

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation**

**Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Annual Performance Report
Survey-Inventory Activities
1 July 1998 - 30 June 1999**

MOUNTAIN GOAT

Mary U. Hicks, Editor



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STATE OF ALASKA
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DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
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DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
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Project Title: Southeast Mountain Goat Population Management

Project Location: Unit 1A (5,000 mi²)
Ketchikan area including the mainland draining into Behm and Portland Canals

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Maintain goat population densities above 20 goats per hour during fall aerial surveys.
- Survey goats annually in established trend count areas throughout Unit 1A.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We completed aerial goat surveys from fixed-wing aircraft in 8 Trend Count Areas (TCAs) during fall 1998. We issued 205 registration permits to hunters for hunting goats in Unit 1A or 1B south of Bradfield Canal.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We observed 82 goats (68 goats per hour) in the Wilson Arm/Boca-de-Quadra TCA; 194 (97 per hour) in the Marten Arm/Portland Canal TCA; 49 (25 per hour) in the Yes Bay/Reflection Lake TCA; 32 (21 per hour) in the Chickamin to 2722 TCA; 23 (21 per hour) in the Chickamin River/Walker Cove TCA; 59 (79 per hour) in the Deer Mountain/Mahoney Mountain TCA; 39 (78 per hour) in the Mirror Lake to Swan Lake TCA; and 74 (57 per hour) in the Swan Lake to Mt. Reid TCA. Numbers of goats observed in all TCAs surveyed exceeded our 20 goats/hour objective. Of the TCAs surveyed during 1998, only 2 areas had higher counts than when they were previously surveyed (Deer Mountain to Mahoney Peak; Mirror Lake to Swan Lake).

Of the 205 registration permits issued to hunters, 91 were returned by hunters who reported that they did not hunt, 76 hunted unsuccessfully, 29 hunters harvested a single goat, and 4 hunters harvested 2 goats. The harvest consisted of 23 billies and 14 nannies. Resident hunters harvested 32 goats, and guided nonresidents harvested 5 goats.

Project Location: Unit 1B (3,000 mi²)
Southeast mainland from Cape Fanshaw to Lemesurier Point

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain population levels to accommodate an annual harvest of 35 goats and a hunter success rate of 35%.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: No aerial surveys were flown during this reporting period.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 119 registration permits in the RG004 registration hunt. A total of 45 hunters reported killing 16 goats in 101 days afield, and 4 hunters reported killing 4 goats in 10 days afield in the Unit 1B portion of the RG001 hunt. The U.S. Forest Service issued no federal registration goat permits for the area between LeConte Bay and the North Fork of Bradfield Canal during this reporting period. The number of goats harvested ($n = 20$) was below our management objective and the 41% success rate was 6% above our management objective.

Project Location: Unit 1C (7,600 mi²)

Southeast mainland and the islands of Lynn Canal and Stephens Passage lying between Cape Fanshaw and the latitude of Eldred Rock, including Sullivan Island and the drainages of Berners Bay

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Maintain goat population densities of at least 30 goats observed per hour during fall surveys in the Eagle–Antler drainages and in the Chilkat Range north of the Endicott River and 50 goats observed per hour in the areas south of Taku Inlet.
- Conduct population size and composition counts.
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.
- Monitor the occurrence of goats infected with contagious ecthyma to determine extent of any outbreak.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We analyzed harvest data collected from registration permit returns on an ongoing basis to determine whether harvests remained within sustainable limits. Preliminary harvest guidelines based on population estimates, incorporating a point system that favors the harvest of male goats, continued to be used for monitoring the hunt.

Aerial surveys were conducted from Eagle Glacier to the east branch of the Lace River on 2–3 October 1998. In 3 hours and 25 minutes of survey time we counted 263 goats (225 adults and 38 kids) for a sighting rate of 77 goats/hour. We also surveyed the area from the Taku Glacier to Sheep Creek on 18 September 1998. In 2 hrs and 20 minutes of survey time we counted 90 goats (71 adults and 19 kids) for a sighting rate of 39 goats/hour.

