

Public Comment to Alaska Board of Game and Fish
July 14th, 2025

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I oppose the aerial culling of bears and cubs in the mistaken attempt to recover the caribou population. The bears are not the reason for caribou decline.

The primary reasons identified by researchers for caribou number decline are:

1. Bacterial Disease (Brucellosis),
2. Past over population leading to over grazing which in turn causing damage to the landscape and reducing the availability of lichen, a crucial winter food source (another mismanagement from the agency).
3. Habitat fragmentation: development projects disrupting caribou migration routes making recovery more challenging.
4. Past Hunting: Past overharvesting compounded by unreported takings and wounding loss contributing to the initial decline and hindering recovery.

In retrospect, we need to be rehabbing the herd like the musk ox was years ago and that was a great success story about a species that was on the brink of extinction.

Please don't overlook the value of bear viewing/tourism. Family outings to Yellowstone National Park provided my children invaluable insight into bears living in the wild as Mother Nature intended. The image of cowards in helicopters hovering over hapless bears with their cubs, and shooting at them from a safe distance is abhorrent to all of my family. We can also imagine that the diminishing of the bear population is a goal for these same cowards to enable them to shoot and slaughter the caribou for trophies and meat. The shame will be felt for all who care about wildlife.

Also, I understand this practice has been proven in the past to be ineffective.. Will we then have to reintroduce the bears back into Alaska just as the wolves had to be reintroduce back into Yellowstone?

Perhaps, the only predators that need to be culled are the ones in the helicopters.

Respectfully, James Neel