

**FURBEARERS
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR: W-33-4

PROJECT NR: 7.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2005–June 2006

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

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

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes furbearer survey and inventory activities. Regionwide activities are listed before specific activities by herd and game management unit.

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

Regionwide Activities

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, collected biological samples opportunistically, and collected harvest data when pelts were presented for sealing. About 271 beaver, 3851 marten, 905 otter, 13 wolverine, and 2 lynx pelts were harvested 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 helps managers provide recommendations to the Board of Game on 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 through conversations with trappers and hunters and collecting data when pelts were presented for sealing. Efforts were made to improve communication with authorized fur sealers where trappers are using temporary sealing forms that have been incompletely filled out and data missing. Changes to the

temporary sealing form located at the back of the trapping regulation booklet have been made in order to have it better represent data needed on the standard sealing form.

Activities by Unit

Unit 4

Activity: Monitor sex and age ratios of marten on NE Chichagof Island, using carcasses submitted by trappers, as part of a cooperative management program with the U.S. Forest Service.

Although marten carcasses were collected by the Forest Service, the information provided to us was incomplete and we were unable to conduct an analysis of sex and age ratios. We will continue to work with the Forest Service and trappers for carcass collection and necropsy information to allow monitoring of this population.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$17.4

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 triennial regional furbearer management report.

No work was accomplished on this activity because the management report was not due this year.

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

Harvest data were collected when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

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

Harvest was monitored through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters, providing the following information:

Unit 6

Beavers	92
Land otters	183
Marten	256
Wolverine	19
Lynx	0

Units 7 and 15

	Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total
Beaver	59	21	11	12	103
Marten	119	6	0	0	125
Wolverine	4	0	1	3	8
Otter	6	15	3	19	43
Lynx	6	0	2	0	8

Unit 8

During the 2005–06 season, 26 trappers brought in 249 otters for sealing, yielding an average of 10 otters per trapper. The harvest was composed of 127 males (51%), 110 females (44%), and 17 of undetermined sex (5%). Most trappers were local residents (73%), and traps were the most common method of take (81%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (54%), and December was the most productive month (65%). Seventeen otters (7%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 63 beavers brought in by 14 trappers, yielding an average harvest of 4.5 beavers per trapper. Twelve (86%) of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and traps were the most common method of take (60%). Four-wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (70%), and the harvest primarily occurred during November (48%) and December (32%). Fifty (79%) 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 — preliminary harvest

Beaver	36
Lynx	16
Otter	40
Wolverine	12

Unit 11 — preliminary harvest

Lynx	26	31% Kittens
Beaver	1	
Otter	4	
Wolverine	10	

Unit 13 — preliminary harvest

Lynx	144	28% Kittens
Beaver	227	
Otter	44	
Wolverine	43	

Unit 14 — preliminary harvest

Beavers	90
Land otters	24
Marten	270
Wolverine	12
Lynx	3

Unit 16

The lynx trapping season was re-opened during 2005-06. Preliminary estimate for fur harvest:

Beavers	137
Land otters	86
Marten	552
Wolverine	25
Lynx	9

Unit 17

Beaver	248
Land Otter	123
Wolverine	42
Lynx	4

Activities by Unit

Unit 6

Activity: Conduct spring river otter latrine surveys.

This project requires a cooperative effort with the furbearer research program, which had other funded priorities during this period. None conducted during FY05 because of poor weather during planned survey period.

Units 7 and 15

Activity 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

Results: Track counts were not flown due to poor tracking conditions (snow, light, etc.) and lack of funds.

Units 11 and 13

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

Aerial transect surveys for lynx tracks were not flown this spring due to weather.

Total Regional Segment Period Costs (in thousands): \$84.9

Submitted by: Gino Del Frate, Regional Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide Activities

Activity: Provide furbearer management information to state and federal regulatory processes.

Provided information to the Alaska Board of Game, state Fish and Game advisory committees, federal regional advisory committees and the Federal Subsistence Board.

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

Distributed trapper questionnaires regionwide to provide a basis for determining the status of furbearer populations.

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

Monitored harvest of 926 lynx, 136 river otters, and 188 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

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

Collected data on harvest of 1250 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters; analyzed harvest data.

Activities by Unit

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 = 31) 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 beaver cache surveys in October in Unit 20B (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.

Discussed ways to protect trees from beaver damage with several dozen people.

