

**FEDERAL AID  
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**WOLF  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY  
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-33-1

**PROJECT NR.:** 14.0

**WORK LOCATION:** Statewide

**PROJECT LOCATIONS:** Game Management Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2002–30 June 2003

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

**REPORT DESCRIPTION:** This statewide performance report includes the four regions involved in wolf survey and inventory activities. Statewide and regional activities are listed before specific activities by herd and game management unit.

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

**Regionwide Activities**

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

This draft satisfies the activity described.

Activity 2: Draft an annual survey and inventory management report.

The 3-year wolf management report was completed in spring 2003 and submitted to headquarters.

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

During the report period, staff testified before the Board of Game regarding 6 regulatory proposals specific to Region I wolves.

Activity 4: Seal harvested wolf pelts that are presented for sealing.

Area staff, other ADF&G staff, FWP troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed wolf pelts during the regulatory year.

Activity 5: Obtain an age structure of the wolves harvested through examination of foreleg bones attached to pelts presented for sealing.

Area staff aged leg bones from Region I wolves that were submitted for sealing.

Activity 6: Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including use of the statewide trapper questionnaire.

This was done throughout the region as opportunities permitted.

## **Activities by Unit**

### **Unit 2**

Activity 1: Use data generated from ongoing Unit 2 wolf research and standard population modeling techniques to estimate the pre-season number of wolves on Prince of Wales Island.

Ketchikan area staff used leg bone ages, research data, and modeling to estimate Unit 2 wolf population parameters.

Activity 2: Calculate when 30% of the Unit 2 wolves have been harvested based on in-season sealing, and keep the harvest within harvest guideline level.

Ketchikan area staff tracked the winter 2002 wolf harvest. Analysis showed that it would not be necessary to close the season early to keep the harvest within the 30% harvest guideline level.

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

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$3.1**

**Submitted by: Dale Rabe, Management Coordinator**

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

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

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

A total of 335 wolves were taken in Region 2 during this reporting period

Activity 3: Prepare annual survey and inventory performance report.

Activity 4: Prepare a wolf management report.

Draft wolf management reports were submitted in spring 2003.

Activity 5: Conduct systematic aerial transect surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Surveys were conducted in Units 11 and 13 during this reporting period.

Activity 6: Provide information to the Board of Game on wolf management.

The Board of Game addressed wolf proposals for region 2 during its spring 2001 meeting.

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### **Activities by Unit**

#### **Unit 6**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations; fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

The preliminary 2002–03 harvest was:

Harvest results: 3 males and 1 female.

#### **Units 7 and 15**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Harvest for 2002–03: Total harvest - 45

Unit 7 –14, Unit 15A –4, Unit 15B –8 Unit 15C -19

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

All pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with *Trichodectes canis*. Pelt damage varied from extreme, generally on pups, to mild on adults.

### **Units 9 and 10**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations; fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

The preliminary wolf harvest for 2002–03 was 21 including 1 illegally taken in Unit 9 and none from Unimak Island. Poor snow conditions hampered travel and hampered trapping effort.

### **Units 11 and 13**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations; fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

The preliminary 2002–03 harvest was:

Unit 13	139 wolves
Unit 11	22 wolves

Activity 2: Conduct surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Preliminary Fall 2002 Estimates:

Unit 13	422 wolves	71 packs
Unit 11	115 wolves	14 packs

### **Unit 14**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations; fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

14A	Males-11	Females-4	Unknown-0	Total-15
14B	Males -6	Females -9	Unknown -0	Total-15
14C	Males -0	Females -0	Unknown -0	Total-0
Unit 14 Total	Males -17	Females -13	Unknown -0	Total-30

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There were at least two cases of lice found on wolves taken in 14B. Two other wolves exhibited hair loss not consistent with lice and may have been “Samson” wolves.

**Unit 16**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations; fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Trappers reported poor travel conditions throughout most of the trapping season. Preliminary harvest for 2002-03 is reported.

16A	Males -4	Females -2	Unknown -1	Total-7
16B	Males -16	Females -20	Unknown -3	Total-39
Unit 16 Total	Males -20	Females -22	Unknown -4	Total-46

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There was one case of lice on a wolf pelt sealed this season from Unit 16A.

**Unit 17**

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations; fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Results- 28 Wolves reported harvested in 2002-03.

**Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project: None**

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$21.0**

Extremely poor conditions preclude most surveys.

**Submitted by: Michael G McDonald, Assistant Management Coordinator**

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

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity 1: Prepare a draft or finalize a wolf management report.

Wrote a draft wolf management report.

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

Wrote an annual survey and inventory report for all units

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

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

### **Activities by Unit**

#### **Unit 12**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed wolf pelts as presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, analyzed harvest data.

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

Monitored the harvest of wolves through trapper interviews and pelt sealing. Preliminary harvest=54 wolves by 19 trappers.

#### **Units 19, 21A, and 21E**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and coordinated with local Fish and Wildlife Protection officers to seal wolves in outlying areas. Analyzed harvest data.

