

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**WOLF
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: W-27-5

PROJECT NR.: 14.0

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 Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations

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

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

Regionwide Activities

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

This draft satisfies the activity described.

Activity 2: Draft an annual survey and inventory management report.

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

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

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

Activity 4: Seal harvested wolf pelts that are presented for sealing.

Area staff, other ADF&G staff, FWP troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed wolf pelts during the regulatory year. About 205 wolf pelts were sealed from the region, including at least 1 illegal, 1 DLP, and 2 for public safety reasons at the Petersburg airport.

Activity 5: Obtain an age structure of the wolves harvested through examination of foreleg bones attached to pelts presented for sealing.

Area staff aged leg bones from Region I wolves that were submitted for sealing. About 180 wolf leg bones were collected for aging from the region.

Activity 6: Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including use of the statewide trapper questionnaire.

Region I area and assistant area biologists reviewed all available information relating to wolves and their harvests for regulatory year 2001.

Activities by Unit

Unit 2

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

Ketchikan area staff opportunistically collected information from trappers, hunters, and others about Unit 2 wolf populations.

Activity 2: Use data generated from Unit 2 wolf research and standard population modeling techniques to estimate the pre-season number of wolves on Prince of Wales Island, calculate when 30% of the wolves have been harvested, and keep harvest within harvest guideline level.

Ketchikan area staff used leg bone ages, research data, and modeling to estimate Unit 2 wolf population parameters. Ketchikan area staff tracked the winter 2002 wolf harvest. Analysis showed that it would not be necessary to close the season early to keep the harvest within the 30% harvest guideline level.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$18.9

Submitted by: Bruce Dinneford, Wildlife Biologist IV

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

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

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

A total of 562 wolves were taken in Region 2 during this reporting period

Activity 3: Prepare annual survey and inventory performance report.

Activity 4: Prepare a wolf management report.

The next draft wolf management report will be prepared during spring 2003.

Activity 5: Conduct systematic aerial transect surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Surveys were conducted in Units 11 and 13 during this reporting period.

Activity 6: Provide information to the Board of Game on wolf management.

Presented information to the Board of Game on wolf proposals for region 2 during the board's spring 2001 meeting.

Activities by Unit

Unit 6

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

The preliminary 2001–02 harvest was:

1 male, and 1 female.

Units 7 and 15

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

Harvest for 2001–02: Total harvest - 31

Unit 7 – 6, Subunit 15A – 9, Subunit 15B – 4 Subunit 15C - 12

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

All pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with *Trichodectes canis*. Pelt damage varied from extreme, generally on pups, to mild on adults.

Units 9 and 10

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

The preliminary wolf harvest for 2001–02 was 106 in Unit 9, and 1 from Unimak Island. Good snow conditions facilitated travel and enhanced trapping effort.

Units 11 and 13

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

The preliminary 2001–02 harvest was:

GMU 13	218 wolves
GMU 11	22 wolves

Activity 2: Conduct surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Estimates:

GMU 13	400 wolves	50 packs
GMU 11	78 wolves	13 packs

Unit 14

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

The preliminary 2001–02 harvest was: 21

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There was at least one case of lice in a wolf taken in 14B.

Unit 16

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

The preliminary 2001–02 harvest was: 87

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There several cases of lice on pelts sealed this season from Unit 16A.

Unit 17

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

The preliminary 2001–02 harvest was: 96

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$22.8

Submitted by: Michael G McDonald, Assistant Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Wolf and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region III

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 and advisory committees on wolf management.

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

Activities by Unit

Unit 12

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal all pelts brought in for sealing and analyze harvest data.

Monitored harvest using sealing documents, interviewed trappers and analyzed harvest data. Twenty-four trappers reported taking 42 wolves.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys in the Tok, Dry Tok, and Little Tok drainages to monitor population status and trend.

Surveyed the Tok, Little Tok, and Dry Tok River drainages and found 7 packs ranging from 2-11 wolves. This will become a trend area to monitor Unit 12 wolf population trend.

Units 19, 21A, and 21E

Activity 1: Conduct population estimation surveys.