Unit 20D

Activity: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey that showed an increasing trend in the hare population.

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

Did not purchase lynx carcasses, but 2 were donated by trappers.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$22.2

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide Activities

Activity: Prepare triennial regional furbearer management reports.

No work was accomplished on this activity because the management report was not due this year.

Activity: 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 Alaska Board of Game, state Fish and Game advisory committees, the Federal Subsistence Board, and federal regional advisory councils.

During the November 2005 Board of Game meeting, the department provided information regarding population status of furbearers in Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A. In March 2006 we commented on and provided additional information at the board's request on a Unit 22 proposal to liberalize beaver trapping in Unit 22. The BOG extended the period during which traps can be used to take beaver in Unit 22 to 16 September–10 June.

Activity: 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: 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 2005–2006 trapping season, but only preliminary harvest figures are available. We expect that harvests will be slightly higher than recent years because of favorable weather conditions throughout the unit.

Unit 22: Harvest reported on 2005–2006 sealing certificates included 104 lynx; 65 were taken in Unit 22A, 38 in Unit 22B, 1 in Unit 22C, and no lynx in Units 22D and 22E. The total reported river otter harvest was 3 otters: 1 from Unit 22A, 1 from Unit 22B, and 1 from Unit 22C. Reports showed 43 wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 13 from Unit 22A, 11 from Unit 22B, 8 from Unit 22C, 6 from Unit 22D and 5 from Unit 22E. Community-based harvest assessment surveys were organized in Brevig Mission, Elim and Teller, but data from these surveys is not yet available.

Unit 23: We monitored harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest assessment surveys.

Unit 26(A): We examined sealing certificates for wolverine taken in Unit 26A. During 2005–2006, reports showed 23 wolverines were sealed, of which 16 were males and 7 were females. Twelve were ground shot, while 11 were trapped. Snowmachines were used for transportation

in all 23 cases. Two wolverines were harvested in February, 19 in March, and 2 in April. One lynx presented for sealing from Unit 26A was a male. A snowmachine was used for transportation, and the lynx was ground shot.

Activity: 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. In Unit 18, we conducted a trapping clinic in Bethel that was attended by 12 local trappers. We provided them with information regarding harvest reporting and sealing requirements.

Activity: 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: Trapper questionnaires for the previous year (2004–2005) were received and reviewed. 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 there are no furbearer problems related to low populations in Unit 18.

Unit 22: Furbearers are currently plentiful, particularly in Units 22A and 22B, where hare numbers have been high for a number of years. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be common throughout the subunit. 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. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D, beavers continue to be common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing.

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: Based on opportunistic observations of furbearers and interviews with local residents, we believe 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 15 hours of moose surveys in April of 2005, we observed 4 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities remain fairly high. The number of wolverines presented for sealing was higher than in recent years, indicating a continued high number of wolverines. We did not see any lynx during moose surveys, and only one was presented for sealing, indicating that lynx continue to exist in low numbers in Unit 26A.

Activity: 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 who 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.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): 13.8

Submitted by: Peter Bente. Management Coordinator

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
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**STATEWIDE FURBEARERS
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
FEDERAL AID PERFORMANCE REPORT**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR: W-33-4
PROJECT NR: 7.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PERIOD: 1 July 2005–30 June 2006

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

Project Activities Statewide and Accomplishments:

Activity 1: Distribute trapping/furbearer materials 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 implemented a new database to track and update trapper contact information and worked with area offices and regional furbearer biologists to update trapper questionnaire mailing lists. A total of 1743 trappers were on the 2005–06 questionnaire mailing list.

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 2005–06 (FY06) survey were printed in three forms: General long form, general short form, and area specific, and were distributed by bulk mail to 1743 trappers at 215 different zip codes.

Activity 4: Prepare a draft annual trapper questionnaire report and distribute to approximately 1500 state trappers.

Accomplishments: We prepared a draft of the 2004–05 Trapper Questionnaire Report. This report will be distributed to approximately 500 active trappers who responded to the 2005–06 questionnaire.

Activity 5: 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 495 trapper questionnaire replies, and responses were recorded in a database. Data will be analyzed and extracted to produce the 2005–06 statewide trapper report.

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

Statewide Project Costs:

Federal Share = \$6,237.30 + State Share \$2,079.09 = Total Costs \$8,316.39

Prepared by: Karen Blejwas, Wildlife Biologist