

ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. AKW-20 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NO. 7.0 Furbearer

PERIOD: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Region 1

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

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

TITLE

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations

Region I (Units 1-5)

Region-wide:

Activity 1: Prepare triennial furbearer management reports.

Accomplishments: No triennial furbearer management report was published this year. DWC is changing to a five-year reporting schedule with brief annual reports.

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

Accomplishments: Information on furbearer harvest and management was provided to state and federal regulatory agencies and boards as requested.

Activity 3: Collect harvest data on beaver, marten, otter, lynx, fisher, coyote and wolverine when pelts are presented for sealing.

Accomplishments: Regional managers collected a variety of data on all furbearers for which sealing is required. There is no sealing requirement for coyotes.

Activity 4: Use the trapper questionnaire, interviews and other anecdotal information from reliable observers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Accomplishments: Regional managers engaged trappers and hunters to learn about their

observations of furbearer populations. They also participated in revising and updating questions asked on the annual Trapper Questionnaire. The updated questionnaire was sent to trappers following the RY16 trapping season.

Activity 5: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Accomplishments: Regional managers monitored the furbearer harvest primarily through sealing data and conversations with trappers.

Activity 6: Collect female wolverine carcasses opportunistically for reproductive information.

Accomplishments: Carcasses collected in Unit 1C were sent to Petersburg for analysis. Experienced volunteer biologists examined carcasses and recorded data under the supervision of the Petersburg Area Biologist.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 1C

Activity 1: Collect carcasses of fishers for sex, age, reproductive status and genetic material that are brought in for sealing to better assess the fisher population in the unit.

Accomplishments: No fishers were sealed during the reporting period, so we did not collect any carcasses

Activity 2: Mark 2-3 coyotes to investigate habitat selection, home range size, and den locations.

Accomplishments: No coyotes were marked during this report period.

Unit 3

Activity 1: Continue to monitor marten on Kuiu Island as a tool to help with management of this furbearer population.

Accomplishments: No activity. The state trapping season for martens on Kuiu Island is currently closed, but the federal season remains open.

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: 7.0

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

PERIOD: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Region 2

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

**The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations In
Region II**

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare information for 5-year regional furbearer management reports and plans.

Reports were finalized and submitted for publication in 2013. Area staff continue to collect information in preparation for drafting future reports. The department is transitioning to a 5-year report and plan. The next report will be published in 2018.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

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

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest data on furbearers presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

All furbearers that require sealing in Region II were presented to staff or appointed sealers for information and specimen collection and sealing. See area specific activities for additional information.

ACTIVITY 4: Monitor the furbearer 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 5: Conduct furbearer track surveys where appropriate

Track count surveys are conducted opportunistically with other species surveys. No furbearer track surveys were conducted during this time.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: Collected harvest data for 110 marten, 35 beaver, 23 wolverine, 0 lynx, and 65 river otters. These harvests are low for marten and river otter, high for beaver and wolverine, and normal for lynx.

Units 7&15

ACTIVITY 1: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Preliminary harvest results are:

	Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Unit 15Z	Total
Beaver	32	26	8	8	1	75
Marten	22	0	0	0	3	25
Wolverine	4	1	1	5	0	11
Otter	3	6	1	16	0	26
Lynx	0	5	1	3	0	9

The trapping season for lynx was closed in 2016-17 due to a low in the population cycle. The hunting season however was open, with a bag limit of 2 lynx.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct wolverine survey. No surveys were conducted due to other survey obligations.

Unit 8

ACTIVITY 1: Collect morphological data and seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Otter – During the 2016–17 season, trappers brought in 127 otters for sealing. The harvest was composed of 61 males, 63 females, and 3 of undetermined sex.

Beaver – During the 2016–17 season, trappers brought in 30 beavers for sealing.

ACTIVITY 3: Latrine surveys to assess river otter densities were not conducted during this time period.

Unit 14C

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ACTIVITY 1: Furbearer harvest was monitored through field observations, fur sealing reports, and contact with trappers and hunters. See below:

Harvest:

Beaver: 9 harvested; 3 of those killed with depredation permits

Lynx: 0

River Otter: 0

Wolf: 0 (1 killed by vehicle collision)

Wolverine: 1

Marten: 3

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: 7.0

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

PROJECT LOCATION: REGION 3 GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, 26C

PROJECT DURATION: 1 July 2016-30 June 2017

REPORT DUE DATE: 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 five-year furbearer management reports and operational plans.

OBJECTIVE 2: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

OBJECTIVE 3: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

OBJECTIVE 4: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

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

OBJECTIVE 6: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Units 19 and 20.

