

**FEDERAL AID  
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
PO Box 25526  
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

**FURBEARERS  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY  
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NR:** W-33-2

**PROJECT NR:** 7.0

**WORK LOCATION:** Statewide

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

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2003–30 June 2004

**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.

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**The Status of Furbearers  
and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region I**

**Regionwide Activities**

Activity : Prepare a regional furbearer management report.

The furbearer management report was completed and submitted to headquarters.

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

The Board of Game meets on a two-year cycle for the SE Alaska region and did not meet during this reporting period. However, in preparation for the November 2004 meeting, regional staffs have met and discussed ideas that may need to be addressed at the next meeting.

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

Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. About 422 beaver, 2897 marten, 0 lynx, 772 otter, and 21 wolverine pelts were harvested and presented for sealing in the region.

Activity : 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 : 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 when furs were brought in for sealing and in conversations with trappers and hunters.

### **Activities by Unit**

#### **Unit 4**

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

This was not accomplished during the reporting period.

**Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:** None

**Stewardship Investment items purchased:** None

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands):** \$22.0

**Submitted by:** Dale L. Rabe – Region I Management Coordinator

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

### Regionwide Activities

Activity: Prepare a furbearer management report.

The furbearer management report was completed and submitted to headquarters.

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

The Board of Game meets on a two-year cycle for the SE Alaska region and did not meet during this reporting period.

Activity: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Data was collected when pelts were presented for sealing. See totals on harvest below.

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

See below

### Unit 6

Activity: Conduct spring river otter latrine surveys.

No spring river otter latrine surveys were conducted in GMU 6.

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

Fur sealing: beavers -56, land otters - 107, marten - 150, wolverine - 16, lynx - 0.

### Units 7 and 15

Activity: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

Furbearer track count surveys were done for wolverine to obtain a density estimate for the western and northern portions of the Kenai Mountains (parts of both GMUs 7 and 15.)

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

Preliminary harvest results for 2003–04:

Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total	
Beaver	21	14	0	34	69
Marten	115	0	0	0	115
Wolverine	10	3	2	1	16
Otter	5	8	2	11	26
Lynx	1	4	3	1	9

## Unit 8

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

During the 2003–04 season, 24 trappers brought in 165 otters for sealing yielding an average of 6.9 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 81 males (49%), 54 females (33%), and 30 of undetermined sex (18%). Most trappers were local residents (83%), and trapping was the most common method of take (84%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (54%), and December was the most productive month (43%). Forty-five otters (27%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 34 beavers brought in by 11 trappers, yielding an average harvest of 3.1 beavers/trapper. Nine (82%) of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and trapping was the most common method of take (68%). Four-wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (47%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during November (24%) and December (41%). Sixteen (47%) 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: 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: 74 beaver, 51 lynx, 150 otter, and 54 wolverine.

## Unit 11

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

GMU 11	Lynx	6	0% Kittens
	Beaver	16	
	Otter	5	
	Wolverine	9	

## Unit 13

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

Aerial transect surveys for lynx tracks were flown this spring.

Not flown in 2001

1.2 new lynx tracks per transect in 2002

0.5 new lynx tracks per transect in 2003

6.5 new lynx tracks per transect in 2004 (not all transects were flown)

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

Preliminary Harvest 2003/04:

GMU 13	Lynx	69	18% Kittens
	Beaver	209	
	Otter	48	
	Marten (13E)	Sealing was discontinued 2003/04	
	Wolverine	31	

#### **Unit 14**

Activity: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

No track count surveys were conducted during this period.

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

Preliminary estimate for fur harvest: beavers-135, land otters-32, marten-217, wolverine-16, lynx-0 (no open season).

#### **Unit 16**

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

Preliminary estimate for fur sealing: beavers-217, land otters-56, marten-729, wolverine-36, lynx-0 (no open season).

#### **Unit 17**

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

Results: beaver-195, land otters-65, wolverine-71, lynx-5

**Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:** None

**Stewardship Investment items purchased:** None

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands):** \$34.01

**Submitted by:** Bruce Bartley, Acting Assistant Management Coordinator

## **The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region III**

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity: Draft or finalize a furbearer management report.

