

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**FURBEARERS
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-8

PROJECT NO. 7.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide (Regions 1, II, III, and V)

PROJECT TITLE: Furbearers S&I

The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations

Region 1:

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare furbearer management reports.

These reports were completed for all Game Management Units in Region I during this report period.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they are harvested and presented for sealing.

ADF&G Wildlife Conservation staff, FWP Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed furbearer pelts harvested in the region. Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. About 286 beaver, 1,494 marten, 230 otter, 16 wolverine, and 8 lynx pelts were harvested and sealed in the region.

ACTIVITY 3: Use trapper questionnaire, interviews, and other anecdotal information from reliable observers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

This was done as opportunities allowed. This type of information helped managers with recommendations about changes to current trapping regulations.

ACTIVITY 4: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

This was done as opportunities presented themselves through sealing fur and conversations with trappers and hunters. Efforts were made to improve communication with authorized fur sealers where trappers are using temporary sealing forms that have been incompletely filled out.

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

Region II:

Regionwide Activities:

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

Unit 6: Trappers reported taking 445 marten, 41 beaver, 9 wolverine, and 43 otters.

Unit 7: Trappers reported taking 25 beaver, 4 wolverine, 15 otter, 33 lynx, and 158 marten.

Unit 8: Trappers reported taking 54 beaver, and, 95 otter.

Unit 9: Trappers reported taking 122 beaver, 28 wolverine, 76 otter, 30 lynx, and 8 marten.

Unit 11: Trappers reported taking 9 beaver, 14 wolverine, 3 otter, and 256 lynx.

Unit 13: Trappers reported taking 132 beaver, 56 wolverine, 23 otter, and 1181 lynx.

Unit 14: Trappers reported taking Beavers--147, river otters--30, Marten--219, Wolverine--9, Lynx--16.

Unit 15 Trappers reported taking 95 beaver, 40 otter, 245 lynx, and 17 marten.

Unit 16: Trappers reported taking Beavers -153, Land otters -9, Marten -742, Wolverine 34, Lynx -5.

Unit 17: Trappers reported taking 209 beaver, 30 wolverine, 61 otter and four lynx.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6:

Activity: Conduct furbearer track counts.

No track survey was conducted, but a did conduct river otter latrine surveys in western Prince William Sound, collected habitat data at 453 sites.

Units 7 and 15:

Activity: Conduct wolverine survey.

No wolverine surveys were conducted due to poor weather conditions.

Unit 8:

Activity: Conduct river otter latrine surveys.

No latrine survey was conducted during this reporting period because those resources were directed toward western Prince William Sound, but this project is planned for next year.

Unit 13:

Activity: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

No Lynx transects flown spring 2009 due to poor weather conditions, although lynx numbers appeared very high from other observations.

Region II: GMU 17

Regionwide Activities:

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

Unit 17: Trappers reported taking 209 beaver, 30 wolverine, 61 otter and four lynx.

Submitted by: Mark Burch

Date: September 8, 2010

Region III:

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Distributed trapper questionnaires region-wide to provide a basis for determining the status of furbearer populations.

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

Monitored preliminary harvest of 3,442 lynx, 85 river otter, and 215 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

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

Collected data on preliminary harvest of 3,742 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 4: Provide furbearer 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.

ACTIVITY 5: Develop specific population and harvest objectives for furbearers, as new research and management findings become available.

Continued to review research and management findings in an attempt to formulate quantifiable furbearer management objectives, without success.

Activities by Unit:

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

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache survey in October in Unit 20B (n = 28 caches).

ACTIVITY 2: Minimize beaver/human conflicts in the Fairbanks area by telling individuals with beaver problems how to protect their trees from beaver damage.

Advised members of the public with nuisance beaver problems and issued nuisance trapping permits where needed.

Unit 20D:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey during which 87 hares were counted along the survey route.

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

Region V:

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented furbearer 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 furbearer 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: Monitor the harvest through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest surveys conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 18: We analyzed fur sealing data for the 2009–2010 trapping season. In past years, only preliminary harvest figures were available by the time these reports are prepared. With improvement to the reporting process, these preliminary harvest should be very close to the final numbers. The reported harvests are 145 river otters, 380 lynx and 7 wolverine. We expect that harvests will be consistent with recent years.