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

Monitored preliminary reported harvest of 105, 4, and 6 wolves in Units 19, 21A, and 21E, respectively, through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters. Harvest was sustainable below an annual harvest rate of 30% in all

subunits - only in 19D East did wolf harvest approach the upper end of our objective (26%). Assessed body condition and reproductive parameters in 29 wolves harvested in 19D East.

Activity 3: Conduct population estimation surveys in Units 19A and 19B.

Did not conduct population estimation surveys in Unit 19A and 19B because of poor survey conditions.

### **Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F, and 25C**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

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

Monitored the harvest of wolves through trapper interviews and pelt sealing (preliminary harvest=209 wolves).

Activity 3: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not conduct aerial wolf population estimates due to lack of snow.

### **Unit 20D**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

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

Monitored the preliminary harvest of 27 wolves through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Activity 3: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in northern Unit 20D.

Conducted 13.3 hours of aerial surveys during winter to estimate the wolf population in portions of Unit 20D.

### **Unit 20E**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed wolf pelts as presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, analyzed harvest data.

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

Monitored the harvest of wolves through trapper interviews and pelt sealing. Preliminary harvest=28 wolves by 14 trappers.

Activity 3: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in western Unit 20E.

Conducted aerial wolf population estimation in southwest, southcentral, and southeast Unit 20E (about 2,600 mi<sup>2</sup> area). Estimated density was 8.9 wolves/1000 km<sup>2</sup> (23.1 wolves/1000 mi<sup>2</sup>).

Activity 4: Monitor radiocollared wolves to determine range use, natality and mortality.

Monitored radiocollared wolves to determine range use, natality and mortality.

### **Units 21B, 21C, 21D**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

In combination with Unit 24, sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

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

In combination with Unit 24, monitored the harvest of 133 wolves, interviewed 40 trappers,

Activity 3: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in cooperation with USFWS.

Did not conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys because of poor survey conditions.

Activity 4: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

Encouraged participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire during trapper interviews and during wolf snaring clinics held in Nulato and Galena.

### **Unit 24**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

In combination with Units 21B, C, and D, sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

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

In combination with Units 21B, C, and D, monitored the harvest of 133 wolves, interviewed 40 trappers, sealed wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data



Activity 3: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in cooperation with USFWS.

Did not conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys because of poor survey conditions.

Activity 4: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

Encouraged participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers presented pelts for sealing.

**Units 25A, 25B, 25D, 26B, and 26C**

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Sealed 35 wolf pelts and analyzed harvest data.

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

Monitored the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Activity 3: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in Units 25D and 25B.

Did not conduct aerial population estimation surveys in Unit 25D because of poor survey conditions. Completed a survey in Unit 26B, observed twenty three wolves in 10 groups.

**Other activities funded by federal aid on this project:**

Unit 19D: collected carcasses from trappers to assess relative body condition, age structure of the harvest and reproductive parameters from mature females. Purchased and processed 25 wolf carcasses, no reproductive age females were analyzed.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$88.7**

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

## **The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing their Population Status in Region V**

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity 1: Write a draft management report for muskox in the region.

A draft management report was 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, 23, and 26A were prepared August 2003 and submitted to headquarters in early September 2003.

Activity 2: Provide information to the Board of Game on wolf management.

Unit 18. Information regarding wolves was presented to the local advisory committees as they deliberated submitting a proposal to change allowable methods and means for harvesting wolves in Unit 18. Their proposal will be considered by the Board of Game in November 2003.

Units 22, 23, 26A: None required.

Activity 3: Maintain the wolf sealing program in all Units to monitor harvests.

Unit 18: We recruited sealers in the villages through letters and telephone contacts, responded to requests for supplies and answered sealer questions, and assigned the fur sealer support duties to a seasonal administrative clerk.

Unit 22: The Nome office supplied sealing agents with fur seals and sealing certificates, answered procedural questions, and processed fur sealing certificates for payment. Wolves taken in the Nome area were sealed by department staff.

Unit 23: Wolves taken in Unit 23 were sealed by ADF&G and DPS staff. The Kotzebue office supplied sealing agents with fur seals, sealing certificates and instruction when necessary.

Unit 26A: Wolves taken in Unit 26A were sealed by ADF&G staff. The Barrow office supplied sealing agents with fur seals, sealing certificates and instruction when necessary.

Activity 4: Distribute the annual trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information after formulation by headquarters.

Unit 18: We sent out questionnaires to trappers and await their responses. Trappers who brought furs in for sealing and returned trapper questionnaires consider the number of wolves in Unit 18 to be high and we agree with that assessment.

Unit 22: A summary of furbearer harvest and abundance in Unit 22 was written for the Trapper Questionnaire annual report. A list of active Unit 22 furbearer hunter/trappers was compiled, a cover letter was written and trapper questionnaires were sent from the Juneau office.

