

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation



Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Annual Performance Report
Survey-Inventory Activities
1 July 1996- 30 June 1997

ELK

Mary U Hicks, Editor



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1996-97

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Grant W-24-5
Study 13.0
October 1997

STATE OF ALASKA
Tony Knowles, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
Frank Rue, Commissioner

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Wayne L. Regelin, Director

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Project Title: Southeast Alaska Elk Management

Project Location: Unit 3 (3,000 mi²)
All islands west of Unit 1B, north of Unit 2, south of the centerline of Frederick Sound, and east of the centerline of Chatham Strait

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Provide for growth of the transplanted elk herd to 900-1000 animals.
- Provide for all beneficial uses of elk consistent with sustained yield management when the herd reaches 250 elk.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We conducted 2 aerial surveys and 1 boat survey to locate elk and to assess their vulnerability to hunters. Elk or elk tracks were consistently seen on the west side of Zarembo Island between St. John Harbor and MacNamara Point. On Etolin Island, elk or elk tracks were regularly seen in the Steamer Bay area and the southwest end of the island from McHenry Inlet southeast to the south end of Canoe Passage and north to Mt. Shakes. We received unverified public reports of elk sightings on Prince of Wales, Wrangell, and Kupreanof Islands during the year. We have been accepting applications from hunters for the first Unit 3 elk hunt, scheduled for next October. Twenty-five state drawing permits for bull elk will be issued. None of the radio collars deployed in 1987 are still functioning.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The Unit 3 elk population is estimated to include 200 - 250 animals.

Segment Period Project Costs:

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	14.3	12.5	26.8
Actual	11.4	6.0	17.4
Difference	2.9	6.5	11.4

Staff spent time compiling materials and addressing issues at and for the State Board of Game meeting. They also completed aerial and ground surveys and issued drawing permit applications to numerous residents.

Submitted by:

Doug Larsen
Acting Management Coordinator

Project Title: Southcentral Alaska Elk Management

Project Location: Unit 8 (5,100 mi²)

Project Objectives:

- Maintain a minimum population of at least 1000 elk for all user groups.
- Maintain harvests within sustainable-yield levels of the elk population.
- Develop population objectives for each major subherd.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We completed aerial sex and age composition surveys during August and September 1996. We did both aerial and foot surveys for the Raspberry Island herd in late September and classified 207 elk on Raspberry Island (42 bulls, 138 cows, 27 calves). On Afognak Island we classified 599 elk (42 bulls, 416 cows, and 141 calves). The calf:cow ratio for Raspberry Island was 20:100 and 34:100 for Afognak Island. The bull:cow ratio was 4:100 for Afognak and 30:100 for Raspberry Island. The estimated prehunt population in 1996 was 1365 elk.

We classified 40 bulls in the Raspberry Island herd from the ground as follows: spike – 55%; 2-3 pt – 23%; 4 or more pt – 23%. There were 18 branch-antlered bulls in 1996, an increase from 14 seen in 1995 and 6 counted in 1994.

Mandatory permit reports returned by hunters provided statistics on hunting effort and harvest. We issued 1158 permits; 591 hunters reported going into the field, taking 136 elk (78 males, 58 females). The harvest by permit hunt was as follows: Raspberry Island drawing permit hunt, 13 males, 19 females; southeastern Afognak drawing permit hunt, 44 males, 26 females; southeastern Afognak registration permit hunt, 12 males, 11 females; northern Afognak registration permit hunt, 9 males, 2 females.

For the first time in several years, we issued no emergency orders to close registration hunts in 1996. Although we expected a closure would be needed for herds accessible from the logging roads, allowable harvest goals for the affected herds were not reached by the season's end on November 25.

Hunting effort increased from 408 hunters afield in 1995 to 591 hunters in 1996, a 20% increase. Total harvest increased from 96 elk in 1995 to 136 elk in 1996, a 41% increase.

The total harvest from drawing and registration permit hunts by herd for Afognak Island was as follows: Duck Mountain - 21; Portage Lake - 17; Seal Bay - 0; Marka Lake - 6; Waterfall Lake - 8; Malina Lakes/Afognak Lake - 42; location not specified - 1.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The elk population has increased steadily since 1993 when low bull:cow ratios and a declining trend in the population prompted more conservative regulations. In 1996 we estimated the elk population at 1365 animals, above the 1000 elk

objective. The reported 1996 harvest of 136 elk equaled 10% of the estimated population, a negligible increase over the 9% estimated rate in 1995. During a comparable increasing trend in the 1980s, some herds sustained harvest rates of at least 15%. That harvest rate was reached only in the Raspberry Island herd in 1996.

The elk population continued to increase and was able to support more harvest. We recommended a longer hunting season for Afognak Island, and the Board of Game added 24 days, adopting a 25 September-30 November season for the registration permit hunt in 1997. No elk were reported killed from the Seal Bay herd in eastern Afognak Island in 1996, and the Board adopted our recommendation to change from a drawing permit hunt to a registration permit for that area.

