

ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. AKW-10 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NO. 14.0 Wolf S&I

PERIOD: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes wolf survey and inventory activities. Activities are listed by game management unit.

The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations

Statewide

Prepare triennial wolf management reports based on the regional reports.

ADF&G is switching to a 5-year reporting schedule for all species. During FY2017 each area management biologist wrote a 5-year report and operational plan for survey and inventory activities involving wolves. Reports covered FY2011 – FY2015 and plans cover FY2016 – FY2020.

Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Region I (Units 1-5)

Region-wide Activities:

Activity 1: Prepare triennial wolf management reports based on the regional reports.

Accomplishments: The State of Alaska is switching to a five-year reporting schedule with brief annual reports. During this reporting period area management biologist wrote a 5-year report and operational plan for survey and inventory activities involving wolves. Reports covered FY2011 – FY2015 and plans cover FY2016 – FY2020.

Activity 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Accomplishments: Information on wolves and wolf management was provided to state and federal regulatory bodies as requested.

Activity 3: Collect data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Accomplishments: All pelts of hunted and trapped wolves were sealed, data were collected, and those data were entered into state-wide database.

Activity 4: Record wolf activity/sightings while conducting aerial surveys for moose and mountain goats.

Accomplishments: Region I biologists recorded wolf sightings during moose and mountain goat surveys and reported sightings in survey memos.

Activity 5: Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including the use of an annual trapper survey.

Accomplishments: Region I managers maintained contacts with reliable trappers in their management areas and discussed locations where wolves were observed and abundance.

Unit 1A

Activity 1: Use motion cameras and hair snares to accumulate data on wolf presence, distribution, and population size on Gravina Island.

Accomplishments: The Ketchikan Area Management Biologist maintained trail cameras and did snow track surveys on Gravina Island to estimate the number of wolves there.

Unit 1C

Activity 1: Monitor wolf sightings in the Juneau area through discussions with deer hunters and trappers.

Accomplishments: Managers in the Douglas office gathered anecdotal information on wolf distribution and abundance in the subunit through opportunistic conversations with deer and moose hunters, trappers, and other members of the public.

Activity 2: Capture and monitor up to 3 wolves in Gustavus through the use of downloadable GPS radio collars.

Accomplishments: One juvenile male wolf in the Gustavus area is currently collared with a GPS collar, and location data were periodically downloaded.

Unit 2

Activity 1: Collect information on wolves presented for sealing, and solicit anecdotal information about wolf populations.

Accomplishments: All pelts of hunted and trapped wolves were sealed, data were collected, and those data were entered into state-wide database. Management biologists also gathered anecdotal information on Unit 2 wolves from hunters and trappers.

Activity 2: Closely monitor wolf harvest during season through information gathered during sealing process to assure harvest stays within guideline levels.

Accomplishments: Region I managers in cooperation with federal managers set a joint harvest quota for Unit 2 and carefully monitored hunting and trapping harvest using the 14-day sealing requirement to ensure that quota was not exceeded.

Unit 3

Activity 1: Collect wolf scat and hair samples for genetic analysis and to establish presence or absence on Mitkof, Kupreanof and Kuiu Islands.

Accomplishments: Hair and scat samples were opportunistically collected in Unit 3 for use investigating food habits and regional structuring of the population.

Activity 2: Capture and radio-collar wolves on Mitkof, Kupreanof, and Kuiu Islands to assess home range size, dispersal and survival of wolves.

Accomplishments: No activity during this report period.

Submitted by: Tom Schumacher, Management Coordinator

Date: September 2017

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Restoration Grant**

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-20 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NUMBER: 14.0

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Wolf and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT PERIOD: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes wolf survey and inventory activities. Activities are listed by game management unit.

**The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in
Region II**

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare information for 5-year regional wolf management operational plans

Wolf management report was prepared and submitted for publication in 2016. Area staff continued to collect information for publication of next management report. The department is transitioning to a 5-year report and plan. The next wolf report will be published in 2021.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

All wolves taken in Region II were presented to staff for specimen collection (if necessary) and sealing. Wolves taken in other parts of the state were often sealed in Region II offices. See area specific activities for additional information.