Unit 23: The statewide trapper questionnaire was sent to trappers in Unit 23. Results were reported in the annual report (organized by region rather than Game Management Unit).

Unit 26A: We attached a letter explaining the state trapper questionnaire and sent it to several trappers in Unit 26A. We examined the results and read the comments from the trappers.

Activity 5: Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Units 18, 22, 23: No progress was made toward this objective during this reporting period.

Unit 26A: We discussed desired population objectives for wolves in Unit 26A with members of the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee and they indicated that they were satisfied with the current population.

Activity 6: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Unit 18: We continue to contribute articles to one of the local newspapers and include occasional articles dealing with wolves. At the start of trapping season, we sent posters to the area post offices explaining sealing requirements. We regularly receive phone calls from the public and answer questions during public meetings regarding wolves.

Unit 22: We explained at public meetings the reason for and importance of harvest reporting.

Unit 23: Department of Public Safety staff traveled to villages in Unit 23 to seal wolves and inform residents of sealing requirements.

Unit 26A: We made Public Service Announcements on the radio, and told many people personally, that everyone was required by law to have their furs sealed, and that tanneries wouldn't accept furs that were not sealed.

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## **Activities by Unit**

### **Unit 18**

Activity 1: Monitor wolf harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, interviews with village residents, and annual hunter/trapper questionnaires.

Wolf harvest was light during this reporting period with only 12 wolves sealed. This is due to low snow conditions throughout the winter and low hunter and trapper effort.

Activity 2: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, and observations by staff and the public.

According to local hunters, the wolf population remains high and we suspect that this assessment is correct, but due to low snow conditions which prevented normal winter field work, we are unable to corroborate this impression.

Activity 3: Assess the effects of wolf predation on prey populations through field observations and interviews with hunters/trappers.

Hunters, particularly in the St. Marys area, reported numerous wolf killed moose during this reporting period, particularly calves.

Activity 4: Provide public education regarding wolves through the media, during public meetings, and other opportunities.

We continue to contribute articles to one of the local newspapers and include occasional articles dealing with wolves. We also regularly address wolf predation issues during various public meetings.

## **Unit 22**

Activity 1: Monitor wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and Community-based Harvest Assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 22 sealing records show a harvest of 21 wolves: 3 from Unit 22A, 16 from Unit 22B, 1 from Unit 22C, 1 from Unit 22D, and 0 from Unit 22E. Big Game surveys completed in Unalakleet and Stebbins show 6 additional wolves taken in Unalakleet, and 5 additional wolves taken in Stebbins.

Activity 2: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Wolf densities were highest in Units 22A and eastern 22B, but harvest data and observations by staff and local residents indicate wolves are becoming more numerous in all parts of the unit. Trapper surveys from Units 22A and 22B reported that wolves were common; however, it is possible wolf numbers are beginning to decrease in areas of Unit 22A because of the lack of wintering caribou during 3 of the last 4 years. Wolf densities appear to be increasing in western Unit 22B and in Unit 22D where increasing pack sizes of 6 or more wolves have been reported. Anecdotal evidence also suggests wolf numbers are increasing in Unit 22C. The increase in wolves on the Seward Peninsula is probably due to the large number of Western Arctic Herd caribou that have wintered here since 1996.

Activity 3: Cooperate with reindeer herders to evaluate methods for reducing adverse interactions between wolves and reindeer.

Nome staff participated in two Reindeer Herder Association meetings and addressed the herders' concerns about wildlife issues, but wolves were not brought up for discussion.

## **Units 23 and 26A**

Activity 1: Monitor wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and big game harvest surveys conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 23: Fifty nine wolves (28 males, 19 females and 12 unknown sex) were reported taken in Unit 23. Fifty one of these wolves were taken by residents of Unit 23. Nonlocal Alaskan residents took 6 wolves and 2 were taken by nonresidents. Fifty five wolves were shot and 4 were trapped. Fifty one wolves were taken using snow machines, 5 using planes and 3 using boats for transportation.

Unit 26A: We sealed wolves and examined sealing reports from Unit 26A and found that 5 wolves were sealed in 2002-2003. Sealing certificates indicated that 2 of these were males and 3 were females. Two of the trappers were local residents and 2 were nonresidents, and they reported that all were ground-shot. Two used aircraft and 2 used snowmachines for access. Four wolves were gray and 1 was black..

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Unit 26A during late winter to assess population status.

No aerial surveys were conducted for wolves in Unit 23. We attempted a wolf count in Unit 26A but weather interfered. We will attempt another aerial survey for wolves during the spring of 2004.

Activity 3: Record wolf sightings during moose censuses in Units 23 and 26A as an indicator of wolf population trends.

The location and number of wolves observed opportunistically in Unit 23 were recorded. In Unit 26A we spotted 4 wolves during the spring moose census in 2002-2003.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project: None.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$5.0**

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

**Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):**

**State Share = \$ 29.45      Federal Share = \$ 88.35      Total Costs = \$ 117.8**