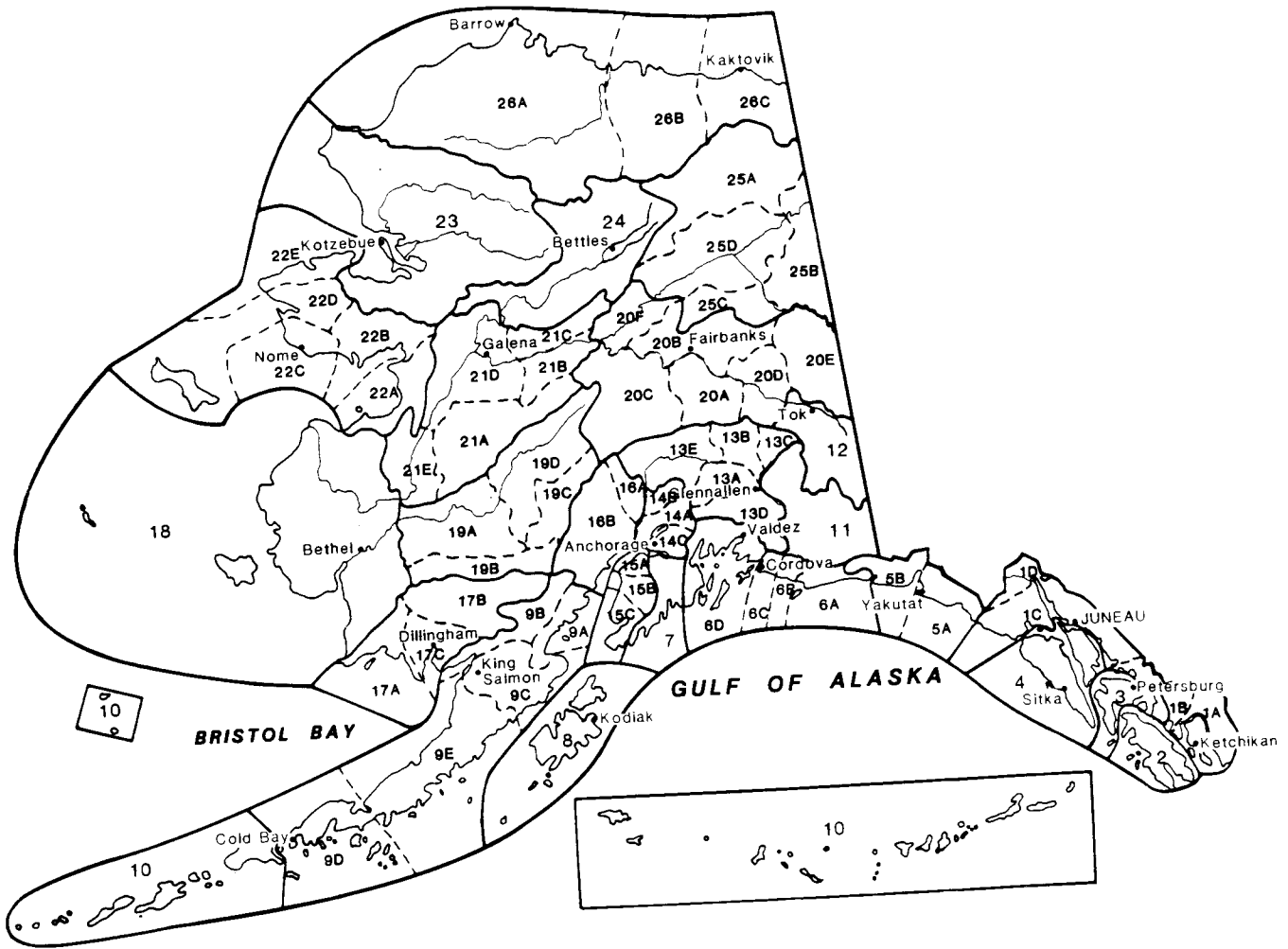
Segment Period Project Costs:

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	19.1	7.5	26.6
Actual	19.1	7.5	26.6
Difference	0.0	0.0	0.0

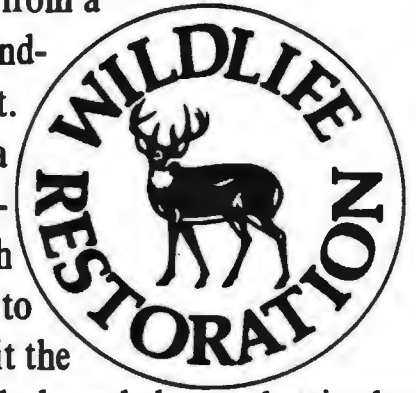
Submitted by:

Michael G. McDonald
Assistant Management Coordinator

Alaska's Game Management Units



The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program consists of funds from a 10% to 11% manufacturer's excise tax collected from the sales of handguns, sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and archery equipment. The Federal Aid program allots funds back to states through a formula based on each state's geographic area and number of paid hunting license holders. Alaska receives a maximum 5% of revenues collected each year. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game uses federal aid funds to help restore, conserve, and manage wild birds and mammals to benefit the public. These funds are also used to educate hunters to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for responsible hunting. Seventy-five percent of the funds for this report are from Federal Aid.



Len Rue Jr

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