

**FEDERAL AID  
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**FURBEARER  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NO.** W-33-6

**PROJECT NO.** 7.0

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2007 – 30 June 2008

**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. Region-wide activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

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

**Regionwide Activities:**

ACTIVITY 1: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they 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 109 beaver, 2,108 marten, 121 otter, 20 wolverine, and 0 lynx pelts were harvested and sealed in the region.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 3: 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 while sealing furbearers and during 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 Barten, Region I Management Coordinator

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

### Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Collect furbearer harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

<i>Unit</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11*</b>	<b>13*</b>	<b>15A</b>	<b>15B</b>	<b>15C</b>	<b>17</b>
marten	35	26	0	0	0	0	14	8	0	0
beaver	54	26	24	66	31	179	16	0	15	178
wolverine	20	14		24	20	48	0	0	4	45
otter	136	9	122	64	4	22	9	0	8	56
lynx	0	0	0	14	192	495	4	3	2	8

\* The annual trapper questionnaire was completed. Furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally. No Lynx transects flown spring 2008 due to poor weather conditions.

*Unit 8:* 21 trappers brought in 122 otters for sealing, yielding an average of 5.8 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 65 males (53%), 52 females (43%), and five of undetermined sex (4%). Most trappers were local residents (95%), and trapping was the most common method of take (92%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (48%), and December was the most productive month (46%). Fifty-two otters (30%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 24 beavers brought in by eight trappers, yielding an average harvest of three beavers/trapper. All of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and trapping was the most common method of take (100%). Four-wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (33%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during November (42%). Eight (30%) 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.

*Unit 10:* No furbearers were harvested.

### Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct river otter latrine surveys.

We did not conduct river otter latrine surveys. These surveys require additional cooperative funding which was not available.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct furbearer track counts.

Track counts were aborted because of poor tracking conditions (freeze/thaw). The single count completed indicated an increasing snowshoe hare density.

**Units 7 and 15**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

No surveys were conducted during this reporting period due to time and budgetary constraints.

**Unit 13**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

No Lynx transects flown spring 2008 due to poor weather conditions.

**Submitted by:** Bruce Bartley

## **The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in 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 1901 lynx, 54 river otter, and 120 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 2075 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: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased lynx carcasses (n = 100) to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache surveys (n = 24 caches) in October.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 1: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

A snowshoe hare population trend survey was conducted that resulted in 96 hares being counted, indicating a slight population decline.

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 for tracking harvest strategy.

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

## **The Status of Furbearer and Factors Influencing Their Populations in 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 32 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 6 in Unit 23, and 5 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 2007–2008 trapping season but only preliminary harvest figures are available. The reported harvests are 19 river otters, 66 lynx and 16 wolverine. We expect that harvests will be consistent with recent years.

Unit 22: The preliminary harvest report on 2007-2008 sealing certificates included 32 lynx: 13 taken in Unit 22A, 15 in Unit 22B, and no lynx in Units 22C, 22D and 22E. The total reported river otter harvest was 14 otters: 1 from Unit 22A, 8 from Unit 22B, 4 from 22C, 1 from Unit 22D, and 0 from Unit 22E. Thirty-two (32) wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 8 from Unit 22A, 6 from Unit 22B, 6 from Unit 22C, 6 from Unit 22D, and 6 from Unit 22E. (Note that community based harvest assessment surveys were not completed in Unit 22 due to sampling effort directed to Unit 23 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 in three communities (Deering, Kivalina, Noatak). Sealing information for 2007-2008 was not available at the time this report was prepared.

Unit 26(A): We examined sealing certificates for wolverine and lynx. During 2007-2008, 11 wolverine were harvested and sealed by 3 Unit 26A residents. Ten were male and 1 was female. Six were ground shot and 5 were trapped. Snow machines were used for transportation in all cases. Two wolverines were harvested in November, 1 in January, 2 in February, and 6 in March. Four lynx were harvested and sealed by one Unit 26A resident trapper. Two males and 2 females were sealed. The trapper used a snow machine for transportation and snared all of the lynx in March.

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.

Unit 18: Trapper questionnaires for the previous year (2006-2007) 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 beaver 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 26(A): 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 14 hours of moose surveys in April of 2008, we observed 5 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities remain fairly high. The number of wolverines that were sealed was higher than last year (6), but not as high as some previous years. The number of wolverines sealed is probably more an indicator of trapper effort than of wolverine numbers. We saw 5 lynx during moose surveys and 4 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.

Project No. 7.0 – Furbearer S&I  
FY08 Annual Performance Report

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



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DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
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Juneau, AK 99811-5526

**STATEWIDE FURBEARERS  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NO.** W-33-6

**PROJECT NO.** 7.0

**WORK LOCATION:** Statewide

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2007 – 30 June 2008

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

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**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 updated trapper contact information in the trapper database using sealing records, the 2007 license database, and by consulting area offices and regional furbearer biologists. A total of 3026 trappers were mailed 2007–08 questionnaires.

**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 2007–08 (FY08) survey were printed in three forms: General long form, general short form, and area specific, and were distributed to 3026 trappers across the state.

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

**Accomplishments:** We prepared a draft of the 2006–07 Trapper Questionnaire Report. This report will be distributed to 709 trappers who responded to the 2006–07 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.

Project 7.0 – Statewide Furbearer Survey  
FY08 Annual Performance Report

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff received 709 trapper questionnaire replies, and responses were recorded in a database. Data will be analyzed and extracted to produce the 2006–07 statewide trapper report.

**Prepared by:** Karen Blejwas, Wildlife Biologist