

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

**Grant Number:** W-33

**Segment Number:** 10

**Project Number:** 1.70

**Project Title:** Moose population dynamics in southeastern Alaska

**Project Duration:** July 1, 2010–June 30, 2014

**Reporting Period:** July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

**Report Due to HQ:** September 1, 2012

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**Cooperators:** Glacier Bay National Park, DOT&PF

**Work Location:** Gustavus and Berners Bay, Alaska (GMU 1C)

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**I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING LAST SEGMENT**

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Acquire long-term demographic data from radio-collared moose in Gustavus and Berners Bay.

We monitored pregnancy rates by collecting fresh fecal pellets from radio-marked adult female moose during late-February 2011 (Gustavus, n = 24, Berners Bay, n = 0). Fecal pellets were analyzed for progesterone concentration to determine pregnancy status (Joan Bauman, St. Louis Zoo). We also analyzed archived fecal pellets collected from previously captured animals of known reproductive status to validate laboratory assays (n = 145). During May 2011, we conducted aerial (Gustavus, n = 3; Berners Bay, n = 2) and ground-based surveys to determine calf status of radio-marked adult female moose (Gustavus, n = 34, Berners Bay, n = 30). We monitored survival of radio-marked adult female moose (Gustavus, n = 38; Berners Bay, n = 32) each month via ground- or air-based radio-telemetry surveys. During 2010/2011, we investigated 10 mortality events involving radio-marked moose (Gustavus, n = 4; Berners Bay, n = 6). We monitored survival of calves associated with radio-marked adult female moose (Gustavus, n = 29; Berners Bay, n = 18) during May/June, November and April via ground- or air-based radio-telemetry surveys. During 2010/2011, we investigated 2 mortality events involving calves associated with radio-marked moose (Gustavus, n = 2; Berners Bay, n = 0). We conducted 2 aerial surveys during winter in order to estimate moose population size and composition (Gustavus, n = 1; Berners Bay, n = 1). During these surveys moose sighting probabilities were estimated using mark-resight techniques based on data collected from radio-marked adult female moose. We did not conduct moose capture activities during this reporting period; our study plan scheduled moose captures every two years (i.e. March 2012 and 2014).

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Develop deterministic population models for moose in Gustavus and Berners Bay. We estimated annual and seasonal survival (adult female and calf) and reproductive (calving, twinning and fecundity) rates for radio-marked adult female moose and associated calves monitored in Gustavus (2003-2011, n = 73) and Berners Bay (2006-2011, n = 67). We also

estimated age-specific survival and reproductive rates for each population. We developed and validated a 2-stage matrix population model parameterized using vital rate data summarized in Job 2a. The model was used to inform harvest management decisions for the Gustavus population and examine the potential for future harvest in the Berners Bay population.

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

### **JOB/ACTIVITY 1a: Estimate reproductive performance of radio-marked adult female moose**

**Accomplishments:** We monitored pregnancy rates by collecting fresh fecal pellets from radio-marked adult female moose during late-February 2012 (Gustavus, n = 33, Berners Bay, n = 5). Fecal pellets were analyzed for progesterone concentration to determine pregnancy status (St. Louis Zoo). We also analyzed blood serum collected from live-captured animals for pregnancy specific protein B concentration (Gustavus, n = 11, Berners Bay, n = 5). During May/June 2012, we conducted aerial (Gustavus, n = 3; Berners Bay, n = 2) and ground-based surveys (only in Gustavus) to determine calf status of radio-marked adult female moose (Gustavus, n = 40, Berners Bay, n = 33).

### **JOB/ACTIVITY 1b: Estimate survival of radio-marked adult female moose**

**Accomplishments:** We monitored survival of radio-marked adult female moose (Gustavus, n = 40; Berners Bay, n = 33) each month via ground- or air-based radio-telemetry surveys. During 2011/2012, we investigated 8 mortality events involving radio-marked moose (Gustavus, n = 4; Berners Bay, n = 4).

### **JOB/ACTIVITY 1c: Estimate survival of calves associated with radio-marked adult female moose**

**Accomplishments:** We monitored survival of calves associated with radio-marked adult female moose (Gustavus, n = 30; Berners Bay, n = 24) during May/June, November and April via ground- or air-based radio-telemetry surveys. During 2011/2012, we investigated 1 mortality events involving a radio-marked 11-month old moose (Gustavus, n = 1; Berners Bay, n = 0).

### **JOB/ACTIVITY 1d: Estimate moose population size and composition.**

**Accomplishments:** We conducted 3 aerial surveys during winter in order to estimate moose population size and composition (Gustavus, n = 2; Berners Bay, n = 1). During these surveys moose sighting probabilities were estimated using mark-resight techniques based on data collected from radio-marked adult female moose.

### **JOB/ACTIVITY 1e: Capture and radio-mark adult female moose.**

**Accomplishments:** During March 2012 we captured 19 moose (Gustavus, n = 12; Berners Bay, n = 7) using helicopter (in Berners Bay only) and ground-capture methods (in Gustavus only). In Gustavus, 5 of the moose captured were 10-month old calves associated with previously radio-marked adult females.

### **JOB/ACTIVITY 1f: Prepare annual reports.**

**Accomplishments:** We prepared a wildlife research report detailing activities conducted in Berners Bay, as required by a funding agreement with AKDOT/PF (White et al. 2012). We also

prepared a report detailing activities conducted in the Gustavus area, to satisfy ADFG Federal Aid reporting requirements.

**JOB/ACTIVITY 2a:** Synthesize population-specific demographic data.

**Accomplishments:** We estimated annual and seasonal survival (adult female and calf) and reproductive (calving, twinning and fecundity) rates for radio-marked adult female moose and associated calves monitored in Gustavus (2003-2012, n = 81, 275 moose years) and Berners Bay (2006-2012, n = 73, 167 moose years). We also estimated age-specific survival and reproductive rates for each population.

**JOB/ACTIVITY 2b:** Develop a moose population model for management applications.

**Accomplishments:** We developed and validated a 2-stage matrix population model parameterized using vital rate data summarized in Job 2a. The model was used to inform harvest management decisions for the Gustavus population and examine the potential for future harvest in the Berners Bay population.

**V. PUBLICATIONS**

White, K. S., D. P. Gregovich, N. L. Barten and R. Scott. 2012. Moose population ecology and habitat use along the Juneau Access road corridor, Alaska. Final wildlife research report. ADF&G/DWC/WRR-2012-03. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Juneau, AK. USA

**VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT**

This project should be continued as described in the study plan.

**Prepared by:** Kevin White

**Date:** 9/01/12