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## PRESS RELEASE

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **Brown Bear Control Program Approved in Unit 16 B**

(Juneau) – On a split 4-3 vote today, the Board of Game approved a proposal to add an experimental brown bear removal to a portion of an existing predation control area in part of Unit 16B in south-central Alaska. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) staff plan to implement the program this spring.

The program is the latest action in efforts to enhance moose harvest in GMU16, an important area for subsistence and general hunting. The control program is confined to a small portion of GMU16B, approximately 40 miles southwest of Anchorage near the villages of Tyonek and Beluga.

Range conditions are excellent resulting in very high pregnancy rates and body condition of moose, but 80 percent of moose calves die during their first summer according to research. Predation has limited recovery of the population which declined due to a series of deep snow winters in the 1990s.

“We know that brown bears are taking large numbers of calves. Research last summer indicates 47 percent of the calves that die are killed by brown bears,” said Lem Butler, ADF&G Region IV Management Supervisor. “Black bears killed 21 percent and the remainder died from a variety of causes including drowning and unknown predators.”

The bear control program involves issuing permits to qualified members of the public to take black bears and brown bears over bait or with foot snares in order to increase moose calf survival on the west side of Cook Inlet. Aircraft can be used to access the bait stations or snares, but not to spot and take free roaming brown bears.

The board has previously authorized snaring and baiting for harvesting black bears, which has proven to be an extremely effective method of take. The board decided to extend the same baiting and foot-snaring methods to reduce brown bears in the 900 square mile experimental area.

“It is very much an adaptive experiment,” said regional supervisor Bruce Dale. “The effectiveness of reducing both bear species through harvest methods to increase moose calf survival has not been demonstrated.”

The department will closely monitor the bear control efforts that will be conducted by Alaskan residents. Participants must attend department training to qualify for taking bears with foot snares.

In an effort to increase moose populations, wolf reduction efforts began in 2004 resulting in higher winter survival of calves. In 2007, the board liberalized bear regulations to reduce bear numbers in order to increase spring and summer calf survival.

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