In October of 1998 the Board of Game adopted a proposal for an archery-only goat hunt in the Taku Inlet/Stephens Passage area between Point Salisbury and the Taku Glacier.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 153 registration permits to goat hunters in Unit 1C in 1998. Of these, 67 permittees hunted and 38 killed goats for a success rate of 57%. Successful hunters averaged 2.2 days hunting, while unsuccessful hunters spent an average of 3.0 days afield. The harvest consisted of 30 males, 6 females, and 2 of undetermined sex. The number of nonresident guided hunters remained at the 1997 level of 21, and 19 of them killed goats. All of the nonresident hunters hunted the Tracy and Endicott Arm area of Unit 1C. The harvest remained within guideline levels in the area from Taku Inlet to the south side of Endicott Arm. In Tracy and Endicott Arms, nonresident hunters accounted for 68% of the harvest. Seventy four percent of the harvested goats in Unit 1C came from the Tracy/Endicott drainages.

Project Location: Unit 1D (2,700 mi²)

Southeast mainland north of the latitude of Eldred Rock, excluding Sullivan Island and the drainages of Berners Bay

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Increase the population to 100 animals in Hunt Area 804 (Skagway).
- Increase the estimated population from 300 to 500 goats and maintain hunter success of 25% in Hunt area 806 (Haines South).
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We conducted an aerial survey from the Katzehin River north to the east fork of the Skagway River. In 1 hour and 30 minutes of survey time we counted 121 goats (104 adults and 17 kids) for a sighting rate of 80 goats/hour. We also surveyed the Takshanuk Mountains and east to the Ferebee Glacier and River. In 3 hours of survey time, we counted 120 goats (91 adults and 29 kids) for a sighting rate of 40 goats/hour.

Harvest data collected from registration permits were analyzed. Preliminary harvest quotas were monitored for discrete areas throughout the subunit based on goat population estimates.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 157 registration permits to hunters in 1998. Of these, 96 permittees hunted and 27 killed goats, for a hunter success rate of 28%. Successful hunters averaged 2.5 days hunting while unsuccessful hunters spent 2.6 days afield. The harvest consisted of 20 males, 6 females, and 1 of undetermined sex. All but 5 of the hunters were residents of Alaska, and they accounted for 26 of the 27 goats harvested.

Project Location: Unit 4 (5,800 mi²)

Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof and adjacent islands.

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Maintain a population capable of providing an annual harvest of at least 35 goats and an annual hunter success rate of at least 25%.
- Conduct population size and composition surveys; monitor results from the registration permit hunt, and develop population objectives.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Aerial surveys were completed in September over the entire goat range in the unit (approximately 950 mi²). A total of 1013 goats were tabulated, leading to a minimum population estimate. We did not attempt to establish sightability, so total population size and density estimates are still largely speculative. Kid percentage observed was 17.8%, with 115 goats observed per hour of survey time. A total of 326 registration permits was issued for the August 1–December 31 hunt on Baranof Island. Following the season we contacted nonrespondents for information and some were cited for noncompliance. Hunt reports were tabulated. Twenty-three harvested goat horn sets were brought to the Sitka office for incremental horn measurements and aging in an effort to better understand growth rates. That effort will continue.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Hunters harvested 63 goats in 1998, including 36 males and 27 females. The success rate for 158 hunters who went afield was 38%. Successful hunters were afield for an average of 2.0 days. Harvest occurred during all months, with the highest number taken in October ($n = 18$, 29% of the annual harvest). Nonresident guided hunts seem to be becoming slightly more popular, with 9 hunters booking hunts in Unit 4 during the 1998 season. Both project objectives were met during this reporting period, although population objectives have not been formalized.

Project Location: Unit 5 (5,800 mi²)
Cape Fairweather to Icy Bay, eastern gulf coast.

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Increase the estimated population from 850 to 1250 goats and maintain a hunter success rate of 25%.
- Conduct population size and composition counts.
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.
- Develop population objectives.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: No surveys were conducted during the reporting period due to workload elsewhere. Harvest was analyzed from the return of hunter reports from the registration permit hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 56 state registration permits to hunters in 1998; the U.S. Forest Service issued an additional 6 federal subsistence permits. Thirty-three permittees hunted, and 16 killed goats for a success rate of 48%. Successful hunters averaged 3.4 days hunting, while unsuccessful hunters spent 3.5 days afield. The harvest consisted of 9 males, 6 females, and 1 goat of undetermined sex. Nonresidents harvested 7 of the 16 goats.

The management objective for mountain goat hunter success rate is being met in the subunit. However, hunter effort and take increased dramatically in 1998, from a previous 5-year average of 16 hunters and 7 goats harvested to 33 hunters and 16 goats harvested in 1998. This increase in harvest is not cause for alarm in itself, but the fact that 10 of the 16 goats were taken in Russell Fjord bears monitoring. Efforts will be made to fly aerial surveys in this area in fall 1999.

