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Press Release

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BOARD OF GAME MAKES CHANGES TO SOUTHCENTRAL INTENSIVE MANAGEMENT

ANCHORAGE – Black bear intensive management in Southcentral Alaska will take on new dimensions following two major actions this week by the Alaska Board of Game.

The Board authorized the use of helicopters to transport permittees and their equipment to and from camps intended for bait sites. The Board also authorized an experimental program supervised by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) using foot snares for taking bears.

"The Department hopes the Board decision adding these tools will help us restore depleted moose populations in Unit 16B," said Corey Rossi, ADF&G Assistant Commissioner.

The use of helicopters for hunting remains illegal in Alaska. However, under a special permit for the black bear control program in Unit 16B Alaska residents may use helicopters on the west side of Cook Inlet, only for the purpose of accessing remote camps in order to remove black bears. Only Alaska residents are eligible for these permits.

Data provided by ADF&G to the Board confirmed that bears are a significant predator of moose calves in Unit 16B. These experimental efforts are intended to help restore this once abundant moose population over the next six to eight years. Unit 16B has been closed to nonresident moose hunting for many years. Tier II subsistence hunting permits were also significantly limited in recent years.

Last year, private baiting efforts assisted in the removal of several hundred black bears, primarily in the Tyonek area, along a primitive road system, and along major rivers. This use of helicopters will target bears in early spring when ice or ground conditions don't allow the use of boats or fixed-wing aircraft in more remote areas. Again, nonresidents are not eligible to participate in this, or any other, intensive management program.

The other major source of predation in Unit 16B is wolves. State-permitted pilots have been reducing wolf numbers here for the past four years. Despite some improvements, many years of low calf survival have altered the age structure of the moose population. Until more female calves are able to breed, the improvement will continue to be slow.

In Unit 16B, only 16 wolves have been taken from the air this winter in the continuing effort to increase moose survival. In the event private pilots are unsuccessful in reducing wolf numbers sufficiently later this spring, ADF&G staff will be authorized to use helicopters to remove wolves.

The experimental snaring project will be conducted in portions of Unit 16 where there is little chance of any conflict with other users. Snares have been used for many years by researchers to capture bears, however, this is the first time snares will be allowed for management purposes in Alaska. The Board,

received a presentation by a well respected Canadian biologist on the use of snares to harvest bears routinely in his province as well as a demonstration of the spring-loaded snares.

"Even with these new tools, the entire effort will remain labor intensive," Rossi said. "We are encouraged though that the Board has enabled Alaska residents, under strict Departmental supervision, to play a greater role in the stewardship of Alaska's important renewable natural resources."

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