

**Findings for the Alaska Board of Game
Regarding the Mulchatna Caribou Herd
2025-235-BOG
March 27, 2025**

The Board of Game finds that an emergency exists regarding the declining Mulchatna Caribou herd, necessitating immediate action to preserve the health and general welfare of Alaskans who depend on the herd. This herd is important for providing high levels of human harvest and has long been important for subsistence users as well as for other Alaskans and nonresident hunters. Currently the herd has declined to a level where no hunting can occur. The Board aims to ensure that a large number of calves to be born in the spring of 2024 will survive, to ensure reproduction into the future. The Department documented extensive bear predation on newborn calves, including by direct observation, and consistently found calves in bear stomachs for the bears taken at the calving grounds in 2023 and 2024. The density of bears in the western calving area leads to an estimate that a similar number of bears would be removed this year if predator control is continued. The Board's intent in 2022 was to implement a predator control program to take bears and wolves for three years. This is considered a minimum period to provide sufficient data to confirm the success seen by the Department. The Mulchatna Caribou herd is responding positively to intensive management. There is no evidence that the intensive management program has impacted or will impact sustainability of bears or wolves in the area. The program covered a small area and was for a limited time during the peak calving season, and failing to take bears and wolves in the area during the calving season for the third cumulative year will threaten the recovery of the herd. There is an immediate threat to the caribou and the Board finds that a delay in acting would result in a situation where a significant number of caribou would not be available in the future. When the intensive management program was first implemented in 2023, the Board and the Department did not have population or density estimates for bears in the area within the prior few years, but the information available indicated the bear population was large and growing while the caribou population was declining. One estimate was an expectation that approximately 30 bears would be taken in 2023; the actual take of almost 100 bears showed there is a high population of bears. The Department has identified brown bears as the primary cause of death of calves within their first two weeks of life. The Board considered a great deal of oral testimony and written comments presented over many days, where such comments were both in support of and opposed to continuing predator control of bears. The communities directly impacted by the caribou decline, including local Advisory Committees, are in support. The Alaska Federation of Natives adopted a resolution, unanimously, supporting the intensive management program.

Vote: 6-0-1 (*John Wood absent*)

March 27, 2025
Anchorage, Alaska

/s/

Jake Fletcher, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game