Segment Period Project Costs:

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	28.4	13.6	42.0
Actual	32.5	18.0	50.5
Difference	-4.1	-4.4	-8.5

Explanation: The acting area biologist and the new assistant area biologist spent more staff time than planned on goat management in the Ketchikan area. The mountain goat surveys cost more than we had anticipated.

Submitted by:

Bruce Dinneford
Management Coordinator

Project Title: Southcentral Alaska Mountain Goat Management

Project Location: Unit 6 (10,150 mi²)
Prince William Sound and north Gulf Coast

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a minimum population of 2400 goats and no less than 70% males in the harvest.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We surveyed 17 mountain goat count areas in a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service. A total of 1281 goats were seen, with 191 (13%) kids. Maximum allowable harvest was set at 102 goat units for the 1998-99 season. Billies were counted as 1 goat unit, and nannies were counted as 2 goat units.

We issued 270 registration permits to hunters for 13 different hunt areas, including Unit 6C, which had been closed since 1989. One hundred thirty-nine hunters harvested 75 goats (including 2 not recovered), totaling 86 goat units. Harvest composition was 62 males (85%) and 22 females (15%). Three hunt areas were closed by emergency order when the maximum allowable harvest was reached.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The population was well above our objective. We estimated 3660 goats in fall 1998. Numbers were increasing in Units 6B and 6D and were stable in Units 6A and 6C.

Male proportion of the harvest was also above our objective. Ongoing educational efforts designed to encourage hunters to select males are needed for continued success. All goat hunters received an information leaflet that presented methods of differentiating sexes of goats at a distance and explained the benefits of selectively harvesting males.

Project Location: Units 7 and 15 (8,400 mi²)
Kenai Peninsula

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a pre-hunting population of at least 4000 to 4500 goats on the Kenai Peninsula.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, monitoring the results of permit hunts, and closing hunt areas as needed when harvest quotas have been reached.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We surveyed 8 count areas and 722 mountain goats were counted. Kids composed 19.9% of the population or 25 kids:100 adults.

Final harvest statistics were not available and preliminary results were reported. Hunters harvested 113 mountain goats on the Kenai Peninsula in 1998. Seventy-three goats (51 males, 22 females) were harvested from 26 open areas during the 10 August to 30 September drawing permit hunt. Thirty-six goats (23 males, 12 females, and 1 unknown) were taken from 10 hunt areas during the 15 October to 30 November registration permit hunt. Two of these hunts were restricted to Archery hunters. Additionally, Tier II hunters took 3 male goats and 1 female goat

during the 1 August to 30 September season. The department issued 448 drawing permits, 430 registration permits, and 46 Tier II permits.

During the 1997 Board of Game meeting, the Board approved the department's plans to allow archery-only hunts during the late fall registration season. Archery hunts would take place only in those areas with a harvestable surplus and where a general all-weapon season is not practical. RG334 and RG339 were open only to bow hunters. Participation in these hunts was excellent with 109 permits issued and 5 goats harvested (3 males and 2 females).

Two emergency orders were issued closing registration hunts as harvest quotas were reached. Hunt areas RG333, RG346, and RG365 closed by emergency order No. 02-09-98 on October 27, 1998. Hunt areas RG334 and RG340 closed by emergency order No. 02-12-98 on November 21, 1998.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We estimated the current population size by summing the most recent surveys from individual count areas and adjusting for sightability. Latest counts totaled 2799 observed goats on the Kenai Peninsula, excluding Kenai Fjords National Park (KFNP). There are an estimated 800 to 1000 goats within the Kenai Fjords National Park boundaries. Including KFNP, we estimated between 3910 (assuming 90% observability +800 in KFNP) and 4999 goats (assuming 70% observability +1000 in KFNP) on the Kenai. The Kenai Peninsula mountain goat population declined slightly in 1998; however, we are still meeting our management objectives.

Current guidelines allow for a harvest rate of up to 7% of the most recent mountain goat surveys. We allow for a harvest goal of 6-7% for stable or increasing populations and 5% or less for depressed or recovering populations. The overall harvest rate in 1998 was approximately 3.9% of observable goats. The current permit system on the Kenai allows for an even distribution of goat harvests. No changes in mountain goat management are recommended.

Project Location: Unit 8 (8,750 mi²)
Kodiak and adjacent islands

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a pre hunting population of at least 700 goats that will sustain an annual harvest of >50% males.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Summer surveys were flown in much of the goat habitat of Kodiak Island; 608 goats were counted (491 adults, 117 kids). This is a kid:adult ratio of 24:100.