Conducted no population estimation surveys because personnel were not available.

Activity 2: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal all pelts brought in for sealing and analyze harvest data.

Monitored harvest, interviewed trappers and sealed all pelts. Harvest seems to be steady, effort has increased in some areas, but harvests have yet to reflect the increased interest in trapping.

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

Activity 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter in selected areas to estimate the wolf population.

Conducted aerial surveys on 1 April 2002 to estimate pack sizes on Tanana Flats portion of Unit 20A.

Activity 2: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal all pelts brought in for sealing and analyze harvest data.

Monitored the harvest of wolves through trapper interviews and pelt sealing, and analyzed harvest data (preliminary RY01 Unit 20 and 25C harvest report = 39 wolves).

Activity 3: Draft population objectives.

No progress made on drafting objectives, completion expected during the next reporting period.

Unit 20D

Activity 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter to estimate the wolf population in northern Unit 20D.

Conducted aerial surveys in southern Unit 20D and interviewed trappers to estimate a population of 113–121 wolves.

Activity 2: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal all pelts brought in for sealing and analyze harvest data.

Monitored the harvest of 10 wolves and analyzed harvest data.

Unit 20E

Activity 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter to estimate the wolf population.

Conducted aerial surveys in areas near the wolf treatment area and found pack sizes ranging from 2-16 wolves. Pups were found in all packs larger than 2 wolves.

Activity 2: Continue monitoring radiocollared wolves to determine range use, natality and mortality.

Monitored movements and productivity of relocated and resident wolves.

Monitored wolf numbers within the nonlethal wolf control area using track surveys (October-April) and radiotelemetry (13 of the 15 treated packs numbered 2 adult wolves).

Activity 3: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal all pelts brought in for sealing and analyze harvest data.

Monitored harvest using sealing documents, trapper questionnaires, and in field contact with trappers. Analyzed harvest data. Ten trappers/hunters reported taking 32 wolves.

Units 21B, 21C, 21D

Activity 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter in cooperation with USFWS to estimate the wolf population.

Did not complete wolf population estimate because weather conditions were not conducive for a SUPE aerial survey.

Activity 2: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal wolf pelts and analyze harvest data.

In combination with Unit 24, monitored the harvest of 125 wolves, interviewed 34 trappers, sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

Unit 24

Activity 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter in cooperation with USFWS to estimate the wolf population.

Did not complete wolf population estimate because weather conditions were not conducive for a SUPE aerial survey.

Activity 2: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal wolf pelts and analyze harvest data.

In combination with Units 21B, C, and D, monitored the harvest of 125 wolves, interviewed 34 trappers, sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

Units 25A, 25B, 25D, 26B, and 26C

Activity 1: Conduct periodic wolf population surveys in Units 25B, 25D East, and 25D West.

Did not complete wolf population estimate because weather conditions were not conducive for an aerial survey.

Activity 2: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers, seal all pelts brought in for sealing and analyze harvest data.

Monitored harvest, interviewed trappers, sealed pelts and analyzed harvest data.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project:

Collected carcasses from unit 19D trappers to assess relative body condition, age structure of the harvest and reproductive parameters from mature females. We purchased and processed 25 wolf carcasses, most were pups and yearling, body condition was variable. No reproductive age females were analyzed

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$80.6

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing their Population Status 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 headquarters in early September 2002.

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

Qualitative information regarding wolf abundance in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A was provided to the BOG at the November 2001 meeting.

Activity 3: Maintain the wolf sealing program in all Units to monitor the hunter/trapper harvest.

Unit 18: When 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. Wolves taken in Unit 18 were sealed by ADF&G staff and designated fur sealers.

Unit 22: The Nome office supplied sealing agents with fur seals and sealing certificates, answered procedural questions, and processed fur sealing certificates for payment. Wolves taken in the Nome area were sealed by department staff.

Unit 23: Wolves taken in Unit 23 were sealed by ADF&G and DPS staff. The Kotzebue office supplied sealing agents with fur seals, sealing certificates and instruction when necessary.

