ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
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FURBEARERS
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Alaska **GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-33-1
PROJECT NR.: 7.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Game Management Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5

PERIOD: 1 July 2002–30 June 2003

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This statewide performance report includes the four regions involved in furbearer survey and inventory activities. Statewide and regional activities are listed before specific activities by herd and game management unit.

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 1

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Finalize a furbearer management report.

The three-year furbearer management report was completed in spring 2003 and submitted to headquarters.

Activity 2: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

This draft satisfies the activity described.

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

During the report period staff testified before the Board of Game regarding 14 regulatory proposals specific to Region I furbearers.

Activity 4: Seal 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.

Activity 5: Collect anecdotal information from reliable observers about the status of furbearer populations, including the use of an annual trapper survey.

Region I area biologists worked with the headquarters staff biologist to survey trappers and analyze results.

Activity 6: Analyze sealing records, interviews with trappers, trapper questionnaires, and observations by staff and the public.

Region I Area and Assistant Area Biologists reviewed all available information relating to furbearers and their harvests for regulatory year 2002, including it in the draft of the 3-year management report.

Unit 4

Conduct spotlight surveys in key areas for mink and marten as needed and budgets allow.

No spotlight surveys were conducted during this reporting period.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $12.8

Submitted by: Dale Rabe, Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Furbearer and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 2

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Prepare a furbearer management report.

Draft furbearer management reports were prepared during spring 2001.

Activity 2: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

Region 2 furbearer regulations were addressed during the spring 2003 Board of game meeting

Activity 4: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Activity 5: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Results of sealing certificate tabulation and the furbearer questionnaire are presented.

Activities by Unit

Unit 6

Activity 1: Conduct river otter latrine surveys and scat counts.

We conducted scat counts on 34 otter latrine sites during 2002 in Port Gravina, Windy Bay, Sheep Bay, and Simpson Bay. Current otter density resulted in an average deposition rate of 1.5 scats/day.

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

Fur sealing:
Beavers - 16, Land otters - 47, Marten - 90, Wolverine - 10, Lynx - 15..

Units 7 and 15

Activity 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

Results: No surveys were conducted during this reporting period.

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

Preliminary harvest results for 2002–03:

	Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total
Beaver	130	45	55	25	255
Marten	35	0	0	0	35
Wolverine	3	0	0	0	3
Otter	22	21	3	17	63
Lynx	1	4	2	3	10

Unit 8

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

During the 2002–03 season, 24 trappers brought in 110 otters for sealing yielding an average of 4.6 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 54 males (49%), 52 females (47%), and 4 of undetermined sex (4%). Most trappers were local residents (83%), and trapping was the most common method of take (94%). Highway vehicles were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (59%), and December was the most productive month (73%). Forty-one otters (37%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 71 beavers brought in by 18 trappers, yielding an average harvest of 3.9 beavers/trapper. Sixteen (89%) of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and trapping was the most common method of take (66%). Four wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (49%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during November (42%) and January (20%). Forty (56%) beavers were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

Trapper questionnaire respondents reported that furbearer populations were high. With the current low harvest in most areas, developing management objectives for furbearers is not a high priority.

Units 9 and 10

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

Preliminary harvests in Unit 9 by species were: 154 beaver, 4 lynx, 37 otter, and 7 wolverine.

Units 11 and 13

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

Preliminary Harvest 2002–03:

Unit 13	Lynx	41	15% Kittens
	Beaver	329	
	Otter	28	
	Marten (13E)	37	
	Wolverine	26	
Unit 11	Lynx	2	0% Kittens
	Beaver	0	
	Otter	2	
	Wolverine	3	

Activity 2: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

Aerial transect surveys for lynx tracks were flown this spring.

3.8 new lynx tracks per transect in 2000
Not flown in 2001
1.2 new lynx tracks per transect in 2002
0.5 new lynx tracks per transect in 2003

Unit 14

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

Fur sealing:
Fur sealing: Beavers -232, Land otters -49, Marten -67, Wolverine -1, Lynx -34.

Unit 16

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

Fur sealing:
Fur sealing: Beavers -244, Land otters -58, Marten -375, Wolverine -17, Lynx -7.

Unit 17

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

Results
Fur sealing for 2002: Beaver-258, Land Otters-50, Wolverine-15, Lynx-1

Activity 2: Conduct fall beaver cache survey.

Results:
Results: 70 miles of stream surveyed and 97 food caches observed.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:

None

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $26.0
Numerous winter surveys were unable to be completed because of the lack of snow.

Submitted by: Michael G. McDonald, Assistant Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 3

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Wrote an annual survey and inventory report for all units.

Activity 2: Conduct trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Conducted personal interviews with area trappers and reviewed results of trapper questionnaires to gain insight on furbearer abundance and trends and trapper effort.

Activity 3: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored furbearer harvests through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Activity 4: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management during the regulatory process.

Made presentations to the Board of Game and advisory committees as needed.

Activities by Unit

Units 12 and 20E

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed fur of harvested lynx (45), otter (5), and wolverine (20) and used this information to monitor harvest effects on population

Activity 2: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased lynx carcasses from are trappers. Necropsied approximately 10 carcasses to determine the sex and age of the harvested population and to estimate population reproductive performance.

Activity 3: Conduct aerial surveys to monitor lynx and snowshoe hare abundance and distribution.

Monitored lynx and snowshoe hare abundance using aerial survey methods.

Unit 19

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, coordinated with local Fish & Wildlife Protection officers to seal furs in outlying areas, and analyzed harvest data (preliminary harvest: beaver=6, lynx=31, otter=27, wolf=106, and wolverine=34).

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

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed furs of selected species to monitor harvest levels and trends and analyzed harvest data (preliminary harvest: wolf =209 , wolverine =37 , lynx =296 , otter =31, and beaver =42).

