

ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-9

PROJECT NO.

PERIOD: July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

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

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

Region 1

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 160 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.

No activity was warranted; the black wolf was illegally harvested.

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

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

No work was done on this activity during the report period.

ACTIVITY 3: Radio collar and monitor wolves on the Gustavus Forelands through the use of downloadable GPS radio collars.

One female wolf was captured and fitted with a GPS radio collar.

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.

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

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

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

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.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: Sealed 6 wolves harvested in Unit 6.

ACTIVITY 2: Recorded observations of wolves during moose surveys. Tracks of one pack of 2 wolves were observed in Unit 6C.

Units 7&15

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

Fourty 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.

Wolves S&I
FY11 Annual Performance Report

No aerial surveys were conducted during the reporting period due to budgetary constraints.

ACTIVITY 3: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.
Most pelts analyzed showed sign of lice.

Unit 14C

ACTIVITY 1: Harvest data was collected when wolf pelts were presented by trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 2: Wolf harvest was monitored through field observations, fur sealing reports, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Number of females harvested: 2

Number of males harvested: 7

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

ACTIVITY 4: Wolf pelts were examined for louse infestation when presented for sealing.

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 433 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 433 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 no surveys due to poor survey conditions.

Units 19

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted an aerial wolf survey in the eastern portion of Unit 19A which contributed to a minimum fall wolf estimate of 30 wolves in 7 packs.

Unit 20A, 20B, 25C

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not complete due to poor snow conditions (i.e., 24.8 inches total snowfall during winter 2010-2011).

Unit 20D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted a spring 2011 wolf survey.

Unit 20E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys

Conducted no surveys due to poor survey conditions.

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.

Conducted wolf population estimation survey and counted 69 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.

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 IV

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1 AND 2: 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: 43 wolves harvested.

Unit 10: 0 wolves harvested.

Unit 11: 8 wolves harvested.

Unit 13: 139 wolves harvested.

Unit 14A: 4 wolves harvested.

Wolves S&I
FY11 Annual Performance Report

Unit 14B: 2 wolves harvested.
Unit 16: 17 wolves harvested.
Unit 17: 72 wolves harvested

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

No aerial surveys were conducted in Region IV.

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

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 25 fur sealers in Unit 18, 15 in Unit 22, 7 in Unit 23, and 3 in Unit 26A.

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

Trapper Questionnaire was revised and distributed to trappers to obtain their information about harvest and furbearer populations.

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. Staff attended meeting hosted by the Bethel Chapter of the Alaska Trappers Association.

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 2010–2011 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 66 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 is generally increasing. Winter weather, specifically snow conditions that are favorable for travel by snowmachine, plays a major role in harvest. The winter of 2010-2011 was an above average snow year. 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 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 5: 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 32 wolves sealed during the 2010-2011 regulatory year in Unit 22: 8 from Unit 22A, 14 from Unit 22B, 7 from Unit 22D, and 3 from 22E; 23 males and 9 females. Alaskan resident

take was 100%. Twenty-nine reported method of take as firearm, 2 reported using traps; and 1 method of take is unknown. Snowmachine was the main transportation (88%) for harvest of wolves.

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.

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. We also received reports of wolf packs hanging around reindeer herds in Unit 22D. Department staff has reported sightings of wolves in the western portion of Unit 22C.

Few aerial wolf sighting were made during the spring 2011 moose survey and in Units 22D and 22E. 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: Sealing certificates indicated that 58 wolves were sealed in 2010–2011, of which 37 were males, 21 were female. Fifty-three reported method of take as firearm and two reported using traps. Snowmachines were indicated as transportation method for 38 wolves, airplanes were used to take 16 wolves and a boat was used to take one wolf. Of the 58 wolves harvested, 31 were gray, 4 were white, and 18 were black. Eleven wolves were taken by non residents, 10 by non-local residents, and the remaining 37 by area residents.

Unit 26(A): Sealing certificates indicated that 27 wolves were sealed in 2010–2011. Fifteen were males and 12 were females. All 27 were ground shot. Snogos were used as transportation for all 27. Twenty-two wolves were gray, 4 were white, and 1 was black. Twenty-six wolves were taken by 10 residents of Unit 26A and a nonresident took one wolf.

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

During the April 2011 Unit 26A spring moose census, 14 wolves were seen in approximately 31 hours of flying. Nine were seen in

approximately 7 hours of flying in 2010, indicating that wolf numbers have remained relatively stable 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.

No surveys were completed to estimate population status or density due to conflicting field work schedules. Previous performance report compared estimated density in 2008 and 2009.

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