Wrote draft furbearer management report.

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

Attended trappers' meetings, interacted with local trappers on a regular basis and reviewed trapper questionnaires turned in by local trappers.

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

Monitored the harvest of furbearers by analyzing sealing records, trapper questionnaires and reports from trappers and hunters. Preliminary data indicate:

Units 12 and 20E: 31 lynx, 2 otter, and 19 wolverine harvested.

Unit 19: 5 beaver, 40 lynx, 43 otter, 44 wolverine

Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F, 25C: 228 lynx, 42 otter, 54 wolverine harvested.

Unit 20D: 18 lynx, 8 river otter, and 7 wolverine harvested.

Unit 21: 1 lynx, 2 otter, and 1 wolverine harvested

Unit 24: 12 lynx, 3 otter and 1 wolverine harvested

Units 25A, 25B, 25D, 26B, 26C: 339 lynx, 37 wolverines and 2 otters harvested.

Activity: Collect data on harvest when pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected data from pelts presented for sealing and analyzed harvest data.

Activity: Provide information to the Board of Game and advisory committees on furbearer management.

Provided information on furbearer management issues and population status to the Board of Game and advisory committees.

### **Units 12 and 20E**

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

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

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

Completed aerial track surveys of lynx and snowshoe hare, with 0.19 lynx tracks/mile (unchanged from FY03) and 1.08 hare tracks/mile (a 280% increase from FY03),

indicating the hare population reached its low in FY03 and is beginning to increase and the lynx population is at or near its low and has not yet begun to increase.

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

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

Purchased lynx carcasses (n=27) to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy

Activity: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted surveys in September (n = 29 caches)

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

Held discussions with several dozen people about how to protect their trees from beaver damage

**Unit 20D**

Activity: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey resulting in 2 hares observed.

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

Purchased lynx carcasses for assessment of age and reproductive condition.

**Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:** None

**Stewardship Investment items purchased:** None

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands):** \$49.9

**Submitted by:** Doreen Parker McNeill, Assistant Management Coordinator

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

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity 1: Prepare triennial regional furbearer management reports.

A furbearer management report was prepared during this reporting period.

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

During the November 2003 Board of Game (BOG) meeting the Department provided information regarding population status of furbearers in Units 18, 23, 22, and 26A. We commented on and provided additional information at the board's request on 1 proposal for Unit 22 and, 2 proposals for Unit 23. The BOG liberalized trapping/hunting seasons and bag limits for beaver in Unit 22 and for mink, weasel, and muskrat in Unit 23. There were no proposals for Units 18 and 26A.

Activity 3: 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 staff throughout villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates.

Activity 4: 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 2003–2004 trapping season but final harvest figures are not available. In 2002–2003 sealing certificates revealed 39 lynx, 337 otters, and 5 wolverines were harvested; low harvests were the result of poor winter travel conditions. Within the department, we commented that fur acquisition reports are poorly maintained and provide little useful information to area management staff, and that we have not received results from the trapper questionnaire since the 2001–2002 season.

Unit 22. Based on sealing certificates in 2003-2004, 51 lynx were taken in Unit 22A, 35 in Unit 22B, 1 in Unit 22C, and no lynx in Units 22D and 22E. The reported total river otter harvest was 8 otters: 2 from Unit 22B and 6 from Unit 22C. Seventy-eight (78) wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 46 from Unit 22A, 24 from Unit 22B, 7 from Unit 22C, and 1 from Unit 22D. Community-based Harvest Assessment surveys were completed in St. Michael and Shaktoolik. Surveys and we found additional wolverine harvest: 9 in St. Michael and 5 in Shaktoolik. Sealing of beaver is no longer required in Unit 22 so we do not have harvest data for this species.



Unit 23. We monitored harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and Community-based Harvest Assessment surveys. At least 33 fur animals were sealed during the reporting period.

