

**FURBEARER  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NUMBER:** AKW-4 Wildlife Restoration FY2015

**PROJECT NUMBER:** 7.0

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Statewide

**PROJECT TITLE:** The Status of Furbearer and Factors Influencing Their Populations

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

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

**Region wide Activities:**

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial furbearer management reports.

Reports are presently being reviewed and edited. Beginning in 2015 the department will switch to a five-year species management reporting schedule including the furbearer species group.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Data from furbearer sealing records was provided to the Alaska Board of Game and Regional Advisory Council at the winter 2015 meeting. Harvest data for CITES species during Regulatory Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015) was also provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority.

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, wolverines, and fishers as they are harvested and presented for sealing.

ADF&G Wildlife Conservation staff, AWT 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. Approximately 375 beavers, 1,658 martens 378 otters, 13 wolverines, 1 lynx, and 5 fishers were harvested and sealed in the region.

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Unit 1A – 220 martens, 43 otters, 65 beavers, 1 wolverine  
Unit 1B – 53 martens, 19 otters, 9 beavers, 2 wolverines  
Unit 1C – 118 martens, 23 otters, 53 beavers, 6 wolverines, 5 fishers  
Unit 1D – 99 martens, 9 otters, 24 beavers, 4 wolverines  
Unit 2 – 490 martens, 107 otters, 129 beavers  
Unit 3 - 178 martens, 38 otters, 37 beavers  
Unit 4 – 402 martens, 128 otters, 49 beavers  
Unit 5 – 98 martens, 11 otters, 9 beavers

ACTIVITY 4: 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 5: 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 sealing fur and 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:** Tom Schumacher, Region I Management Coordinator

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

### **Region wide Activities:**

ACTIVITY: Prepare a triennial regional furbearer management report.

Reports were finalized and submitted for publication in 2013. Area staff continue to collect information in preparation for drafting future reports. The department is transitioning to a 5-year report and plan. The next report will be published in 2018.

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

Staff routinely interact with federal staff and discuss management of furbearers relative to the respective regulatory systems. Staff prepared information for presentation to the state Board of Game meeting in 2015.

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

All furbearers that require sealing in Region II were presented to staff or appointed sealers for information and specimen collection and sealing. See area specific activities for additional information.

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

These are standard activities accomplished in each office. See Area specific activities.

**Activities by Unit:**

**Unit 6**

ACTIVITY : Collected harvest data for 57 marten, 42 beaver, 11 wolverine, 0 lynx, and 164 river otters. These harvests are low for marten and beaver, high for otter, and normal for lynx and wolverine.

ACTIVITY : No river otter latrine surveys were conducted in western Prince William Sound. Priority area was unit 8.

**Units 7&15**

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

Preliminary harvest results by GMU are:

	7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total
Beaver	35	32	14	18	99
Marten	39	5	0	0	44
Wolverine	1	0	1	3	5
Otter	9	7	4	21	41
Lynx	2	1	3	0	6

The hunting and trapping seasons for lynx were closed in 2014-15 due to a low in the population cycle.

ACTIVITY : Conduct wolverine survey. No surveys were conducted due to poor survey conditions.

**Unit 08**

Activity : *Otter* - During the 2014–15 season, 38 individuals brought in 161 otters for sealing yielding an average of 4.2 otters/person. Otter harvest was comprised of 86 males (53%), 58 females (36%), and 17 of undetermined sex (11%). Local residents comprised most of the harvest (90%), and trapping was the most common method of take (97%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used (61%), and December was the most successful month (53%). Twenty-seven otters (17%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

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*Beaver* – Ninety-three beavers were brought in by 20 individuals, yielding an average harvest of 4.7 beavers/person. Local residents comprised most of the harvest (80%), and trapping was the most common method of take (55%). Airplanes were the most common method of transportation used (40%), and the harvest primarily occurred during the month of November. Twenty beaver (22%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system with the remaining harvested in remote portions of the management area.

