

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-10

PROJECT NO.

PERIOD: July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

PROJECT LOCATION: RI, RII, RIII, RIV, RV

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

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

Region I Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare management reports

Management reports are nearing completion.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect biological data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing.

Area staff, other ADF&G staff, Alaska Wildlife Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed wolf pelts during the regulatory year. About 149 wolf pelts were sealed from the region.

ACTIVITY 3: Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including the use of an annual trapper survey.

This work was done throughout the region as opportunities permitted.

Activities by Unit

Unit 1C

ACTIVITY 1: Continue to monitor wolves at the Mendenhall Lake Recreational Area (MLRA) through conversations with public and communication with the USFS.

Douglas staff monitored wolf activity at the MLRA and in urban areas of Juneau through conversations with residents encountering wolves, and local public safety agencies.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor wolves at Gustavus through the use of downloadable GPS radio collars.

A single wolf that was radio collared in November of 2010 was monitored through February of 2012 when it died from injuries inflicted by other wolves. We continued to attempt to capture and radio collar additional wolves without any success.

Submitted by: Neil L. Barten, Region I Management Coordinator

Region II

Regionwide:

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

All wolves taken in Region II were presented to staff for specimen collection (if necessary) and sealing. See area specific activities for additional information.

ACTIVITY: Monitor the wolf 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: Conduct aerial surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Surveys were completed on the Kenai Peninsula during this period. See the activities under GMU 7 and 15.

ACTIVITY: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.

No surveys of this type were completed during this period due in part to poor weather conditions and other higher priorities.

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

All wolf pelts presented to ADF&G and appointed sealers were examined for the presence of lice. Wolves infected with lice currently exist only in the Kenai Peninsula within Region II.

ACTIVITY : Draft a triennial wolf management report.
Wolf management report was prepared and submitted for publication.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: No wolves were harvested in Unit 6 during the reporting period.

ACTIVITY 2: Recorded observations of wolves during moose surveys. A pack of 9 wolves and a pair were observed in Unit 6B and a lone wolf was observed in Unit 6C.

ACTIVITY 3: Prepared a Wolf Management Report.

Units 7&15

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

Forty-three wolves were taken by trappers and hunters during the reporting period and presented for sealing.

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

Forty-three wolves were taken by trappers and hunters during the reporting period.

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

Aerial surveys were conducted during the reporting period in most of GMU 15 with 144-160 estimated including 60-62 in GMU 15A, 40-46 in GMU 15B and 44-52 in GMU 15C.

ACTIVITY 3: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

Most pelts analyzed showed sign of lice.

ACTIVITY 4: Prepared a Wolf Management Report.

Unit 14C

ACTIVITY 1: Harvest data was collected when wolf pelts were presented by trappers and hunters. No wolves were reported for this year.

ACTIVITY 2: Wolf harvest was monitored through field observations, fur sealing reports, and contact with trappers and hunters. No wolves were reported for this year.

ACTIVITY 3: No aerial surveys were conducted to estimate wolf densities, pack sizes and distribution.

ACTIVITY 4: No wolves were taken in GMU 14C therefore no wolf pelts were examined for louse infestation.

ACTIVITY 5: Prepared a Wolf Management Report.

Submitted by: Gino Del Frate, Management Coordinator, Region II

Date: 1 September 2012

Region III Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare wolf management reports

Prepared wolf management reports.

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

Monitored preliminary harvest of 486 wolves through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contacts with trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest information when wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected harvest data when 486 wolf pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 4: Provide wolf management information to State and Federal regulatory processes. Provided information to 15 State fish and game advisory committees, the Alaska Board of Game, and 2 Federal regional advisory councils.

Activities by Unit

Unit 12

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.
Conducted surveys in approximately 500mi² of NW Unit 12.

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

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.
Conducted wolf population estimate in eastern portion of Unit 20C (54 wolves; 10.7 wolves/1,000 mi²).

Unit 20D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.
Conducted a spring 2011 partial wolf survey, estimating 93–101 wolves.

Unit 20E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys
Conducted aerial wolf survey to help establish a wolf population estimate.

Unit 21A, 21E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys
No population estimation survey conducted because of poor survey conditions.

Units 21B, 21C, 21D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.
Did not conduct surveys due to inadequate survey conditions.

ACTIVITY 2: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.
No questionnaires or interviews conducted due to inadequate personnel support.

Unit 24

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.
Conducted wolf population estimation survey and counted 67 wolves in a portion of Unit 24B.

ACTIVITY 2: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.
No questionnaires or interviews conducted due to inadequate personnel support.

Units 25D, 25B, 26B, 26C

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.
Did not conduct survey due to inadequate survey conditions.

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Region III Management Coordinator

Region IV Activities:

Project Location: Game Management Units 9, 10, 11, 13, 14A, 14B, 16, and 17

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial wolf management reports.
Wolf management reports were written and submitted to the region for editing.

ACTIVITY 2 AND 3: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit 9: 130 wolves harvested.

Unit 10: 1 wolves harvested.

Unit 11: 15 wolves harvested.

Unit 13: 91 wolves harvested.

Unit 14A: 1 wolves harvested.

Unit 14B: 3 wolves harvested.

Unit 16: 19 wolves harvested.

Unit 17: 98 wolves harvested

ACTIVITY 4: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.
No SUPE surveys were conducted due to a lack of appropriate snow conditions.

ACTIVITY 5: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.
Pelts were examined and no evidence of louse was found in Region IV.