Unit 26A: We examined sealing certificates for wolverine taken in Unit 26A. Twenty wolverines were sealed, of which 18 were males, and 2 females. Seventeen were ground shot, while 3 were trapped. Transportation methods included snowmachine in 19 cases, and aircraft in 1 case. One wolverine was harvested in September, 1 in November, 1 in February, and the remainder (17) were harvested in March. Three lynx were sealed from Unit 26A, 2 males and 1 female. Snow machines were used to harvest the lynx, and 1 was ground shot, while the remaining two were trapped.

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

Though out 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. In Unit 18 we prepared to teach a trapping clinic in St. Mary's but this clinic was cancelled and has been rescheduled to a later date due to the death of a respected elder in the community.

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. We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; sent out trapper questionnaires; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined that there are no furbearer problems related to low populations in Unit 18.

Unit 22. Furbearers are currently plentiful and several species appear to be expanding their range and increasing in numbers. 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 and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be common east of the Darby Mountains and increasing in the remainder of the subunit. Lynx harvest was low in Units 22C and 22D where they are uncommon, and they are scarce in Unit 22E. River otter are reported to be common and increasing in Units 22A, 22B and 22C and their status in Units 22D and 22E is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common and generally increasing throughout the unit, particularly in Unit 22B west of the Darby Mountains.

Unit 23. We assessed furbearer population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, community-based harvest assessments and observations by staff and the public.

Unit 26A. Through opportunistic observations of fur bearers and interviews with local residents, we felt that current the current population number of wolverines is fairly high

and stable, while arctic and red foxes are both in a period of low population level. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. A beaver was seen for the first time in Unit 26A this year. During 21 hours of moose surveys in 2003-2004, we observed 7 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities remain fairly high. We also saw 1 lynx, which indicated they are still present but that there may be fewer than during the past 2 years.

Activity 7: 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 22, 23, and 26A to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire distributed to trappers in the region.

**Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:** None.

**Stewardship Investment items purchased:** None.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands):** \$ 18.3

**Submitted by:** Peter Bente, Management Coordinator

**Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):**

**State Share = \$31.05 Federal Share = \$93.16 Total Costs = \$124.21**

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**STATEWIDE FURBEARERS  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY  
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**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NR:** W-33-2  
**PROJECT NR:** 7.0

**WORK LOCATION:** Statewide

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2003 – 30 June 2004

**PROJECT TITLE:** The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing their Populations  
Statewide.

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**Project Activities Statewide and Accomplishments:**

Activity 1: Distribute furbearer material to staff involved in furbearer management.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff provided DWC furbearer management staff completed trapper reports, and raw trapper data sets as requested.

Activity 2: Maintain and revise a list of approximately 1500 trappers in the state.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff worked with area offices and regional furbearer biologists to update trapper questionnaire mailing lists. An additional 362 trappers were added to 2002–2003 questionnaire mailing list bringing the total to 1769.

Activity 3: Maintain and revise the statewide trapper questionnaire.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff solicited input for the revised trapper questionnaire from division area offices and regional furbearer biologists. Trapper questionnaires were updated to meet area management biologist data requests. Questionnaires for the 2002–2003 survey were printed in three forms: General long form, general short form, and area specific, and were distributed by bulk mail to 1769 trappers at 221 different zip codes. Along with the questionnaire, trappers were sent copies of the 2001–2002 statewide trapper report. A copy of that report has been sent under separate cover.

Activity 4: Summarize information from the statewide trapper questionnaire regarding trapper demographics, trapper observations of furbearers and their prey, and population trends and abundance.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff received 466 trapper questionnaire replies, and responses were recorded in a database. Data will be analyzed and extracted to produce the 2002–2003 statewide trapper report.

**Other activities funded by federal aid on this project:** None.

**Statewide Project Costs:**

State Share = \$4,125      Federal Share = \$12,375      Total Costs = \$16,500

**Note:** Expenditures include publishing and mailing of final 2001–2002 trapper report and 2002–2003 trapper questionnaire.

**Prepared by:** Tim Peltier and Ryan Scott, Wildlife Biologists