

**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 NR.:** W-33-11

**PROJECT NO.:** 2.0 Deer

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Statewide: Activities in Regions I and II.

**PROJECT TITLE:** The Status of Deer and Factors Influencing Their Populations

**REPORT DESCRIPTION:** This performance report describes deer survey and inventory activities in the state, which occurred in Regions I and II. Regionwide activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

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**Region I—Southeast Alaska**

**Regionwide Activities:**

**ACTIVITY 1:** Prepare biennial regional deer management reports.

These reports are being reviewed and edited.

**ACTIVITY 2:** Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on deer management.

Data from deer harvest and population indices were provided to the Alaska Board of Game process as well as the federal subsistence process.

**ACTIVITY 3:** Determine harvest and population trends using a harvest reporting system.

Beginning in RY11 (fall 2011), the department changed its deer harvest data gathering system from a mail-out survey to a harvest report card. Each deer harvest ticket now has a harvest report card attached, and hunters are required to submit their hunt effort through this card or report online through the department website. Although we had plans to follow this up with a nonresponse bias survey in RY12, we never completed this task.

**ACTIVITY 4:** Conduct spring pellet-group surveys at selected locations throughout the region.

Pellet-group surveys were conducted in late April through mid-May 2013. The number traditional deer pellet transects has been reduced in favor of testing two new methods: 1) using the DNA from deer pellets to estimate deer numbers in a given area, and 2) using a “path sampling” approach for counting deer pellets instead of the traditional method. Both the DNA and path sampling techniques are being tested with the hope they can provide us with more precise methods of determining deer abundance. Most of this new

effort has taken place in Units 1A and 3, due to the increased interest in deer numbers associated with the intensive management issues in these areas.

**ACTIVITY 5:** Conduct mortality transects in key areas as needed and budgets allow.

Deer mortality transects were conducted in Unit 4 along Peril Strait between Baranof and Chichagof Islands, and in Freshwater Bay on Chichagof island. Six miles of beach were walked but no mortalities were discovered. In other areas of the region staff recorded deer mortalities along traditional deer pellet transects as they encountered them.

**ACTIVITY 6:** Monitor the harvest by communicating with hunters on an opportunistic basis.

A deer check station was jointly run in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service—Hoonah Ranger District just outside of Hoonah on NE Chichagof Island during September thru November. Hunter information and deer jaws for age estimates were collected for analysis.

Staffs noted anecdotal information from discussions with hunters throughout the RY 2012 deer hunting season.

**ACTIVITY 7:** Conduct DNA-based pellet transects at selected locations.

In spring 2013 staff conducted DNA pellet transects in Unit 3 for the second consecutive year to test this method in an area with low density deer. Part of the decision to move this operation to Unit 3 also hinged on the need for deer data in this area in lieu of potential intensive management efforts to boost deer numbers. This was the fourth consecutive year we employed this DNA method and we continue to investigate the utility of this method for assessing deer abundance.

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

## **Region II: Game Management Units 6 (North Gulf Coast and Prince William Sound) and 8 (Kodiak Archipelago)**

### **Regionwide Activities**

**ACTIVITY :** Prepare a biennial deer management report.

A deer management report was submitted during summer 2013 to division headquarters for publishing. Staff continues to collect information for future publication.

**ACTIVITY :** Determine harvest and population trends using a harvest reporting system.

Questionnaires were replaced in 2011 with a new harvest reporting system. All hunters were required to obtain harvest tickets and report on hunting activities after the season or at the completion of their hunt.

**ACTIVITY :** Monitor the deer harvest through field observations and contacts with hunters.

These are standard activities accomplished in each office. See Area specific activities.

ACTIVITY : Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on black bear management.

Staff routinely interact with federal staff and discuss management of deer relative to the respective regulatory systems. Staff attended the state Board of Game meeting during this reporting period.

## **Activities by Unit**

### **Unit 6**

ACTIVITY : Spring shoreline surveys were not conducted because of staff turnover.

ACTIVITY. Conducted annual pellet group surveys on 28 transects. Surveys found the lowest mean pellet group densities per plot ever observed and also when islands were considered individually. This further supports evidence of high mortality from the winter of 2011-2012 since we observed pellet density changes with a one year lag time.

ACTIVITY 2: Harvest estimate is not yet available, but reports from hunters suggest that harvest was low due to decreased effort and success related to a population decline. The harvest was likely less than 1,200 deer. As the population recovers from the severe winter in RY 2011 we should make progress toward achieving both population and harvest objectives.

### **Unit 8**

ACTIVITY : Winter mortality of deer during 2012/13 was relatively low. Reports from the public coincided with our annual deer mortality transects, indicating very few dead deer found along beaches or other wintering areas throughout the archipelago.

ACTIVITY : Evaluate improved procedures for assessing population status. No activity during this reporting period due to other priorities.

ACTIVITY : Estimate sex ratios with alpine aerial surveys in August. No activity during this reporting period due to other priorities.

ACTIVITY : Annual hunter survey results were not yet available for this reporting period, but hunter effort and harvest are suspected to have been lower than in previous years due to a lower deer population. As the population recovers from the severe winter in RY 2011 we should make progress toward achieving both population and harvest objectives.

**Submitted by: Gino Del Frate**

**Date: 6 September 2013**