ACTIVITY 3: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

These are standard activities accomplished in each office. See area specific activities.

ACTIVITY 4: Conduct aerial surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Surveys were completed on the Kenai Peninsula during this period. See the activities under GMU 7 and 15.

ACTIVITY 5: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Staff routinely interact with federal staff and discuss management of wolves relative to the respective regulatory systems.

ACTIVITY 6: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

All wolf pelts presented to ADF&G and appointed sealers were examined for the presence of lice. Wolves infected with lice currently exist on the Kenai Peninsula within Region II.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: Two wolves (2 males) were harvested in Unit 6 during the reporting period. In the previous reporting period, wolves taken in GMU 6A were suspected to have lice. Two pelts were submitted for diagnosis and no lice were found, though the hides were of poor quality.

ACTIVITY 2: No wolves were documented during the moose surveys conducted in December or March.

Units 7&15

ACTIVITY 1: Forty-three wolves were taken by trappers and hunters during the reporting period in Units 7 and 15. The harvest increase was most likely due to good snow conditions which made hunting and trapping easier and allowed snowmachine access to much of the Peninsula during the trapping season.

	Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Unit 15 Unknown
Harvest	5	8	15	14	1

ACTIVITY 2: Weather conditions have not allowed surveys of wolf numbers in Units 15C to be completed for several previous years. During February and March of 2017, 18 wolves were captured and collared in Unit 15C to aid in wolf abundance monitoring. Further flights throughout the year have been planned to improve estimates of wolf abundance and pack dynamics in Unit 15C.

ACTIVITY 3: Pelt condition continues to improve. No lice were reported on the pelts harvested during the 2016/17 season.

ACTIVITY 4: Other management activities. No wolves were taken under the board directed Predator Control Program in 15A (See 2016: 15A Predator Control Report).

Unit 14C

ACTIVITY 1: No wolves were reported taken for the sixth year in a row from Unit 14C. One female wolf was killed by a vehicle.

ACTIVITY 2: No wolf pelts examined showed evidence of louse infestation.

ACTIVITY 3: No aerial surveys were conducted to estimate wolf densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Submitted by: Cynthia M. Wardlow, Management Coordinator

FEDERAL AID INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Restoration Grant

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-20

PROJECT NUMBER: 14.0

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations

PROJECT LOCATION: GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, 26C

PROJECT DURATION: 1 July 2016-30 June 2017

REPORT DUE DATE: Approved extension – December 8, 2017

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Doreen Parker McNeill, Josh Peirce, Jonathan Barton, Tony Hollis, Bob Schmidt, Jeff Gross, Jeff Wells, Beth Lenart, Jason Caikoski, Glenn Stout.

COOPERATORS:

WORK LOCATION: Interior and Northeastern Arctic Alaska (GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, 26C)

Briefly describe how Federal Aid funds were spent on each active job, listing the results achieved during this segment period. If a job was not accomplished as planned, explain briefly why.

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING LAST SEGMENT

OBJECTIVE 1: Prepare 5-year Wolf Management Operational Reports and Plans.

Accomplishments: Compiled information and data and drafted nine 5-year Wolf Management Reports and Operational Plans for Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C.

OBJECTIVE 2: Monitor wolf harvest through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Accomplishments: Monitored the harvest of 417 wolves taken by hunting and trapping in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C through sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, field observations, trapline checks, interviews with successful hunters and trappers and analyses of harvest data. Harvest data were analyzed for use in operational planning.

OBJECTIVE 3: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Accomplishments: Collected harvest data information on wolves presented for sealing in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. These data were analyzed for use in operational planning.

OBJECTIVE 4: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Accomplishments: Completed a minimum wolf count survey in Unit 20D (5,637 mi²). Completed a minimum wolf count survey in a 4,752 mi² portion of Unit 24B.

OBJECTIVE 5: Provide wolf management information to state and federal regulatory processes.