Unit 22: The preliminary harvest report on 2009-2010 sealing certificates included 136 lynx: 38 taken in Unit 22A, 97 in Unit 22B, and 1 in Unit 22D. The total reported river otter harvest was 9 otters: 2 from Unit 22A, 6 from Unit 22B, and 1 from Unit 22C. Thirty wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 4 from Unit 22A, 20 from Unit 22B, 2 from Unit 22C, and 4 from Unit 22D. Community based harvest assessment surveys were not completed in Unit 22 during the reporting period.

Unit 23: We monitored harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires, and community-based harvest assessment surveys. The preliminary harvest report on 2009-2010 sealing certificates included 53 lynx, all of which were taken by residents. Two were shot and the remainder were trapped. Eight lynx were taken using an airplane and 45 were taken using a snowmachine. The total reported river otter harvest was 3 (two females, one male), one was shot and 2 were trapped, and two were taken by snowmachine and one by airplane. Two wolverines were sealed (1 female and one unknown), one was taken by snare and one by trap, and both were taken using snowmachine. Community harvest assessment survey data is not available at this time.

Unit 26A: We examined sealing certificates for wolverine and lynx. During 2009-2010, 26 wolverines were harvested and sealed by 10 Unit 26A residents. Twenty-three were male and 3 were female. Sixteen were ground shot, 9 were trapped, and 1 was killed by

wolves. Snow machines were used for transportation for twenty-five and aircraft for 1. Three wolverines were harvested in November, 1 in December, 2 in January, 2 in February, and 18 in March. Ten lynx were harvested and sealed by 3 Unit 26A resident trappers. Five males and 5 females were sealed. The trappers used a snow machines for transportation and all were captured in March. Five were trapped and 5 were ground shot.

ACTIVITY 4: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Throughout Region V we communicated with local trappers to improve harvest reporting through the fur sealing process; explained the importance of harvest reporting at public meetings in villages; and prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data.

ACTIVITY 5: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Regionwide: Work on trapper questionnaires and trapper responses have been delayed due to staffing changes in headquarters. Regional staff will continue this activity when information becomes available.

Unit 18: We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined there are no furbearer problems related to low populations in Unit 18. Lynx numbers and harvest are a record high in Unit 18. Interest in trapping lynx has increased and trapping pressure for lynx is high in some localized areas.

Unit 22: Furbearers are currently plentiful, particularly in Units 22A and 22B where hare numbers continue to be high. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be high throughout the subunit this regulatory year along with a high number of hare sightings reported by trappers and pilots. The number of lynx harvested in Unit 22B increased 39% from the last reporting period and trapper effort has increased in the area. Lynx are uncommon in Units 22C and 22D and scarce in Unit 22E. River otters are believed to be more common than the low harvest numbers would indicate, but their abundance is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E. Wolverine harvest in Unit 22B doubled since the last reporting period likely due to increased trapper efforts. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D beaver continue to be common.

Unit 23: Furbearer populations appeared to be within the range of levels observed in previous years based on sealing records, opportunistic observations of furbearers, contacts with hunter and trappers, and community-based harvest assessments. Lynx population levels appear to be stable although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. Wolverine numbers appeared to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period.

Unit 26A: Through opportunistic observations of fur bearers and interviews with local residents, we felt that the current population number of wolverines is fairly high and stable, while arctic and red foxes are both in a period of medium population level. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. During 8 hours of moose surveys in April of 2010, we observed 3 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities are probably stable. The number of wolverines that were sealed (n=26) was one of the highest years ever recorded. The number of wolverines sealed is probably more an indicator of trapper effort than of wolverine numbers. We saw 4 lynx during moose surveys and 10 were sealed, indicating that lynx numbers may be increasing in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 6: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

We provided names and addresses of >100 known hunters/trappers that reside within Region V to assist the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire program. We prepared summary furbearer reports for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire distributed to trappers in the region.

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