

## **Opposition Statement to the Mulchatna Bear Control Program**

I respectfully submit this statement in strong opposition to the Mulchatna Bear Control Program, which seeks to lethally reduce brown and black bear populations in an effort to increase caribou numbers in the Mulchatna herd.

This program is fundamentally flawed on ecological, ethical, and scientific grounds.

### **1. Lack of Scientific Justification**

Numerous biologists and wildlife experts have noted that the decline of the Mulchatna caribou herd is primarily due to **habitat degradation, disease, climate-related factors, and overharvesting by humans**, not predation. There is no credible, peer-reviewed science demonstrating that a broad-scale killing of bears will result in a significant or sustainable increase in caribou numbers. Predators are easy scapegoats, but complex population declines demand nuanced, science-based solutions—not simplistic and destructive ones.

### **2. Ecological Consequences**

Bears play a vital role in Alaska's ecosystems. They are not just top predators but also keystone species, helping to maintain ecological balance. Removing large numbers of bears from the landscape risks disrupting food chains,

altering animal behaviors, and damaging the biodiversity of the region. These effects are rarely reversible and often ripple across ecosystems for years.

### **3. Ethical and Public Backlash**

This program involves aerial gunning and the killing of sows and cubs, practices that are inhumane and ethically indefensible to many Alaskans and Americans. Public trust in wildlife management is eroded when decisions appear driven by political or economic pressures rather than by science and ethics. Alaska's wildlife belongs to all of us, and lethal control measures that lack broad public support and rigorous evidence undermine that shared trust.

### **4. Damaging Precedent**

Allowing widespread predator control in the absence of scientific consensus sets a dangerous precedent for future wildlife management in Alaska and beyond. Once the door is opened to politically expedient predator kills, it becomes harder to defend science-based conservation elsewhere.

### **5. Better Alternatives Exist**

Instead of killing bears, the state should prioritize addressing human-caused factors that are directly impacting the caribou herd. These include regulating

hunting more effectively, protecting habitat from degradation, and funding more robust population monitoring and research.

In conclusion, the Mulchatna Bear Control Program is an irresponsible use of state resources that prioritizes short-term, politically convenient action over long-term ecological health and scientific integrity. I urge the Alaska Board of Game, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and other stakeholders to halt this program immediately and invest in genuine, data-driven solutions for restoring the Mulchatna caribou population.

Respectfully,