ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
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FURBEARERS
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Alaska **GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-27-5
PROJECT NR.: 7.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Game Management Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5

PERIOD: 1 July 2001–30 June 2002

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

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This statewide performance report includes the four regions involved in furbearer survey and inventory activities. Statewide and regional activities are listed before specific activities by herd and game management unit.

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 1

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Draft a furbearer management report.

Area biologists collected data to be used in the 3-year report, due to headquarters in May 2003.

Activity 2: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

This draft satisfies the activity described.

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

During the report period the Board of Game did not consider Region I furbearer issues.

Activity 4: Seal beavers, martens, otters, lynx and wolverines as they are harvested and presented for sealing.

ADF&G Wildlife Conservation staff, FWP Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed furbearer pelts harvested in the region. Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. About 309 beaver, 1203 marten, 7 lynx, 517 otter, and 26 wolverine pelts were harvested and sealed in the region.

Activity 5: Collect anecdotal information from reliable observers about the status of furbearer populations, including the use of an annual trapper survey.

Region I area biologists worked with the headquarters staff biologist to survey trappers and analyze results.

Activity 6: Analyze sealing records, interviews with trappers, trapper questionnaires, and observations by staff and the public.

Region I Area and Assistant Area Biologists reviewed all available information relating to furbearers and their harvests for regulatory year 2001, including it in the draft of the 3-year management report.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $41.5

Submitted by: Bruce Dinneford, Wildlife Biologist IV

The Status of Alaska Furbearer and
Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 2

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Prepare a furbearer management report.

Draft furbearer management reports were prepared during spring 2001.

Activity 2: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

Provided information to the board during the spring 2001 Board of Game meeting.

Activity 4: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Sealed furbearer pelts as presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

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

Results of sealing certificate tabulation and the furbearer questionnaire are presented.

Activities by Unit

Unit 6

Activity 1: Conduct fall beaver cache surveys on the Copper River Delta.

No surveys were conducted. Began planning a cooperative project with U.S. Forest Service to determine beaver population, density and habitat use on Copper River Delta, to be conducted by a graduate student.

Activity 2: Conduct river otter latrine surveys and scat counts.

We conducted habitat assessment on 47 otter latrine sites during 2001 in Port Gravina, Windy Bay, Sheep Bay, and Simpson Bay.

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

Fur sealing:
Beavers - 16, Land otters - 47, Marten - 90, Wolverine - 10, Lynx - 15

Units 7 and 15

Activity 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

Results: No surveys were conducted during this reporting period.

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

Harvest results for 2001–02:

Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total	
Beaver	26	38	14	40	118
Marten	106	0	0	0	106
Wolverine	4	1	3	3	11
Otter	12	5	1	20	38
Lynx	12	32	15	11	70

Twelve percent of the lynx harvested were kittens.

Unit 8

Activity 1: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

During the 2001–02 season, 24 trappers brought in 216 otters for sealing, yielding an average of 11.1 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 98 males (45%), 106 females (49%), and 12 of undetermined sex (6%). Most trappers were local residents (88%), and trapping was the most common method of take (92%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (75%), and December was the most productive month (87%). Twenty-four otters (11%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 18 beavers brought in by 8 trappers, yielding an average harvest of 2.3 beavers/trapper. All of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents (100%), and trapping was the most common method of take (78%). Four wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (39%), and the harvest primarily occurred during November (72%) and December (22%). Fourteen (78%) beavers were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

Trapper questionnaire respondents reported that furbearer populations were high. With the current low harvest in most areas, developing management objectives for furbearers is not a high priority.

Units 9 and 10

Activity 1: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Preliminary harvests in Unit 9 by species were: 107 beaver, 33 lynx, 47 otter, and 24 wolverine.

Units 11 and 13

Activity 1: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Preliminary Harvest 2001–2002:

GMU 13	Lynx	194	10% Kittens
	Beaver	189	
	Otter	34	
	Marten (13E)	18	
	Wolverine	53	
GMU 11	Lynx	32	6% Kittens
	Beaver	0	
	Otter	0	
	Wolverine	6	

Activity 2: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine the status and trend of lynx populations.

Aerial transect surveys for lynx tracks were flown this spring.

