

**WOLF  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NO.** W-33-8

**PROJECT NO.** 14.0

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Statewide

**PROJECT TITLE:** Wolf S&I

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**The Status of Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations**

**Region I:**

**Regionwide Activities:**

ACTIVITY 1: 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 119 wolf pelts were sealed from the region.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 the black wolf on Mendenhall Lake through conversations with public and communication with the USFS.

Douglas staff monitored the black wolf through discussions with local residents. A wolf that fits this description was illegally harvested near Juneau and there is some speculation that this might be the black wolf known to reside near Mendenhall Lake.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor wolves in Berners Bay through the use of downloadable GPS radio collars.

Telemetry flights to locate these wolves provided area staff with information on pack size, color, and general home range size of the wolves in Berners Bay.

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

## **Region II:**

### **Regionwide:**

ACTIVITY 1 & 2: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

*Unit 6:* Sealed 4 wolves. Recorded observations of wolves during moose surveys. One pack of 4 wolves was observed in Unit 6B.

*Unit 7 & 15:* Hunters and trappers took 32 wolves.

*Unit 9:* Hunters and trappers took 58 wolves.

*Unit 10:* Hunters and trappers took 3 wolves.

*Unit 11:* 18 wolves harvested.

*Unit 13:* 74 wolves harvested.

*Unit 14:* Hunters and trappers took 18 wolves (11 males, 7 females).

*Unit 16:* Six wolves (3 males, 3 females) were taken. Of the 4 wolves taken in Unit 16B, (2 males, 1 female) were taken by same-day-airborne (SDA) permitted wolf-control pilots and shooters in conjunction with the department's on-going wolf control program in Unit 16. Of 2 wolves taken in Unit 16A, none were taken by Unit 16 SDA wolf-control permittees.

*Unit 17:* Collected harvest data from 37 wolves (17 males, 20 females) presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 3: Conduct aerial surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

*Unit 15:* A survey was conducted in February 2010 and tallied 40-45 wolves in Unit 15A.

No other surveys were conducted due to budgetary and/or weather constraints. When surveys are not completed, wolf populations are monitored incidental to other wildlife surveys and through conversations with hunters.

ACTIVITY 4: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.

*Unit 17:* No SUPE surveys were conducted due to budgetary constraints.

ACTIVITY 5: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

*Unit 7 & 15:* Most pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with lice.

*Unit 14:* There were no reported or observed cases of lice infestation in wolves in Unit 14 during this reporting period.

*Unit 16:* There were no confirmed cases of lice or evidence of lice on wolves sealed this season.

*Unit 17:* No cases of lice or evidence of lice reported or found on wolves sealed this season.

## **Region II: GMU 17**

### **Regionwide:**

ACTIVITY 1 & 2: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

*Unit 17:* Collected harvest data from 37 wolves (17 males, 20 females) presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 3: Conduct aerial surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

*Unit 17:* No surveys were conducted due to budgetary and/or weather constraints. When surveys are not completed, wolf populations are monitored incidental to other wildlife surveys and through conversations with hunters.

ACTIVITY 4: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.

*Unit 17:* No SUPE surveys were conducted due to budgetary constraints.

ACTIVITY 5: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

*Unit 17:* No cases of lice or evidence of lice reported or found on wolves sealed this season.

**Submitted by: Mark Burch**

**Date:** September 8, 2010

**Region III:**

**Regionwide Activities**

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

Monitored preliminary harvest of 404 wolves through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contacts with trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect harvest information when wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected harvest data when 404 wolf pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 an aerial wolf survey in northern Unit 12 to help establish a wolf population estimate.

**Units 19:**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

No population estimate conducted due to poor survey conditions.

**Unit 20A, 20B, 25C:**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not complete due to poor snow conditions (i.e., 27 inches total snowfall during winter 2009-2010).