OBJECTIVE 7: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS IDENTIFIED IN ANNUAL PLAN THIS PERIOD

Job/Activity 1-a: Prepare five-year furbearer management reports and operational plans.

Accomplishments: Gathered information and data from various sources regarding Alaska's furbearer populations for 7 five-year Furbearer Management Reports and Plans for Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B, and 26C. This will be used in 5-year management reports and operational plans that will include historical and current data, management directions, methods, Board of Game actions, harvests and natural mortality, habitat assessments, and local and statewide non-regulatory issues.

Job/Activity 2-a: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Accomplishments: Trapper questionnaires were sent to approximately 4,450 trappers in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. Approximately 235 responded with data regarding trapping area, frequency, distance travelled, transportation method, trapline composition, target species, harvest methods, species abundance, and harvest trends.

Job/Activity 2-b: Personal Interviews

Accomplishments: To determine status of furbearer populations, we conducted interviews opportunistically with furbearer hunters and trappers in the field, and during sealing of wolves, lynx, wolverine, and river otter, and during marten carcass collections.

Job/Activity 3-a.: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Accomplishments: Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C: Monitored the furbearer harvest through field observations, and contact with trappers in the field and during fur sealing reports and contact with trappers.

1. **Job/Activity 4-a:** Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Accomplishments: Collected data from 1,377 lynx, 173 wolverine, and 61 river otter pelts that were presented for sealing, including harvest location, size measurements and sex determination.

Job/Activity 5-a: Provide furbearer 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, 2 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 brown bear management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board.

Job/Activity 6-a: Conduct beaver cache surveys.

Accomplishments: Beaver cache surveys in Units 19 and 20 were not conducted due to time spent on other priorities. This activity will not be planned in subsequent years.

1. **Job/Activity 6-a:** Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Accomplishments: In Unit 20D, we conducted a snowshoe hare population survey in conjunction with other small game over a week-long timespan in late April. Data from this survey are used to generate a population index for hares, which are important prey for furbearers.

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 (*List project-related publications prepared or published during this reporting period.*)

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT (*optional*)

Prepared by: Doreen Parker McNeill

Date: December 8, 2017

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

**FURBEARER
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NUMBER: AKW-20 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NUMBER: 7.0

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 Furbearer and Factors Influencing Their Populations

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

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

Region wide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Collect furbearer harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit	Beaver	Lynx	Marten	Otter	Wolverine
<i>Unit 9</i>	71	17	0 ^a	31	18
<i>Unit 10^b</i>	-	-	-	0	1
<i>Unit 11</i>	3	31	N/A ^a	1	9
<i>Unit 13</i>	134	94	5 ^a	21	48
<i>Unit 14A</i>	42	0	24	11	1
<i>Unit 14B</i>	29	0	20	4	1
<i>Unit 16^c</i>	76	1	142	46	15
<i>Unit 17</i>	82	31	N/A ^a	44	37

^a Marten sealing is not required in Units 9, 10, 11, 13, and 17.

^b Beaver, lynx, and marten do not occur in Unit 10

^c Beaver are no longer required to be sealed in Unit 16.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

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The annual trapper questionnaire was not completed during this reporting period..

Activities by Unit:

Unit 13

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial and ground transects to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

No lynx surveys were flown in FY17 due to resource limitations.

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-10 Wildlife Restoration FY2017

PROJECT NUMBER: 7.0

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

PERIOD: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

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

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations In

Region V

Region wide Activities:

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

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented furbearer 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 furbearer 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.

Monitor harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, the annual hunter/trapper questionnaire, and Community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 18: We analyzed fur sealing data for the RY16 trapping season. These preliminary harvests reports are close to what we anticipated for harvest but final numbers should be a little higher for all species. For RY 16; 55 lynx, 100 river otter, and 32 wolverine were reported. The presence of a local fur buyer encourages trappers to not only participate in trapping and passing the knowledge of how to trap on to the next generation but also increase the number of people in getting their fur sealed. A below average number of fur

sealed in RY16 trapping season was expected because of lower than average snow conditions, a prolonged down turn in the fur market, and decreased trapping effort.

Unit 22:

Furbearer harvest results by subunit are based on RY16-17 sealing certificates:

	2 A	2 B	2 C	2 D	2 E	T o t a l
Lynx	1 0	2	0	1	0	1 3
Otte	1	3	6	0	1	1 1
Wolverine	1 2	6	7	4	6	3 5

Community-based Harvest Assessments completed in Unit 22 by Division of Subsistence show beaver, marten, and red fox are also harvested by Unit 22 communities.

In RY15 three wolverine carcasses were donated by hunters and sent to the ADF&G Wildlife Health and Disease Surveillance Program in Fairbanks, AK for rabies surveillance. Recent results indicate the wolverines tested negative for rabies.