15 Lynx tracks per transect in 2000
Not flown in 2001
2.5 Lynx tracks per transect in 2002

Unit 14

Activity 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

These surveys are conducted on an opportunistic basis only and have not been conducted since 1996. Track counts will be conducted in the future as time allows.

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

Fur sealing:
Beavers--149, Land otters--28, Marten--128, Wolverine--10, Lynx--44.

Unit 16

Activity 1: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Fur sealing:
Beavers -154, Land otters -61, Marten -926, Wolverine -45, Lynx -22.

Unit 17

Activity 1: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Results
Fur sealing: Beaver-230, Land Otters-30, Wolverine-47, Lynx-2

Activity 2: Conduct fall beaver cache survey.

Results:
146 miles of stream surveyed and 112 food caches observed.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project: None

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $35.5

Submitted by: Michael G. McDonald, Assistant Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 3

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Wrote an annual survey and inventory report for all units.

Activity 2: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management during the regulatory process.

Made presentations to the Board of Game and advisory committees as needed.

Activities by Unit

Units 12 and 20E

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Conducted personal interviews with area trappers to gain additional insight on unit-wide furbearer abundance and trends, and trapper effort.

Further evaluated Units 12 and 20E furbearer management objectives using results from trapper questionnaires, trapper interviews, sealing documents, and the scientific literature. Based on these data, no changes to the management objectives were necessary.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Sealed fur of harvested lynx (142), otter (2), beaver (6), and wolverine (26). This information was used to monitor harvest effects on these populations by unit.

Activity 3: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased lynx carcasses from are trappers. Necropsied about 75 carcasses to determine the sex and age of the harvested population and to estimate population reproductive performance.

Activity 4: Conduct aerial surveys to monitor lynx and snowshoe hare abundance and distribution.

Monitored lynx and snowshoe hare abundance along 412 miles of transect lines in Unit 12 using aerial survey methods.

Unit 19

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Conducted trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations. Interviews indicated poor early snow conditions and persistent low prices continue to reduce effort in many areas.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Sealed furs of selected species as they were harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends. Marten catches were down and the percent females in the harvest increased indicating a slump in the marten population. Causes for the decrease are speculative and yet unknown. Similar situations have been noted throughout the marten trapping range.

Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F and 25C

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Submitted questions for inclusion in the statewide trapper questionnaires, attended Alaska Trappers Association meetings and interacted with local trappers on a regular basis.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Sealed furs of selected species to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Activity 3: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased several hundred lynx carcasses from trappers and examined them to assess age and reproductive condition to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Activity 4: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted a beaver cache survey on the lower Chena River in Unit 20B in September.

Activity 5: Minimize beaver/human conflicts in the Fairbanks area.

This activity was not funded through federal aid.

Unit 20D

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Mailed trapper questionnaires to determine status of furbearer populations.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Sealed furs from 15 beaver, 207 lynx, 6 river otter, and 11 wolverine and analyzed preliminary harvest data.

Activity 3: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased 62 lynx carcasses to assess age and reproduction condition and modify the lynx trapping season.

Activity 4: Conduct hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey and counted 2 hares.

Unit 21

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Mailed 89 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 34 trappers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Sealed furs of selected species to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Unit 24

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Mailed 89 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 34 trappers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Sealed furs of selected species to monitor harvest levels and trends.

UNITS 25A, 25B, 25D, 26B AND 26C

Activity 1: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Completed trapper questionnaires and interviews.

Activity 2: Seal furs of selected species as they are harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends.

Preliminary data indicate that pelts of 11 Beaver, 1 otter, 74 lynx, 13 wolves, and 20 wolverines were sealed.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $36.9

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Performance report for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A were prepared August 2002 and submitted to HQ early September 2002

Activity 2: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

Unit 18. None required.

Unit 22. Provided information as required.

Unit 23. Briefed the BOG in November 2001 on the population status of furbearers in Unit 23.

Unit 26A. None required.

Activity 3: Maintain the furbearer sealing agents in remote villages.

Unit 18. When we were alerted to the need, we recruited sealers in the villages through letters and telephone contacts. We responded to requests for supplies and answered sealer questions.

