

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**MUSKOX
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
FEDERAL AID PERFORMANCE REPORT
(revised December 5, 2003)**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: W-33-1

PROJECT NR.: 16.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Regions 3 and 5

PERIOD: 1 July 2002–30 June 2003

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Muskoxen and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This statewide performance report includes the two regions involved in muskox survey and inventory activities. Regional activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

**The Status of Alaska Muskoxen and
Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region 3**

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Wrote an annual survey and inventory report.

Activity 2: Prepare a draft or finalize a musk ox management report.

Prepared a draft musk ox management report.

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game and advisory committees on muskox management.

Made presentations to the Board of Game and advisory committees as needed.

Activities by Unit

Units 26B and 26C

Activity 1: Conduct an April aerial survey in Unit 26B to estimate population size.

Conducted an aerial survey in Unit 26B and counted 300 muskoxen.

Activity 2: Conduct June composition counts in Unit 26B.

Conducted June composition counts in Unit 26B (n=175).

Activity 3: Monitor the results of the permit hunts in Unit 26B and analyze harvest data.

Monitored the results of the permit hunts in Unit 26B and analyzed harvest data. Six muskoxen were harvested.

Activity 4: Review information obtained by the USFWS on population size, sex and age composition in Unit 26C and on movements of radio-collared animals (all objectives).

Reviewed information obtained by the USFWS on population size, and sex and age composition in Unit 26C, and on movements of radiocollared animals.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project:

Unit 26B: captured and radiocollared 2 muskoxen.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$35.9

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Muskoxen and Factors Influencing their Populations in Region 5

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write a draft muskox management report.

Draft management reports were prepared by August 2003 and submitted to headquarters in September 2003.

Activity 2: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Performance report for Units 18, 22, and 23 were prepared August 2003 and submitted to headquarters in early September 2003

Activity 3: Provide information to the Board of Game on muskox management.

Unit 18, 22, 23, 26A: None required.

Activities by Unit

Unit 18

Activity 1: Conduct annual aerial censuses of the Nunivak and Nelson Island populations to estimate population size and determine age-sex composition.

We conducted an aerial census of Nunivak Island on 16-18 July 2002 and counted 527 muskoxen. On 3 August 2002 we counted 293 muskoxen on Nelson Island during an aerial census.

Activity 2: Monitor the population size, distribution, and dispersal of musk ox onto the mainland through location of radio-collared animals, harvest reporting, contacts with the public, and field observations.

No muskoxen have been radiocollared at this time in Unit 18. We had reports from the public of several groups of muskoxen on the mainland during the time period.

Activity 3: Monitor hunting and other mortality factors through harvest reporting, contacts with the public and field observations.

During this report period the harvest on Nelson Island was 14 cows and 13 bulls. The cow harvest on Nunivak Island was 44 animals and the bull harvest was 45.

Activity 4: Work with local Advisory Committees, village representatives, and other agencies to promote the establishment of a huntable muskox population on the mainland.

We discussed muskoxen at the Lower Kuskokwim, Central Bering Sea and Lower Yukon advisory committee meetings.

Activity 5: Work with local residents to rescue stranded muskoxen as needed and reduce kills of nuisance animals.

We did not need to take action with any stranded or nuisance muskox during the reporting period.

Activity 6: Continue to develop and utilize the ongoing cooperative muskox management plans (such as the *Nelson Island Musk ox Herd Cooperative Management Plan*) in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

We did not hold any public meetings other than the advisory committee meetings where muskoxen were discussed during the reporting period.

Units 22 and 23SW (the portion of Unit 23 west of and including the Buckland River drainage)

Activity 1: Participate in Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Group meetings and facilitate exchange of information and ideas between agencies and user groups.

The Muskox Cooperators Group did not meet during this reporting period. The next scheduled cooperators meeting is September 2003.

Activity 2: Manage muskoxen along the road system in Units 22B and 22C primarily for viewing, education, and other non-consumptive uses, and secondarily for hunting.

Seasons and hunt areas in Units 22B, 22C, and southern 22D, were established to minimize hunting disturbances to the most-viewed herds near Nome and those along the road system. No hunting is allowed near the most accessible herds in the vicinity of Nome. Along the road system, seasons are delayed until roads were generally closed by snowfall. Thus hunting occurs in the winter and does not conflict with road-based viewing.

Department staff uses in person interviews and the ADF&G muskoxen website to orientate public on muskox identification, and sex and age classification.

Activity 3: Work with local reindeer herders to identify and minimize conflicts between reindeer and muskoxen in an effort to conserve muskoxen and allow for population growth and expansion.

Activities related to reindeer herding occurred in Units 22 and 23SW. Nome staff attended the annual Reindeer Herders Association meeting and discussed the herders' concerns about wildlife issues, but muskoxen were not brought up for discussion.

Activity 4: Encourage cooperation and sharing of information among agencies and users of the resource in developing and executing management and research programs.

Nome staff works closely with BLM and NPS staff to coordinate hunt administration and management activities.

Units 23NW, and 26A

Activity 1: Census muskox annually in Unit 23 NW (Cape Thompson population)

We were unable to conduct a census during this reporting period.

Activity 2: Census and conduct muskox composition surveys annually in eastern Unit 26A (ANWR population).

We flew composition surveys of muskoxen west of the Itkillik River in late June. We classified 71 by sex and age, including 24% calves and 8% yearlings. We found one instance of a multiple muskox kill by a bear and other single kills along the Colville River.

Activity 3: Conduct muskox distribution surveys periodically (every 2-3 years) in selected portions of Unit 26A to document range expansion of the population.

Transects were flown in western Unit 26A to try to locate a group of 25 muskoxen that were seen near Point Lay the previous fall, but they were not found.

Activity 4: Use public education to improve understanding of the conservation value of hunting regulations and obtain better harvest data through increased harvest reporting.

Muskox management was discussed with advisory committees and local residents of Unit 23 and Unit 26A, and with the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee.

Activity 5: Encourage cooperation and information exchange among agencies and muskox user groups to develop and implement management objectives.

We continued to work with the North Slope Muskox Working Group, which is made up of representatives from villages and agencies that meet to discuss issues and make recommendations concerning management of muskoxen on the North Slope. The status of muskox in Unit 23 was discussed with Advisory Committees.

Activity 6: Record reported sightings of muskoxen, particularly mixed-sex groups as an indicator of range expansion.

Observations of muskoxen reported by the public and opportunistic observations by department staff were recorded and mapped. A mixed sex group of approximately 25 muskoxen moved from Unit 23 to Unit 26A, near the village of Point Lay during the summer of 2002. This may indicate a substantial range expansion for the Cape Thompson population.

Activity 7: Evaluate whether musk ox population growth will adversely affect resident reindeer and caribou populations.

No studies were conducted to determine impact of muskoxen on reindeer or caribou.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$68.2

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Management Coordinator

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):

State Share = \$ 26.1 Federal Share = \$78 Total Costs = \$104.1