Accomplishments: Communicated and coordinated with and attended meetings of 15 local Fish and Game Advisory Committee, the Alaska Board of Game, 3 Federal Regional Advisory Councils, the Federal Subsistence Board, Office of Subsistence Management, numerous local village councils, Native corporations, and the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission about wolf management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board.

OBJECTIVE 6: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

Accomplishments: Conducted interviews opportunistically with wolf hunters and trappers in the field in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C, and during wolf sealing.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS IDENTIFIED IN ANNUAL PLAN THIS PERIOD - see above information under objectives.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS AND/OR ADDITIONAL FEDERAL AID-FUNDED WORK NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE THAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THIS PROJECT DURING THIS SEGMENT PERIOD None

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Drafted nine 5-year Wolf Management Reports and Operational Plans for Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C, but these were not yet published (see objective 1)

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT (optional)

Prepared by: Doreen Parker McNeill

Date: December 8, 2017

**WOLF
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NUMBER: AKW-20 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NUMBER: 14.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Region IV (Units 9, 10, 11, 13, 14A, 14B, 16, and 17)

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes wolf survey and inventory activities. Regionwide activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

**The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in
Region IV**

Region wide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial wolf management reports.

Triennial wolf management reports were not due during this reporting period however 5-year operational planning did commence and the related reports were submitted in early 2017.

ACTIVITY 2 AND 3: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit 9: 19 wolves harvested.

Unit 10: 1 wolf harvested.

Unit 11: 27 wolves harvested.

Unit 13: 92 wolves harvested.

Unit 14A: 4 wolves harvested.

Unit 14B: 4 wolves harvested.

AKW-20 14.0 Wolf S&I Combined FY2017
Annual Performance Report

Unit 16: 11 wolf harvested.

Unit 17: 68 wolves harvested

ACTIVITY 4: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.

No SUPE surveys were conducted during this reporting period due to inadequate survey conditions. However efforts to mark wolf packs with radiocollars began in February 2017 throughout the region to aid in abundance estimation and demography. Collars have been deployed in Units 16 and 17.

Submitted by: Todd A. Rinaldi, Region IV Management Coordinator

Date: 1 September 2017

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Restoration Grant**

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-20 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NUMBER: 14.0

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Wolf and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT PERIOD: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Region V

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes wolf survey and inventory activities. Activities are listed by game management unit.

**The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in
Region V**

Region wide Activities:

Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented wolf information to the State Board of Game, State Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

Maintain the ability in all units to monitor harvests by collecting data through the wolf sealing process.

The area offices in Barrow, Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome maintained designated fur sealers in villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates. Staff supported 29 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 9 in Unit 23, and 6 in Unit 26A.

Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

Staff supported this activity by contributing furbearer information and summarizing trapper responses and observations to be included in the trapper questionnaire report.

Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Meetings with the public and other agencies were not held due to conflicting schedules. Population objectives were not updated.

Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Staff discussed sealing and harvest reporting with trappers/hunters, and the public. During public meetings we explained the importance of harvest reports and encouraged trappers to report their harvest.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 18:

Monitor wolf harvests through the fur sealing program, and interviews with village residents.

We monitored Unit 18 wolf harvests using fur sealing data for the RY16 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 21 wolves.

Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, hunter/trapper interviews, and observations by staff and the public.

Sealing data, as well as observations by staff and public, indicate that the Unit 18 wolf harvest was low for this reporting period. Winter weather, specifically snow conditions that are favorable for travel by snowmachine, plays a major role in harvest. The winter of RY16 was more favorable than RY15, but access was still poor compared to most years. The wolf population was probably close to normal south and east of the Kuskokwim River in Unit 18. Wolf number on the Yukon River within Unit 18 appeared to be average. This was collaborated by hunter/trapper interviews, observations by staff and the public, and opportunistic track sightings made during aerial survey work for other species.

Assess the effects of wolf predation on prey populations through field observations and interviews with hunters/trappers.