Hunters and trappers have reported increased otter and beaver populations on Kodiak and surrounding islands in recent years. Similar to other areas, harvest trends on Kodiak Island tend to fluctuate with oscillations in fur prices and overseas demand as well as weather patterns and fur quality.

### **Unit 14C**

ACTIVITY : Harvest data was collected when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. See below:

Harvest:

Beaver: 35 harvested; 33 of those killed with depredation permits

Lynx: 0

River Otter: 5

Wolf: 0

Wolverine: 0

Marten: 2

**Submitted by:** Gino Del Frate, Region II Management Coordinator

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

### **Region wide Activities:**

1. Six area offices used trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.
2. Monitored the harvest of >1300 furbearers through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.
3. Collected harvest data when 1300 pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.
4. Provide furbearer information to state and federal regulatory processes: 17 Fish and Game Advisory Committees, 1 Board of Game, 3 federal Regional Advisory Councils and 1 federal Subsistence Board.
5. Conducted 0 beaver cache surveys.

**Covers GMUs:** 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C

**Prepared by:** Doreen Parker-McNeil, Region III Management Coordinator

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

### **Region wide Activities:**

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

Unit	Beaver	Lynx	Marten	Otter	Wolverine
<i>Unit 9</i>	61	14	0 <sup>a</sup>	37	7
<i>Unit 10<sup>b</sup></i>	-	-	-	0	0
<i>Unit 11</i>	7	9	N/A <sup>a</sup>	4	4
<i>Unit 13</i>	150	80	N/A <sup>a</sup>	30	48
<i>Unit 14A</i>	69	4	18	19	0
<i>Unit 14B</i>	58	2	26	8	2
<i>Unit 16</i>	43	6	256	41	22
<i>Unit 17</i>	115	0	N/A <sup>a</sup>	31	6

<sup>a</sup>Marten sealing is not required in Units 9, 10, 11, 13, and 17.

<sup>b</sup>Beaver, lynx, and marten do not occur in Unit 10

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

The annual trapper questionnaire was not completed.

### **Activities by Unit:**

#### **Unit 13**

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

No lynx surveys were flown in FY2015

**Covers GMUs:** 9, 10, 11, 13, 14A, 14B, 16, and 17

**Submitted by:** Lem Butler, Region IV Regional Supervisor

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

### **Region wide Activities:**

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

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Game, State Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

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 29 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 9 in Unit 23, and 6 in Unit 26A.

Monitor harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, the annual hunter/trapper questionnaire, and Community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

*Unit 18:* We analyzed fur sealing data for the RY14 trapping season. These preliminary harvests are probably not close to the final numbers. The reported harvests are 24 river otters, 15 lynx, and 2 wolverine. These would be record low numbers if correct. We expect a lower than average number of fur sealed in RY14 trapping season because of lower than average snow conditions, a down turn in the fur market, and decreased trapping effort. The presents of a local fur buyer encourages trappers to not only participate in trapping and passing the knowledge of how to trap on to the next generation but also increase the number of people in getting their fur sealed.

*Unit 22:* The preliminary furbearer harvest based on RY14 sealing certificates indicates 25 lynx were sealed. The breakdown of lynx sealed by subunit is 23 in Unit 22A, 1 in Unit 22B, and 1 in Unit 22C. Fifteen river otters were harvested by residents; 9 in 22A, 1 in 22B, 4 in 22C, and 1 in 22D. Twenty-five wolverines were harvested by residents; 14 in Unit 22A, 5 in Unit 22B, 1 in Unit 22C, 1 in Unit 22D, and 4 in Unit 22E. A Community-based Harvest Assessment was completed in Shishmaref by Division of Subsistence. Data analysis is currently ongoing and results are not available, however previous harvest surveys show beaver, marten, and red fox are also harvested by Unit 22 communities.

