

***During the 11/18/2020 Board of Game meeting, the board clarified their intent to address Unit 9, 17, 18 and 19 at the Central and Southwest Region meeting.***

*Note: The range of the Mulchatna caribou herd is Units 9 and 17 in the Central & Southwest Region; Unit 18 for the Western Arctic/Western Region; and Unit 19 for the Interior and Eastern Arctic Region. The Board of Game is scheduled to address only the Central/Southwest Region units at this meeting.*

## **PROPOSAL 21**

### **5 AAC 92.111. Intensive Management Plans I.**

Establish a second predation control area for Mulchatna caribou on federal lands in Game Management Units 17 and 18.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Mulchatna Caribou Herd Predation Management Area is established to increase the Mulchatna caribou herd (MCH) within Units 9B, 17B, 17C, 19A and 19B to aid in achieving intensive management (IM) objectives. The Mulchatna Caribou Herd Predation Management Area encompasses approximately 39,683 square miles (multiple predator control areas may be utilized within the management area); however, the current active control areas is limited to a total of 10,000 square miles, which is 25 percent of the management area.

The current control program was first established by the Board of Game (board) in 2011 for wolf control. It is designed to increase the caribou herd's population size and human harvest by reducing wolf predation on caribou and is expected to contribute to achieving the IM objectives across the range. The IM objective for the MCH as established in 5 AAC 92.108 is 30,000–80,000 caribou. These objectives were based on historical information regarding population numbers, habitat limitations, human use, and sustainable harvests. The caribou harvest objective established for the MCH is 2,400–8,000.

Wolves are a major predator of caribou in the range of the MCH and are an important factor in failing to achieve objectives. The wolf population objective for the MCH Predation Management Area is to annually reduce the number of wolves in predator control areas to a level that results in increased calf survival and recruitment. A reduction of wolf predation can reasonably be expected to aid in achieving objectives using recognized, prudent active management techniques based on scientific information.

The population and harvest objectives for the MCH are still well below the IM objectives throughout the herd's range and state and federal hunts have been affected, resulting in bag limit changes and an early closure to the 2019/2020 season. It is still believed that reducing wolf predation is likely effective and that reducing wolf predation is in the best interests of subsistence users. Under 5 AAC 99.025, in 1988, the board made a positive customary and traditional use (C&T) finding for caribou in Units 9A, 9B, 17, and 18, with an amount reasonably necessary for subsistence (ANS) of 2,100– 2,400 caribou. To date, the program has been affected by the limitations of flying and tracking conditions and hampered to a degree by an inability to reduce predation on large portions of federal land where much of the MCH range. In winter 2020 the Secretary of the Interior communicated to the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) that the Division of Wildlife Conservation should draft a plan for predation control on federal lands in Units 17 and 18 to address the declining caribou population. This proposal seeks to establish additional predation control area(s) by expanding the current

authorized limit of 10,000 mi<sup>2</sup> for implementation on federal lands (Togiak National Wildlife Refuge).

This proposal requires concurrence from the Department of Interior for implementation on federal lands. The department anticipates this approval prior to the Board of Game meeting in January 2021.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F20-052)  
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