Unit 22. The Nome Fish and Game office supplied sealing agents with fur seals and sealing certificates, answered procedural questions, and processed certificates for payment.

Unit 23. We provided seals and sealing documents to fur sealers in Unit 23.

Unit 26A. We assisted and encouraged vendors in Nuiqsut, Barrow, and Wainwright. We recruited and provided the paperwork for a new vendor in Point Lay.

Activity 4: Monitor the harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 18. We are continuing to collect fur sealing data for wolves, otters, lynx, and wolverine. Even though beavers are no longer required to be sealed, we are collecting occasional fur sealing data for them as well. Harvest data for this period has not been finalized. We sent out questionnaires to trappers and await their responses.

Unit 22. Sixty-three lynx were taken in Unit 22A, 5 lynx were taken in Unit 22B, and no lynx were sealed from other units. The reported river otter harvest was 7 otters; 6 from Unit 22A, and 1 from Unit 22C. In Unit 22 37 wolverines were sealed; 10 from Unit 22A, 13 from Unit 22B, 5 from Unit 22C, 4 from Unit 22D, and 4 from Unit 22E. Sealing is no longer required for beaver in Unit 22.

Unit 23. Harvest of furbearers in Unit 23 was monitored through the statewide furbearer sealing certificate program. Harvest levels for all species were comparable to previous years.

Unit 26A. We examined sealing certificates for wolverine in Unit 26A. Trappers sealed 23 wolverines, of which 13 were males and 10 females. Twenty-two were ground shot and 1 was trapped. Twenty wolverine were taken using snowmachines for transportation, and three were taken using skis or snowshoes for transportation. Two wolverines were harvested in November, 5 in December, 3 in February, and 13 in March.

For the first time in recent history, several lynx were taken in 26A. Trappers sealed 7 lynx; 5 males, 1 female and 1 of unknown sex. All seven were ground shot using snowmachines for transportation. One was taken in February and 6 were taken in March.

Activity 5: Improve compliance with current sealing requirements through public communication and education.

Unit 18. We contributed articles to one of the local newspapers and included occasional furbearer articles. At the start of trapping season, we sent posters to the area post offices explaining sealing requirements.

Unit 22. The reason for and importance of harvest reporting was explained at public meetings during trips to villages in Unit 22.

Unit 23. Sealing requirements were reviewed with Unit 23 advisory committees and with prominent trappers and hunters in local communities. The Department of Public Safety officer traveled to local communities in Unit 23 to seal furs.

Unit 26A. We made Public Service Announcements about the importance of sealing on the radio, and also let people know that tanneries wouldn't accept furs that were not sealed.

Activity 6: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Unit 18. Trappers and hunters who brought furs in for sealing were interviewed. Wolf, beaver, and red fox numbers are considered high by these users. Wolverine numbers are holding steady and lynx populations are beginning their normal cyclic decline. These views are consistent with our impressions gathered during aerial surveys for other species.

Unit 22. Furbearers in Unit 22 are currently plentiful and many populations appear to be increasing. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D beaver continue to be common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing. We had no trapper reports from Unit 22E, but beaver numbers are believed to be increasing in the Serpentine River drainage. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable or increasing. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be scarce but increasing, particularly in the eastern portion of the unit. In the remainder of Unit 22 lynx are reported to be scarce or not present. River otter are reported to be common and increasing in Units 22A, 22B and 22C. Their status in Unit 22D and 22E is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common and generally increasing throughout the unit.

Unit 23. Sealing records were summarized and reported in the triennial furbearer management report. The statewide trapper questionnaire was mailed to selected hunters and trappers in Unit 23. No community-based harvest assessments were conducted due to scheduling difficulties.

Unit 26A. Through interviews and observations we determined that arctic foxes and red foxes were fairly abundant in Unit 26A. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. Lynx became much more plentiful than past years. Wolverine densities are relatively high and we observed 8 wolverines during 32 hours of moose census flights in Unit 26A during 2001-2002.

Activity 7: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and furbearer harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

Summary furbearer reports were prepared for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A. These reports were included and distributed to trappers in the region with the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $7.4

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Management Coordinator

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):
State Share = $ 30.3 Federal Share = $ 91 Total Costs = $ 121.3