

PROPOSAL 29

5 AAC 92.108. Identified big game prey populations and objectives.

Review the population and harvest objectives for the Mulchatna caribou herd as follows:

I recommend establishing new population and harvest objectives after a habitat assessment has been performed to determine the current ecological potential of the range to support caribou. Further, I recommend consideration of recent population and distribution data collected by state and federal Mulchatna caribou herd (MCH) managers that suggest that there are multiple, independent caribou populations within the designated range of the MCH.

Caribou Herds, Population Finding Population Harvest

Adak Negative

Beaver Mountain Negative

Central Arctic Positive 28,000 - 32,000 1,400 - 1,600

Chisana Negative

Delta Negative Denali Negative

Farewell/Big River Negative

Fortymile Positive 50,000 - 100,000 1,000 - 15,000

Galena Mountain Negative

Kenai Lowlands Negative

Kenai Mountains Negative

Killely River, Fox River, and Twin Lakes Negative

Macomb Positive 600 - 800 30 - 50

Mentasta Negative

Mulchatna Positive To be determined [30,000 – 80,000 2,400 – 8,000]

Nelchina Positive 35,000 - 40,000 3,000 - 6,000

Northern Alaska Peninsula Positive 6,000 - 15,000 600 - 1,500

Nushagak Peninsula Negative

Porcupine Positive 100,000 - 150,000 1,500 - 2,000

Rainy Pass Negative

Ray Mountain Negative

Southern Alaska Peninsula Positive 1,500 - 4,000 150 - 200

Sunshine Mountain Negative

Teshkepuk Positive 15,000 - 28,000 900 - 2,800

Tonzona Negative

Unimak Island

Western Arctic Positive at least 200,000 12,000 - 20,000

White Mountain Negative

Wolf Mountain Negative

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Mulchatna caribou herd has changed continuously from the time monitoring began, increasing from an estimated 14,000 in 1974 to 200,000 in 1996, then decreasing to ~12,000 currently. A population objective of 25,000 was initially established in 1987, and since then revised multiple times. The current population objective (30,000-80,000) was established in 2008 at which point the population was estimated to be 30,000. This objective has been achieved only once since then. The multiple revisions in objectives over time have been a sensible approach to management of a changing resource. I request that the Board of Game review the Intensive Management population and harvest objectives with the goal of adjusting objectives to an ecologically sustainable level. I recommend this review include consideration of habitat quality, which almost certainly has changed in response to caribou grazing, reducing population potential.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee? I have discussed this concept with local federal and state MCH managers but am submitting the proposal individually.

PROPOSED BY: Patrick Walsh

(EG-F24-090)