Unit 23: The preliminary harvest reported on RY16 sealing certificates included 42 lynx (7 females, 11 males, 24 unknown); all but 24 were taken by Unit 23 residents. Thirty-four lynx were trapped and 8 were shot. Forty-one were taken using a snowmachine and 1 by airplane. Four otters (3 males and 1 female) were taken during this regulatory year. One otter was taken using a plane; all other otters were taken using a snowmachine. All were taken by Unit 23 residents. Two otters were shot and 2 otters were trapped. Thirty-five wolverines were sealed (7 female and 28 males), 6 were taken by ground shooting, 28 by traps, and 1 by snare. For transportation, 16 were taken using an airplane, 1 by four-wheeler, and 18 were taken using a snowmachine

Unit 26A: We analyzed fur sealing data for the RY16 trapping season and reported harvests were 1 river otters (male), 5 lynx (3 males, 2 females), and 29 wolverine (19 male, 8 female, 2 unknown). All furbearers were taken by local residents of 26A. The river otter was ground shot, 2 lynx were trapped and 3 lynx were ground shot. Of the 29 wolverines, 14 were ground shot and 15 were trapped. Snow machines were used for transportation for all harvested furbearers.

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

Throughout Region V we communicated with local trappers and hunters to improve harvest reporting through the fur sealing process; explained the importance of harvest reporting at public meetings in villages; prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data; and attended meetings hosted by local chapters of the Alaska Trappers Association.

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

Unit 18: We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. Muskrat numbers continue to remain low but increasing since the 2009-2010 winters. Lynx numbers are starting to rebound after population low in 2014. harvest for RY16 was 54. Wolverine harvest for RY16 was 32 animals. This was above the 20 year long term average of 22 but below the record high harvest in RY10 (n=64)... River otter harvest has likely remained stable with a preliminary harvest in RY16 of 100. Harvest data is not gathered for beaver, marten and fox however numbers appear to be stable in abundance over the reporting period.

Unit 22 Sealing data reports suggest lynx numbers have declined in Unit 22A and 22B, likely because of decreased snowshoe hare numbers. The reported unit wide average annual harvest of lynx from RY09 to RY13 is 100 per year (range 83-137) versus 13 reported harvests during this period, and the 16 lynx harvested in RY15-16. River otters are believed to be more common than harvest numbers would indicate. However, reports of abundant sign of snowshoe hare in 22B and 22C this winter suggest lynx food resource is increasing. The unit wide average annual harvest of otters from RY09 to RY16 is 12 otters per year (range 4-16). Wolverine numbers are unknown; however observations and anecdotal reports suggest wolverines are common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E. The unit wide average annual harvest of wolverines from RY09 to RY16 is 33 wolverines per year (range 26-40).

Unit 23: Furbearer populations appeared to be within the range of levels observed in previous years based on sealing records, opportunistic observations of furbearers, contacts with hunter and trappers, and community-based harvest assessments. Like last year, lynx population levels appear to be dropping, although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. The reported unit wide average annual harvest of lynx from RY09 to RY12 is 141 per year (range 124-174) versus 42 lynx harvested during this period, and the 23 lynx harvested last period. The unit wide average annual harvest of otters from RY10 to RY16 is 8 otters per year (range 1-13). Wolverine numbers continue to appear to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period however, with harvests similar to last year (RY15). The unit wide average annual harvest of wolverines from RY10 to RY16 is 32 wolverines per year (range 18-52)

Unit 26A: Opportunistic observations of wolverines on aerial surveys and interviews with local residents indicate that wolverines appear to be at high numbers. Observations of high snowshoe hare numbers and their browsing effects during the regulatory year might indicate a future increase in the lynx population. Arctic and red foxes are both in a period of medium population level. Coyotes are rare; river otter and lynx densities are very low.

Coordinate with the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report and prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest.

Summaries of trapper harvest information and general population status for each game management unit are provided to support annual trapper questionnaire reports.

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

Furbearer information is available for discussion during Advisory Committee and Regional Advisory Council meetings. Beaver populations continue to be considered too high by many members of the public because their dams impede boat passage on creeks and waterways, as well as spawning salmon.

Work with community members in rural locations to keep fur sealing vendors active and up to date with new information.

In Unit 22, fur vendors were contacted to ensure their sealing supplies were adequate. Finding new fur sealers in communities have been on-going efforts to ensure sealing and reporting requirements are met. . Unit 22 staff traveled to Shishmaref to recruit a new fur sealing vendor and seal fur. Public service announcements were sent to communities at the end of the trapping season to remind hunters & trappers to visit their local sealer.

Submitted by: Phillip Perry, Region V Management Coordinator