Observers participating in aerial moose, caribou, and muskox surveys, and/or telemetry flights in 2016-2017 recorded wolf kills on both the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers. In RY16 all wolf kills observed were of moose and caribou. Looking at annual recruitment and continued rapid population growth in moose populations in both the Yukon, and Kuskokwim drainages and riparian areas, wolf predation is not a factor effecting either population. Reports of wolves killing muskox on and Near Nelson Island are occasionally reported to the department. Wolf predation on Nelson Island has not influenced population growth or hunt management of Nelson Island Muskox in RY16. Observation of Mulchatna caribou being killed by wolves was observed by department staff and the public in RY16. The most recent population estimate for MCH are unavailable at the time of this report so it is unclear to what extent, if any, wolves are effecting the population with in Unit 18.

Provide public education regarding wolves through the media, during public meetings, and other opportunities.

We discussed wolf numbers, regulations and management at all Advisory Committee meetings and with numerous trappers and hunters during this reporting period.

Unit 22:

Monitor wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and Community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages, and through interviews with trapper/hunters.

Regulatory year 2016-2017 sealing certificates report 59 wolves were sealed in Unit 22; 9 in Unit 22B, 3 in Unit 22C, 9 in Unit 22D, and 29 in 22E. Sex composition of harvest was 37 males and 22 females. Two wolves were harvested by nonresidents. Snowmachine was the main mode of transportation (93% 55 of 59) for harvesting a wolf.

Assess population status and trends utilizing track surveys, sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, Community-based Harvest Assessments and observations by staff and the public.

Wolf distribution and abundance varies depending on location and abundance of caribou. During this reporting period, a large portion of the Western Arctic caribou herd was distributed approximately 30 miles East of Shishmaref, Northern Unit 22D, and Western Unit 22(B). Wolf hunters in Shishmaref reported wolves around caribou, reindeer, and moose.

Department staff and members of the public have reported wolf signs and observation throughout Unit 22. The increasing observation of wolves in Unit 22 does not always correlate with relatively low reported harvest numbers.

Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation

Wolf hides that were sealed by department staff were examined for hair loss and patches of broken guard which may indicate the presence of lice. Wolves that were inspected by staff did not appear to have visible signs of lice infestation.

Record wolf sightings during wildlife surveys as an indicator of wolf population trends.

Observers participating in the 2017 Unit 22 spring moose survey reported observations of wolf tracks and sightings. Unit 22 staff will continue to make observations on wolf and track sightings within the unit during survey and census work for other species.

Units 23 and 26A:

Monitor wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and Community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages, and through interviews with trapper/hunters.

Unit 23: Preliminary sealing certificates indicated that 60 wolves were sealed in RY16, of which 33 were males and 26 were female and one unknown. Fifty-four hunter/trappers reported method of take as firearm

and 4 reported using traps. Snowmachines were indicated as transportation method for 54 wolves and 4 were taken by airplane. Of the 60 wolves harvested, 42 were gray, 4 were white, 8 were black, and 6 were unknown. Three were taken by nonresidents, 3 by non-local residents, and the remaining 54 by area residents.

Community-based Harvest Assessments were completed by Division of Subsistence in Kotzebue in Unit 23, and in Point Hope in nearby neighboring Unit 26A. Data analysis is currently ongoing and results are not available.

Unit 26A: Sealing certificates indicated that 14 wolves were sealed in RY16. Seven were males, and 7 were females. Thirteen were ground shot and 1 was trapped. Snowmachines were used as transportation for all 14 wolves. Ten wolves were gray 3 were black, and 1 was white. All wolves were taken by residents of Unit 26A.

Community-based Harvest Survey were completed by Division of Subsistence in Barrow and other villages of the North Slope in Unit 26A. Data analysis is currently ongoing and results are not available.

Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Units 23 and 26A during late winter to assess population status.

A wolf survey in Unit 26A was not attempted because very low populations were documented in RY15 and RY16.

Record wolf sightings during moose censuses in Unit 26A as an indicator of wolf population trends.

During the April 2017 Unit 26A spring moose trend area count we observed zero wolves. In 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 we counted 3.10, 1.66, 0.45, 2.4, 2.5, 0.3, 0.8, and 1.0 wolves per hour, respectively. It appears that wolf numbers have increased slightly since 2014.

Submitted by: Phillip Perry Region V Management Coordinator