Activity 2: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased several lynx carcasses (n=45) from trappers and examined them to assess age and reproductive condition to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Activity 3: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache survey in September (n=25 caches) on the lower Chena River.

Activity 4: Minimize beaver/human conflicts in the Fairbanks area.

Minimized conflicts by giving individuals technical advice on how to protect trees from beaver damage.

Unit 20D

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed 1 beaver, 22 lynx, 1 river otter, and 3 wolverine as they were harvested and presented for sealing to monitor harvest levels and trends. Analyzed harvest data.

Activity 2: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased approximately 15 lynx carcasses to assess age and reproduction condition and modify the lynx trapping season.

Activity 3: Conduct hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey and counted 2 hares along a 25 mile route.

Unit 21

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed furs of selected species to monitor harvest levels and trends and analyzed harvest data (Preliminary harvest=29 wolves, 20 beaver, 15 lynx, and 7 otter).

Unit 24

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed furs of selected species to monitor harvest levels and trends and analyzed harvest data (preliminary harvest =31 wolves, 26 lynx, 4 otters, and 6 wolverines)

Units 25A, 25B, 25D, 26B and 26C

Activity 1: Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Preliminary data indicate 11 Beaver, 1 otter, 74 lynx, 13 wolves, and 20 wolverines were sealed. Analyzed harvest data.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project:

Conducted a beaver cache survey in Unit 19 to compare status of the local beaver population with previous years' data

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $20.8

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and
Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region V

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Performance report for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A were prepared August 2003 and submitted to HQ early September 2003

Activity 2: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

Unit 18, 22, 23, 26A. None required.

Activity 3: Maintain furbearer sealing agents in villages.

Unit 18. We recruited sealers in the villages through letters and telephone contacts, responded to requests for supplies and answered sealer questions, and assigned the fur sealer support duties to a seasonal administrative clerk.

Unit 22. The Nome Fish and Game office supplied sealing agents with fur seals and sealing certificates, answered procedural questions, and processed certificates for payment.

Unit 23. We provided seals and sealing documents to fur sealers in Unit 23.

Unit 26A. We assisted and encouraged fur sealers in Unit 26A.

Activity 4: Monitor the harvest through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 18. We continue to collect fur sealing data for otters, lynx, and wolverine. Even though beavers are no longer required to be sealed, trappers occasionally request this service. Harvest data for this period have not been finalized but preliminary results show that trappers harvested a minimum of 376 otters, 31 lynx, and 4 wolverines. We sent out questionnaires to trappers and await their responses.

Unit 22. Fifty (50) lynx were taken in Unit 22A, 10 lynx were taken in Unit 22B, 5 lynx were taken in Unit 22D, and no lynx were sealed from Unit 22C or Unit 22E. The reported river otter harvest was 8 otters; 4 from Unit 22B, and 4 from Unit 22C. In Unit 22 20 wolverines were sealed; 1 from Unit 22A, 13 from Unit 22B, 2 from Unit 22C, and 4 from Unit 22D. Sealing is no longer required for beaver in Unit 22.

Unit 23. Harvest of furbearers in Unit 23 was monitored through the statewide furbearer sealing certificate program. Harvest levels for all species were comparable to previous years.

Unit 26A. We examined sealing certificates for wolverine in Unit 26A. Trappers sealed 10 wolverines, of which 8 were males and 2 females. All 10 were ground shot. Nine wolverine

were taken using snow machines and 1 taken using aircraft for transportation. One wolverine was harvested in September and 9 were taken in March.

One male lynx was ground shot in March using a snow machine for transportation.

Activity 5: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Unit 18. We contributed articles to one of the local newspapers and included occasional furbearer articles. At the start of trapping season, we sent posters to the area post offices explaining sealing requirements.

Unit 22. The reason for and importance of harvest reporting was explained at public meetings during trips to villages in Unit 22.

Unit 23. Sealing requirements were reviewed with Unit 23 advisory committees.

Unit 26A. We made Public Service Announcements about the importance of sealing on the radio, and also let people know that tanneries wouldn't accept furs that were not sealed.

Activity 6: 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.

Unit 18. Trappers and hunters who brought furs in for sealing were interviewed. Beaver numbers are considered particularly high by these users. Wolverine numbers are holding steady and lynx populations are in their normal cyclic decline. These views are consistent with our impressions gathered during aerial surveys for other species.

Unit 22. Furbearers in Unit 22 are currently plentiful and many populations appear to be increasing. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D beaver continue to be common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant or increasing. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be increasing, particularly in the eastern portion of the unit. Lynx have also been seen in areas of eastern Unit 22D and areas of western Unit 22B. In the remainder of Unit 22 lynx are reported to be scarce or not present. River otter are reported to be common in Units 22A, 22B and 22C, but reported otter harvest continues to be low. Their status in Unit 22D and 22E is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common and generally increasing throughout the unit.

Unit 23. Sealing records were summarized and reported in the triennial furbearer management report. The statewide trapper questionnaire was mailed to selected hunters and trappers in Unit 23. Community-based harvest assessments were conducted in Shungnak and Noorvik.

Unit 26A. Through interviews and observations we determined that arctic foxes and red foxes were fairly abundant in Unit 26A. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. Lynx have become much more plentiful in recent years. Wolverine densities are relatively high and we observed 6 wolverines during 24 hours of moose census flights in Unit 26A during 2002-2003.

Activity 7: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

Summary furbearer reports were prepared for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A. These reports were included and distributed to trappers in the region with the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $17.5

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Management Coordinator

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):
State Share = $ 19.28 Federal Share = $ 57.83 Total Costs = $ 77.10