Unit 26A: We sealed wolves and examined sealing reports from Unit 26A and found that 12 wolves were sealed in 2001-2002. Sealing certificates indicated that 10 of these were males and 2 were females. Two of the trappers were local residents and 1 was a non-local resident, and they reported that all 12 were ground-shot, using snowmachines for access. Ten of the wolves that were harvested were gray, 1 was black, and 1 was white.

Activity 4: Send out an annual trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

Unit 18: We sent out questionnaires to trappers and await their responses. Trappers who brought furs in for sealing consistently stated that wolf populations are larger than in previous years, and are increasing. Wolf harvest as determined by sealing records over the past few years are consistent with that impression.

Unit 22: A summary of furbearer harvest and abundance in Unit 22 was written for the Trapper Questionnaire annual report. A list of active Unit 22 furbearer hunter/trappers was compiled, a cover letter was written and trapper questionnaires were sent from the Juneau office.

Unit 23: The statewide trapper questionnaire was sent to trappers in Unit 23. Results were reported in the annual report (organized by region rather than Game Management Unit).

Unit 26A: We attached a letter explaining the state trapper questionnaire and sent it to several trappers in Unit 26A. We examined the results and read the comments from the trappers.

Activity 5: Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Unit 26A: We discussed desired population objectives for wolves in Unit 26A with members of the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee and they indicated that they were satisfied with the current population.

Activity 6: Improve compliance with current sealing requirements through public communication and education.

Unit 18: We continue to contribute articles to one of the local newspapers and include occasional articles dealing with wolves. At the start of trapping season, we sent posters to the area post offices explaining sealing requirements. We regularly receive phone calls from the public and answer questions during public meetings regarding wolves.

Unit 22: We explained at public meetings the reason for and importance of harvest reporting.

Unit 23: The Unit 23 Area Biologist participated in the local radio station programs describing sealing requirements for wolves and other furbearers in Kotzebue Sound. Department of Public Safety staff traveled to villages in Unit 23 to seal wolves and inform residents of sealing requirements.

Unit 26A: We made Public Service Announcements on the radio, and told many people personally, that everyone was required by law to have their furs sealed, and that tanneries wouldn't accept furs that were not sealed.

Activities by Unit

Unit 22

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 22 sealing records show a harvest of 36 wolves: 5 from Unit 22A, 25 from Unit 22B, 2 from Unit 22C, 4 from Unit 22D, and 0 from Unit 22E. Big game harvest surveys completed in Golovin show 1 additional wolf was taken in Unit 22.

Activity 2: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Wolf densities were highest in Units 22A and eastern 22B, but harvest data and observations by staff and local residents indicate wolves are becoming more numerous in all parts of the unit. The increase is probably due to the large number of Western Arctic Herd caribou that wintered on the Seward Peninsula during the last six years. Trapper surveys from Units 22A and 22B reported that wolves were common. In 22A numbers were generally thought to be stable, while in Unit 22B wolves were generally thought to be increasing. Respondents from the remainder of the unit reported that wolves were scarce, but most respondents thought numbers were increasing.

Activity 3: Cooperate with reindeer herders to evaluate methods for reducing adverse interactions between wolves and reindeer.

Nome staff participated in 2 Reindeer Herder Association meetings and addressed the herders' concerns about wildlife issues, but wolves were not brought up for discussion.

Units 23 and 26A

Activity 1: Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Units 23 and 26A during late winter to assess population status.

No aerial surveys were conducted for wolves in Unit 23. In Unit 26A we did not conduct an aerial survey for wolves. The next wolf count is scheduled for the spring of 2003.

Activity 2: Record wolf sightings during moose censuses in Units 23 and 26A as an indicator of wolf population trends.

The location and number of wolves observed opportunistically in Unit 23 were recorded. In Unit 26A we spotted 8 wolves during the spring moose census in 2001-2002.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project: None.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$0.9

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Wildlife Biologist III

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):

State Share = \$ 30.8 Federal Share = \$ 92.4 Total Costs = \$ 123.2