**Unit 20D:**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted a spring 2010 wolf survey.

**Unit 20E:**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted aerial wolf survey in Unit 20E to help establish a spring wolf population estimate.

**Units 21B, 21C, 21D:**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not conduct survey 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.

**Unit 24:**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not conduct survey 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.

**Units 25D, 25B:**

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 V:**

**Regionwide Activities:**

ACTIVITY 1: 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 2: 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 27 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 6 in Unit 23, and 3 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 3: Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

Preparation of Trapper Questionnaire annual report has been temporarily suspended due to vacancy in Juneau office where the report is compiled.

ACTIVITY 4: Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

During Advisory Committee, Regional Advisory Council, 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 5: 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.

### **Unit 18:**

ACTIVITY 1: Complete a population estimate in the Paimiut moose census area to determine wolf density and estimate predation rates on moose in this census area.

No surveys were flown during the reporting period because of poor weather and limited aircraft availability.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 2009–2010 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 18 wolves.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 is generally increasing. Winter weather, specifically snow conditions that are favorable for travel by snowmachine, plays a major role in harvest. The winter of 2009 and 2010 was a very low snow year, with snow being absent from much of the area from the first of December to the middle of January. After that, snow levels were still very low and travel conditions for hunters and trappers were very poor. The wolf population is increasing

throughout Unit 18 as prey populations, particularly moose, increase and this is corroborated by hunter/trapper interviews, observations by staff and the public, and opportunistic track sightings made during aerial work for other species.

**ACTIVITY 4:** 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 populations and other prey species. However, moose populations are probably still growing throughout Unit 18, but the Mulchatna caribou herd is declining. The extent to which wolf predation contributes to the caribou decline is not known.

**ACTIVITY 5:** Provide public education regarding wolves through the media, during public meetings, and other opportunities.

We discussed wolf numbers, regulations and management at the three 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.

Sealing certificates show 44 wolves sealed during the 2009-2010 regulatory year in GMU 22: 15 from Unit 22A, 16 from Unit 22B, 1 from Unit 22C, 12 from Unit 22D, and Zero from 22E. Seventeen of which were males, 16 being females, and 11 unknown sex. Three wolves were harvested by non-residents and the remaining 41 were taken by Alaska residents.

**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.

Staff and local hunters report that wolves were scarce in Central Unit 22A which is attributed to caribou wintering further north in the Nulato Hills. Wolves in Unit 22 are most abundant in areas where large numbers of caribou are wintering and during this reporting period that was in northern Unit 22E and eastern Unit 22B.

Few aerial wolf sightings were made during the spring 2010 moose survey and muskox census in Units 22B and 22C. The department will continue to make observations on wolf and track sightings within Unit 22.

**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:* Sealing certificates indicated that 32 wolves were sealed in 2009–2010, of which 16 were males, 11 were females and 5 did not indicate sex. Twenty-seven reported method of take as firearm, two reported using traps and one reported using a snare. Snowmachines were indicated as transportation method for 27 wolves, airplanes were used to take four wolves and a boat was used to take one wolf. Of the 32 wolves harvested, 14 were gray, 2 were white, and 9 were black. Two wolves were taken by non residents, six were taken by non-local residents the remaining 24 were taken by area residents.

*Unit 26(A):* Sealing certificates indicated that 15 wolves were sealed in 2009–2010. Nine were males and 6 were females. Five were ground shot and 10 were trapped. Snogoes were used as transportation for all 15. Eleven wolves were gray and 4 were black. All 15 wolves were taken by 2 residents of Unit 26A.

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

During the April 2010 Unit 26A spring moose trend count, 9 wolves were seen in approximately 7 hours of flying. Thirty were seen in approximately 7 hours of flying in 2009, indicating that wolf numbers declined in the core moose habitat area.

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.

In Unit 26A we flew wolf reconnaissance surveys on April 7-14, 2009. We surveyed a 17,800 km<sup>2</sup> area that included the Killik River drainage to the west of the Anaktuvuk River.

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