and age structure that will sustain a group or groups of caribou within the range of the NAP herd, to restore harvest, and to maintain the herd at a size that will allow for future population growth towards identified population and harvest objectives.

15. The immediate goal of the Northern Alaska Peninsula predation management program is to reduce the number of wolves on state lands to improve caribou survival and recruitment in any group or groups of caribou within the Northern Alaska Peninsula predation management area, and to attempt to achieve some reduction in wolf numbers on Refuge lands through increased trapping and hunting harvest opportunity.

Vote: 6-0-1
March 30, 2011
Anchorage, Alaska



Cliff Judkins, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game