Hunters reported taking 70 goats (49 males, 21 females), the highest reported harvest ever recorded for Unit 8. We issued 168 drawing permits; 107 hunters went into the field, and hunter success was 65%. The harvest ranged from 3-16 goats from each of the 8 permit hunts.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The kid:adult ratio observed in 1998 (24:100) is somewhat higher than the average ratio noted during the previous 5 years (20:100). We surveyed 66% of the goat habitat on the island, and the population continued to be stable to increasing in 1998.

Management objectives are being achieved with current seasons and bag limits, and the drawing permit hunts. Increasing goat numbers in northeastern Kodiak prompted us to increase the number of permits in hunt DG478 (Chiniak Bay) from 8 to 15.

Project Location: Unit 11 (12,800 mi²)
Wrangell Mountains

Project Objectives and Activities:

- To allow the population to fluctuate as dictated by available habitat, climate conditions, and predation.
- Allow limited human harvests, with annual harvests averaging no more than 10% of the estimated population in harvest areas.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: The MacColl Ridge trend count area was surveyed for mountain goats on 16 June 1998 and 74 goats were observed. The 1998 count was 12% higher than the 1997 count ($n = 66$) and represents the highest total count on record. The percent kids in the observed population declined from 24 in 1997 to 20 in 1998. The 15 kids observed in 1998 is only 1 less than the 1997 count of 16, the highest kid count on record. The most recent population estimates for mountain goats in Unit 11 include approximately 400 animals north of the Chitina River and 300 to the south in the Chugach Range.

We issued registration permits to 48 individuals in 1998 and hunters harvested 17 goats. Success rate for the 29 permittees who hunted was 59%. The harvest included 12 billies (71%) and 5 nannies. Nonresidents took 8 goats (47%), nonlocal Alaska residents 5 (29%), while local residents took 4 (24%). All 17 (100%) successful hunters used aircraft for transportation. Successful permittees averaged 2.4 days hunting, compared to 4.2 days for unsuccessful hunters. Harvest chronology data shows that 75% ($n = 12$) of the harvest took place during the first 3 weeks of September, presumably by hunters on a combination sheep/mountain goat hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Mountain goat numbers and annual kid production on MacColl Ridge have increased for the last 3 years and are the highest ever observed. Overall in Unit 11 mountain goats are considered numerous only in limited areas where habitat conditions are favorable. The historic unit population estimate was 700 mountain goats. Recent survey data suggest a stable to slightly increasing population. Goat densities in Unit 11 are much lower than in areas with more favorable habitat (i.e., the Kenai Peninsula or Unit 6).

Mountain goat harvest statistics have been variable since registration hunts were initiated in 1980. Averages for 1980–97 include a harvest of 16 (range = 6–30), 34 hunters (range = 20–52), 47% success rate (range = 30–65%), and 66% males in the harvest (range = 23–92%). Unit 11 harvest is estimated to be 3% of the population, but localized harvests in accessible areas may approach 10% in some years.

The mountain goat population in Unit 11 seems capable of withstanding recent harvest levels without a decline in numbers if hunters do not concentrate all their effort in specific locations every year. Therefore, no immediate changes in season dates, bag limits, or registration hunt requirements are recommended. Harvest rates and goat populations for MacColl Ridge and Hawkins, Barnard, and Miles glaciers should be monitored yearly to assure hunters do not overharvest.

Project Location: Unit 13 (23,400 mi²)
Nelchina Basin

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Maintain viable populations controlled largely by available habitat, climate conditions, and predation.
- Harvest up to 5% of the Unit 13D population when survey data indicate a minimum of 100 goats are present in the subunit and when local, accessible populations are not overharvested.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Mountain goat surveys were not flown in Unit 13D during 1998. The latest surveys were flown in 1993 and 1995 when respective observations of 79 goats (21% kids) and 65 goats (23% kids) were recorded in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area.

Two drawing permit hunts are conducted for mountain goats in Unit 13. The boundary between hunt areas is the Klutina River with Hunt 718 west of the river and Hunt 719 east. Drawing permits were issued to 35 hunters who took 5 mountain goats (4 males and 1 female) in 1998. Sixteen permittees hunted, and the hunter success rate was 31%. Three (60%) successful hunters used highway vehicles, and 2 (40%) used an aircraft. Successful hunters averaged 3 days afield; unsuccessful hunters averaged 5.3 days. Three goats were harvested during August and 2 were taken during the September portion of the hunt. Resident Alaskans took 4 goats; nonresidents harvested 1 goat.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The number of mountain goats observed in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area declined by 17% between 1993 and 1995. Most of the decline was in the number of adults observed. Kid numbers remained high with 17 observed in 1993 and 15 in 1995. The 1995 kid count was the second highest in this area; the highest was in 1993. It is unlikely goat populations fluctuate as much as survey results indicate. Mountain goats are among

the most difficult big game animals to survey. Differences in survey results often reflect count conditions, not changes in goat numbers.

