N1615 (WRST-RM)

June 23, 1995

Memorandum

To:Chisana Caribou File, WRST

From:Management Biologist, WRST

Subject:Chisana Caribou Herd, summer composition and census

On June 22, 1995 myself and pilot Jim Hannah conducted a portion of the annual spring composition survey and biennial census of the Chisana caribou herd as per Draft Chisana Caribou Herd Cooperative Operations Plan. The other portion of the survey was conducted by ADF&G biologist Craig Gardner and pilot Kirk Ellis.

We flew the Park's Arctic Tern at 300 to 500 feet AGL through cloudy skies and occasional drizzle and monitored 21 frequencies (list attached) while conducting the census. We began our portion of the census on the bench south of the Chisana River near Bow Creek and worked our way south and east to the White River, then east along the White River to Rock Lake, then north to the Beaver Creek drainage, then west to Klein Creek (maps).

After reaching the White River, we felt it likely the ADF&G team would be unable to join us because of the poor weather. At this point we widened our search pattern in an effort to provide at least partial coverage of the entire known summer range. We were unable to search south of the White River, in to Canada, the Ophire Creek drainage, or the Gold Hill area. Considering the number of small aggregations, the dispersion of the herd, and our partial and low altitude survey, I expect we missed several small bands.

The ADF&G team joined the effort just prior to our leaving the Chisana area. They continued the census by flying as high as the cloud ceiling would allow and locating the remaining collared cows. They then counted and classified all caribou associated with these collared cows.

The joint effort resulted in all but two collared cows being located. From field counts of small groups and photo counts of three large groups we classified 723 caribou in 29 groups. Of the 723, 34 were calves for an estimated 4.7% calves in the herd (Table 1).

The majority of the herd (76%) was in three large aggregations near Solo Mountain, but small bands, many of which were cow-calf groups, were observed through out the areas we searched (maps, ADF&G maps not included). It is likely that our combined overall count is a minimum estimate and that the percent calves was under estimated.

This effort was paid for by WRST.

Cost breakdown: WRST team 8hrs * 91.45 = 731.60
ADF&G team 8.59hrs (150 wet, 130 dry) = 1286.63

Total cost to WRST Resource Management = 2018.23

Bill Route