



PRESS RELEASE

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Matthew A. Cronin, Ph.D., Provides Report Showing Ambler Access Project Unlikely to Have Significant Impact on Caribou

Anchorage, Alaska – The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) announces the findings of a review of the potential impacts of the proposed Ambler Road on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WAH). This report, [“A Review of Information on Caribou \(*Rangifer tarandus*\) in Relation to the Ambler Road Project in Northern Alaska”](#) was prepared by Matthew A. Cronin, Ph.D., (Northwest Biology and Forestry Company, LLC).

The Ambler Road Project is a 211-mile proposed private road in northern Alaska, extending westward from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler mining district. There has been concern that the Ambler Road could impact the WAH numbers, migration, and habitat use. The findings of the report indicate that it is unlikely the project will have significant impacts, given the proposed Ambler Road’s design and management, and the herd’s past distribution and movements.

The report’s findings are based on the planned design, construction, and operational management of the Ambler road and existing information about the distribution, movements, and ecology of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WAH) and other caribou herds in Alaska and Canada. This information indicates the Ambler Access Project is not likely to have significant negative impacts on the WAH caribou herd’s numbers or migration. Please read the report and the references cited in it for an accurate understanding of the Ambler Road’s potential impacts on the WAH.

Previous reports of the Red Dog Road negatively affecting caribou migration failed to highlight the effects of hunting activity and predation. The report notes that AIDEA’s Red Dog Road and Port infrastructure typically allows the WAH to cross during their fall migration. The Ambler Access Project is an example of a resource development project that can coexist with subsistence harvest and maintenance of wildlife populations similar to Red Dog.

“The information in this report supports our traditional knowledge of herd migration and the need for increased predator control,” said **Larry Westlake Sr. Kiana Elder and Co-Chair of the Ambler Access Project Subsistence Advisory Committee.**

Tristen Pattee, Subsistence Hunter in Ambler, Alaska said “What I found interesting is that the Ambler Access Project starts with best practices along the Delong Mountain Transport System at Red Dog, setting a strong standard for future Ambler Road development, operations, and caribou migration protection.”

Key findings from the report include:

- **Minimal Habitat Loss:** The proposed road footprint is less than 0.005% of the WAH's 92.2-million-acre range and is unlikely to negatively affect habitat loss.
- **Lack of Interference with Major Migration Routes:** The primary migration routes of the WAH have been west and north of the proposed road. The number of collared caribou crossing the proposed road route during fall migrations and winter has been small in past years.
- **Ambler Road and Mines Location are not near WAH calving grounds:** The Ambler Road and associated mines are located over 150 miles away from the Western Arctic Caribou core calving grounds, some of which are in and near the National Petroleum Reserve–Alaska (NPRA).
- **Demonstrated Migration Resilience Across Existing Infrastructure:** Caribou have successfully crossed the Dalton Highway and other roads in Alaska and Canada during migrations for many years. These observations suggest the WAH migrations will not likely be blocked by the Ambler Road.
- **Natural Factors as Primary Influences:** Predation by bears^{1,2,3} and wolves^{4,5}, especially on calves, and winter weather and icing events, are primary factors impacting the WAH. The Ambler Road's influence on the WAH will likely be minor compared to these natural factors. (Note, the videos in the footnote references are not from Matt Cronin's report.)
- **Regular Road Crossings by Caribou:** Caribou regularly cross highways and mining roads during migrations in other parts of Alaska and Canada. The proposed Ambler Road will be closed to the public, with only mining vehicle traffic. No hunting will be permitted on or from the road.
- **Ambler Access Project Subsistence Advisory Committee (AAP SAC) Oversight & Recommendations:** The [AAP SAC adopted](#) and improved upon the best practices in place of the Red Dog Road and Port Subsistence and Wildlife Policies. The SAC has requested the Department of Interior to implement predator control around the Western Arctic herd in NPRA and all federal lands where predator control is allowed, to reduce the impacts of predation on the WAH.

The Ambler Access Project remains committed to ensuring that the Ambler Road proceeds with minimal environmental impact. The commissioning of this report underscores AIDEA's dedication to understanding the potential influence to subsistence resources the Ambler Road may have on the WAH.

About AIDEA:

Established by the Alaska State Legislature in 1967, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) is an independently governed public corporation dedicated to promoting the economic welfare of Alaskans. AIDEA's mission is to provide financing and investment opportunities that drive economic development, create jobs, and enhance the quality of life for residents across the state.

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[A Review of Information on Caribou \(Rangifer tarandus\) in Relation to the Ambler Road Project in Northern Alaska](#) prepared by Matthew A. Cronin, Ph.D. with figures by Morgan Flagg

Video References:

[1Grizzly Bear Kills Caribou RAW footage - YouTube @Bighunterification](#)

[2 Grizzly vs. Caribou Herd – YouTube @naturepbs](#)

[3 Grizzly bear kills caribou calf – YouTube @The Jungle Beats](#)

[4Wolf hunts caribou - Nature's Epic Journeys: Episode 2 Preview – YouTube @BBC](#)

[5Arctic Wolf Hunts Baby Caribou | Planet Earth II | YouTube @BBC Earth](#)