Current harvest rates are low and well dispersed, having little adverse effects on mountain goat numbers in Unit 13. The number of permits issued for both hunts has been limited to prevent overharvesting goats near popular airstrips. Such overharvests have not occurred. Also, airstrips are not located near mountain goat hunting areas east of the Klutina River and harvests from this area have been low. Permittees hunting mountain goats in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area must walk into the area, further limiting hunting effort. No changes in season length or bag limits are recommended.

Project Location: Unit 14 (6,600 mi²)
Upper Cook Inlet

Project Objectives and Activities:

Units 14A and 14B

The goat management objective for Units 14A and 14B (Talkeetna Mountains) is to allow the population to reach an observable minimum of 50 goats before allowing harvest, at which time annual harvest should not exceed 5% of observable goats and should comprise at least 60% males.

The goat management objective for Unit 14A (Chugach Mountains) is to maintain a minimum observable population of 60 goats, comprising at least 70% males, that will sustain an annual harvest of 7% of observable goats.

Unit 14C

The goat management objective for Unit 14C is to maintain a population of at least 500 goats that will sustain an annual harvest of 25 goats composed of at least 60% males. Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: In Unit 14A biologists counted 115 goats (22% kids) during Dall sheep aerial surveys in late July 1998. No goat surveys were conducted in Unit 14B during this period; however, only 17 goats were observed during a sheep/goat aerial survey in the Talkeetna Mountains in late July 1999.

In Unit 14C biologists counted 124 goats (23% kids) during Dall sheep aerial surveys in late July 1998. This is comparable to goat counts during sheep surveys in recent years. Goat surveys were not conducted in the Lake George and Twentymile River drainages, where most of the goats in the unit are found. Sixty-three goats (47 adults, 16 kids) were counted in the East Fork Eklutna drawing hunt area.

In Unit 14A 72 registration permits were issued, 36 hunters went afield, and 1 female and 6 male goats were harvested (19% hunter success). Goat hunting was not permitted in Unit 14B. In Unit 14C 2 registration permit hunt areas were available: the Twentymile River and Lake George areas. In the Twentymile River area, 73 permits were issued, 35 hunters went afield, and 4 male

and 3 female goats were harvested (20% hunter success). One hunter registered for the late season, archery-only hunt in the Twentymile River drainage but did not hunt. In the Lake George area, 75 permits were issued, 36 hunters went afield, and 11 male and 5 female goats were harvested (44% hunter success). One hunter registered for the late season, archery-only hunt in the Lake George drainage but did not hunt. In 2 drawing permit hunts in Unit 14C, 5 permits were issued for the East Fork Eklutna River drainage, 4 hunters went afield, and 2 harvested male goats. We issued 8 permits for the Glacier/Winner Creek drainages, 5 hunters went afield, and 1 harvested a female goat.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Survey and harvest results indicated management objectives were met. From limited observations in 1998, we believe goat numbers are comparable to those in 1995 when we conducted the last unitwide counts. Observed numbers of goats are well above the minimum population objectives in Units 14A and 14C.

Hunters harvested 7 goats in Unit 14A (Chugach Mountains), and 86% were males. Hunters harvested 26 goats in Unit 14C, and 65% were males.

