

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL 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-4 Wildlife Restoration FY2015
Project Number: 24.0
Project Title: Fire Management Planning for Wildlife Habitat
Project Duration: 1 July 2014–30 June 2015
Report Due Date: 28 September 2015
Principal Investigator: Doreen Parker McNeill
Work Location: Statewide

Project Activities and Accomplishments

ACTIVITY 1: Represent the department on the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG) and related Committees and Task Groups.

Accomplishments: Sue Rodman in Anchorage served as the agency representative, also serving as Chair beginning in January 2015. She also serves on the Wildland Fire Prevention and Education Committee. Tom Paragi in Fairbanks served as the alternate representative. He continued to participate on the Fire Research and GIS committees by phone and email and coordinated with Rodman on Interior fire issues. The Fire Research committee conducted its annual fall review of research proposals to the Joint Fires Sciences Program (federal funding) and wrote endorsement letters for selected proposals. Paragi submitted GIS shapefiles for ADF&G mechanical treatments and prescribed fires back to the mid-1990s to the Alaska Fire Service for updating its database on hazardous fuels treatments. Spatial knowledge of where spruce stands are converted to young forest dominated by hardwoods may enhance tactical strategy in fire suppression, regardless of the fact it was created for wildlife habitat benefits. Rodman attended the January annual meeting in Boise of the Coordinating Group Advisory Council (CGAC) and their joint meeting with National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC).

ACTIVITY 2: Participate in the two annual fall fire reviews sponsored by the AWFCG and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry (DOF), respectively.

Accomplishments: Rodman attended the state agency fire review in Homer that included a field trip to the Funny River fuel break. This interagency field session highlighted the opportunities presented to ADF&G with respect to incorporating habitat enhancement projects into fire management strategies. Rodman also chaired the interagency fire review in Fairbanks; Paragi attend a portion of the interagency review. Rodman attended the spring state agency fire planning meeting in Girdwood in March. Rodman participated in the spring Agency Administrator / Fire Management Officer meeting in Fairbanks to set up interagency coordination for the summer fire season. Rodman also chaired the AWFCG business meeting at the end of that week.

ACTIVITY 3: Annually evaluate and comment on the selection of fire management options (Critical, Full, Modified, and Limited) under the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan and recommend changes.

Accomplishments: ADF&G staff had no requests to change options for the 2014 fire season. However, plans are in place through coordination with State Forestry and federal partners to review opportunities for changing options in both Regions II and IV. Agencies will be reviewing the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan in fall 2015, which will provide ADF&G another opportunity to review management options.

ACTIVITY 4: Meet with federal, state and local level administrators to discuss fire-related policies, procedures or issues. Review and comment on state and federal fire-related policies and procedures. Develop and promote department policies and positions relative to fire management

Accomplishments: Rodman and Paragi participated in the 3 teleconferences with state and federal fire managers to coordinate planning of wildland fire management and prescribed fire to maintain or enhance forage for free-ranging plains bison near Delta Junction. Two main issues were identified: a habitat management plan for bison (for which ADF&G would have the lead role) is required by the Bureau of Land Management to justify operational involvement in prescribed fire, and using the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the greater Delta area as a conduit for public engagement on use of fire to manage habitat. There may be an opportunity to coordinate with State Forestry on updating the CWPP in its next iteration.

Rodman participated in three All Lands All Hands meetings on the Kenai Peninsula. She met with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Fire Management Officer Kristi Bullock along with Hans Rinke and Howie Kent from State Forestry in Soldotna in April 2015 to review the proposed fuel break around Sterling. This project will serve both fire management and wildlife habitat enhancement while providing the Refuge with opportunities to use prescribed fire in the future. This project is also being coordinated with Chugachmiut Inc. and Kenai Natives Association. Rodman also attended the Incident Management Team close out meeting for the Aggie fire north of Fairbanks and visited the Incident Command Post of the Sockeye Fire near Willow. Rodman and Region IV staff coordinated with DOF staff in Palmer through the winter 2014/2015 to prepare the Little Granite Prescribed Fire Plan, conduct public outreach, and manage logistics of implementing this burn. Unfortunately, the weather window did not open within the pre-leaf out period; the burn is rescheduled for fall 2015 or spring 2016. At the national level, Rodman participates in the monthly teleconferences of the CGAC. Policy issues are often addressed at these meetings and Rodman provides comments on behalf of AWFCG and the State as appropriate to the issues. She also provided specific comments to NMAC regarding the hiring of Incident Commanders who maintain an 'Administratively Determined' status. At the state level, during the busy 2015 fire season, when the Alaska Preparedness Level (PL) was at 3 and conditions called for an increase to 4, Rodman asked the Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) group to activate. She participated in some of the MAC calls, including three in-person meetings in Fairbanks when the PL was at 5. Note that ADF&G is not a member of the MAC; Rodman asked for a review of this policy for 2016. As Chair of the AWFCG, Rodman chairs monthly teleconferences and one in-person meeting to date in 2015 with three more planned during the remainder of her term as Chair.

ACTIVITY 5: Facilitate department staff involvement in fire-related issues

Accomplishments: Paragi and Rodman assisted Delta Area staff with drafting a prescribed fire plan for field complexes that compose about 3% (3,000 acres) of the legislatively-designated Delta Junction Bison Range. The purpose is to reduce shrub and forest succession and encroachment in cleared portions and restore forbs and grasses as forage. Additionally, they wrote an interim letter to State Forestry, BLM and the Army requesting that “fire use” (allowing a natural ignition to burn for resource objectives) be considered on the full bison range until a prescribed fire plan is formalized. Paragi & Rodman discussed fire operations with local staff in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Palmer and Soldotna. Rodman reviewed how to use the Integrated Fire Management tool online or via mobile device with the State Game Refuge and Sanctuaries staff to they could stay informed on fire activities.

ACTIVITY 6: Identify and review appropriate literature to maintain expertise on fire management issues.

Accomplishments: Paragi continued periodic literature downloads on fire and forest ecology and management pertinent to Alaska ecosystems. Rodman attended the Alaska Fire Science Consortium (AFSC) workshop in Fairbanks in both October, 2014 and April 2015. She also serves as a member of the AFSC and attended their board meeting in March 2015. Rodman reviewed literature on aspen forest ecology and response to fire in preparation for the Little Granite prescribed burn in Unit 14A and in anticipation of more burn plans to be written for the Kenai Peninsula.

ACTIVITY 7: Prepare and disseminate information (e.g., news releases, guest editorials, brochures and video) on fire-related issues. Interact with broadcast media on fire-related issues.

Accomplishments: Rodman hosted a media event for Fire Prevention Week in May located in Eagle River with the Governor’s office in attendance with local television and radio stations. Resource agencies were also present to discuss wildland fire prevention, including DOF and the Anchorage Fire Department. Rodman supported two Anchorage Daily News articles on the use of fire for habitat and fire prevention as preparation for the Little Granite prescribed burn in addition to posting two updates to akfireinfo.com.

ACTIVITY 8: Prepare an annual budget, work plan, and documents needed to satisfy Federal Aid and other reporting requirements.

Accomplishments: Paragi and Rodman drafted the Federal Aid performance report and reviewed program needs for FY16 budget preparation.

Submitted by: Doreen I. Parker McNeill, Region III Management Coordinator

Date: August 24, 2015