Submitted by: Lem Butler, Region IV Management Coordinator

Date: 15 August, 2012

Region V Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare a triennial regional wolf management report.
A wolf management report was prepared during this reporting period.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.
Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented wolf information to the State Board of Game, State Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

ACTIVITY 3: Maintain the ability in all units to monitor harvests by collecting data through the wolf 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, 16 in Unit 22, 9 in Unit 23, and 3 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 4: Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

Work on trapper questionnaires and trapper responses have been delayed due to staffing changes in headquarters. All backlogged reports were finalized and distributed to furbearer hunters and trappers to obtain their information about harvest and furbearer populations. Regional staff will continue this activity with the current cycle questionnaire.

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

During Advisory Committee, Regional Advisory Council, Reindeer Herders Association, and other public meetings, staff discussed wolf numbers and their potential impacts on prey species as part of the process to update population objectives.

ACTIVITY 6: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Staff discussed sealing and harvest reporting with trappers/hunters, and the public. During public meetings we explained the importance of harvest reports and encouraged trappers to report their harvest.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 18:

ACTIVITY 1: Monitor wolf harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, interviews with village residents, and annual hunter/trapper questionnaires.

We monitored Unit 18 wolf harvests using fur sealing data for the 2011–2012 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 25 wolves.

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

Sealing data, as well as observations by staff and public, indicate that the Unit 18 wolf harvest was low for this reporting period. Winter weather, specifically snow conditions that are favorable for travel by snowmachine, plays a major role in harvest. The winter of 2011-2012 was an above average snow year. The wolf population was very low south and East of the Kuskokwim river in Unit 18. Wolf number on the Yukon River within GMU 18 appeared to be average to lower than normal levels. This was corroborated by hunter/trapper interviews, observations by staff and the public, and opportunistic track sightings made during aerial survey work for other species.

ACTIVITY 3: Assess the effects of wolf predation on prey populations through field observations and interviews with hunters/trappers.

Hunters/trappers frequently comment during interviews that wolves are having a negative impact on moose and caribou populations. However, moose populations are still growing rapidly throughout Unit 18, but the Mulchatna caribou herd (MCH) continues to be stable or declining. The extent to which wolf predation affects the MCH growth rate is not known.

ACTIVITY 4: Provide public education regarding wolves through the media, during public meetings, and other opportunities.

We discussed wolf numbers, regulations and management at all Advisory Committee meetings and with numerous trappers and hunters during this reporting period.

Unit 22:

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

Preliminary sealing certificates show 24 wolves sealed during the 2011-2012 regulatory year in Unit 22: 3 from Unit 22A, 9 from Unit 22B, 3 from Unit 22D, and 5 from 22E; 14 males, 6 females, and 4 unknown. Alaskan resident take was 96% and nonresident take was 4%. Seventeen hunters reported method of take as firearm, 2 reported using traps; and 5 reported method of take as unknown. Snowmachine was the main transportation (96%) for harvesting of wolf.

ACTIVITY 2: Assess population status and trends utilizing track surveys, sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, Community-based Harvest Assessments and observations by staff and the public.

Wolf distribution and abundance varies greatly from year to year, depending on location and abundance of caribou.

During this reporting period the Western Arctic caribou herd was distributed in the northern portions of the Unalakleet River drainage, north of Shaktoolik in 22A, northern 22D, and eastern Unit 22B. We also received reports of wolf packs hanging around reindeer herds in Unit 22D.

Department staff and members of the public have reported sightings of wolves just outside of the City of Nome and throughout Unit 22C. We received an antidotal report of a small pack chasing a muskox. Trapper questionnaires have indicated, through Unit 22 respondents, that the relative abundance of wolves is common and numbers are increasing

Observers participating in aerial moose surveys in the central portion of Unit 22A in spring 2012 recorded signs of wolves within the search unit. The department will continue to make observations on wolf and track sightings within Unit 22 during survey and census work for other species.

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

Nome staff participated in the annual Reindeer Herders Association meeting and addressed the herders' concerns about wildlife issues. Herders have been concerned with increasing wolf numbers and their effect on remaining diminished reindeer herds. Wolf harvest trends and sighting information in Unit 22 were also reported to the herders.

Units 23 and 26A:

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

Unit 23: Preliminary sealing certificates indicated that 31 wolves were sealed in 2011–2012, of which 16 were males, 14 were female. Twenty-three hunter/trappers reported method of take as firearm, 3 reported using traps, and 5 used snares. Snowmachines were indicated as transportation method for 26 wolves whereas 5 were taken by airplane. Of the 31 wolves harvested, 21 were gray, 2 were white, and 6 were black. Two were taken by non residents, 2 by non-local residents, and the remaining 25 by area residents.

Unit 26A: Sealing certificates indicated that 10 wolves were sealed in 2011–2012. Six were males and 4 were females. All 10 were ground shot. Snogos were used as transportation for 6 and aircraft for 4. Seven wolves were gray and 3 were black. Six wolves were taken by 4 residents of Unit 26A and 4 wolves were taken by 4 nonresidents. Trappers were hampered by very cold weather and injury to a key hunter and harvest was much lower than the 27 harvested last year.

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

During the April 2012 Unit 26A spring moose trend area count, 19 wolves were seen in approximately 8 hours of flying. Nine were seen in approximately 7 hours of flying in 2010, indicating that wolf numbers increased, partly due to low harvest.

ACTIVITY 3: Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Unit 23 to assess the feasibility of using reduced numbers of aircraft/observers to determine population status.

A busy spring field schedule and pilot scheduling conflicts prevented the completion of this work. These data will be collected only as time and resources permit.

ACTIVITY 4: Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Unit 26A during late winter to assess population status.

A reconnaissance wolf survey was attempted in April 2012, but snow conditions were inadequate to complete the survey, so we just counted the number of wolves seen during our moose survey.

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Survey and Inventory Coordinator, Region V

Date: 1 September 2012