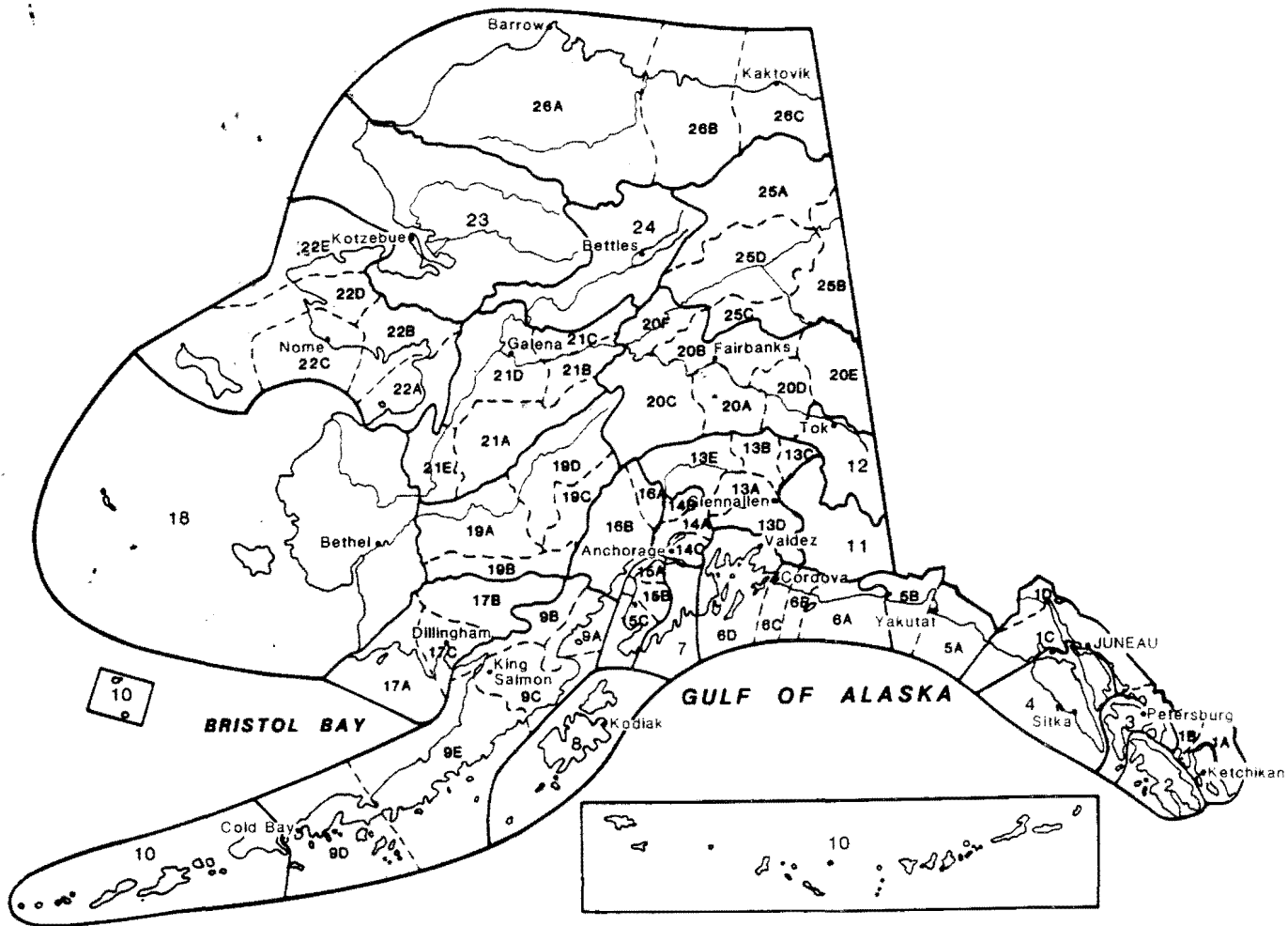
Segment Period Project Costs:

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	38.1	12.0	50.1
Actual	38.1	12.0	50.1
Difference	0.0	0.0	0.0

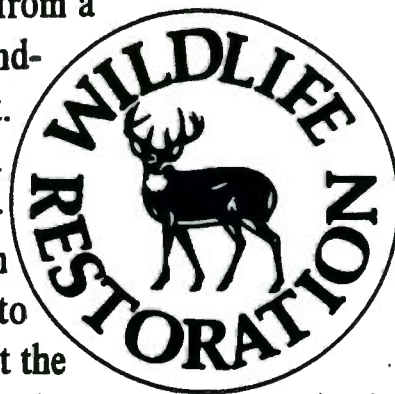
Submitted by:

Michael G. McDonald
Assistant Management Coordinator

Alaska's Game Management Units



The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program consists of funds from a 10% to 11% manufacturer's excise tax collected from the sales of handguns, sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and archery equipment. The Federal Aid program allots funds back to states through a formula based on each state's geographic area and number of paid hunting license holders. Alaska receives a maximum 5% of revenues collected each year. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game uses federal aid funds to help restore, conserve, and manage wild birds and mammals to benefit the public. These funds are also used to educate hunters to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for responsible hunting. Seventy-five percent of the funds for this report are from Federal Aid.



Costello