*Unit 23:* The preliminary harvest reported on RY14 sealing certificates included 26 lynx (13 females, 13 males); all were taken by Unit 23 residents. Two lynx were snared, and 23 were trapped, and 1 was shot. All 26 were taken using a snowmachine. Eleven otters (7 males, 3 females, and 1 unknown) were taken during this regulatory year. All 11 otters were taken using a snowmachine. Ten were taken by Unit 23 residents and 1 was taken by a non-local resident. One otter was shot and the other 10 were trapped. Twenty-two wolverines were sealed (9 female, 13 males, and 1 unknown), 6 were taken by ground shooting, and 16 by traps. For transportation, 1 was taken using an airplane, 1 was taken by 4-wheeler, 1 was taken by foot, and 19 were taken using a snowmachine. Community-based Harvest Assessments were completed by Division of Subsistence in Kotzebue in Unit 23, and in Point Hope in nearby neighboring Unit 26A. Data analysis is currently ongoing and results are not available, but they usually indicate dramatically higher harvest than sealing records indicate.

*Unit 26A:* We analyzed fur sealing data for the RY14 trapping season and reported harvests were no river otters, no lynx, and 20 wolverine (14 male, 6 female) taken by 6 local residents of Unit 26A. Fourteen wolverine were male and 6 were female; 4 were

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ground shot, 6 were trapped, and 10 were taken by unreported methods. Snow machines were used for transportation for 10; all others had unreported transportation. One wolverine was harvested in December, 8 in January, 4 in March, and 1 in May.

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

Throughout Region V we communicated with local trappers and hunters to improve harvest reporting through the fur sealing process; explained the importance of harvest reporting at public meetings in villages; prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data; and attended meetings hosted by local chapters of the Alaska Trappers Association. Unit 22 organized an introduction to trapping class that was held in Nome for new trappers to learn the basics of trapping and regulations.

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; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. Muskrat numbers continue to remain low but increasing since the 2009-2010 winter. Lynx numbers and harvest are declining from record highs of 2011 due to decreased abundance of snowshoe hares. Wolverine, river otter, beaver, marten and fox numbers appear to be stable in abundance over the reporting period. Most trappers reported an increase in the amount of mink they encountered but few people reported targeting them.

*Unit 22:* Preliminary sealing data and anecdotal reports suggest lynx numbers have declined in Unit 22A and 22B, likely because of decreased snowshoe hare numbers. The reported unit wide average annual harvest of lynx from RY09 to RY12 is 111 per year (range 83-137) versus 25 lynx harvested during this period, and the 48 lynx harvested last period. River otters are believed to be more common than harvest numbers would indicate, but their population is unknown. The unit wide average annual harvest of otters from RY09 to RY14 is 12 otters per year (range 4-15). Wolverine numbers are unknown; however observations and anecdotal reports suggest wolverines are common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E. . The unit wide average annual harvest of wolverines from RY09 to RY14 is 32 wolverines per year (range 25-40).

*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. Like last year, lynx population levels appear to be dropping, although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. Wolverine numbers continue to appear to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period however, with harvests similar to last year (RY13).

*Unit 26A:* Opportunistic observations of wolverines on aerial surveys and interviews with local residents indicate that wolverines appear to be at high numbers. Arctic and red foxes are both in a period of medium population level. Coyotes are rare; river otter and lynx densities are very low.

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Coordinate with the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report and prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest.

Summaries of trapper harvest information and general population status for each game management unit are provided to support annual trapper questionnaire reports.

Develop updated population objectives in consultation with the local public and other agencies.

Furbearer information is available for discussion during Advisory Committee meetings. Beaver populations continue to be considered too high by many members of the public because their dams impede boat passage on creeks and waterways, as well as spawning salmon.

Work with community members in rural locations to keep fur sealing vendors active and up to date with new information.

In Unit 22, fur vendors were contacted to ensure their sealing supplies were adequate. Finding new fur sealers in communities have been on-going efforts so sealing and reporting requirements are met. Public service announcements were sent to communities at the end of the trapping season to remind hunters & trappers to visit their local sealer.

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