

**FEDERAL AID
FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**WOLF
SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: W-33-5

PROJECT NR.: 14.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2006 – 30 June 2007

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

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

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes wolf survey and inventory activities. Region-wide activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

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

Region-wide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Information on wolf harvest and management was supplied to state and federal regulatory bodies in response to proposals to change regulations within the region. This included one proposal to the State Board of Game and one proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing.

Area staff, other ADF&G staff, Alaska Wildlife Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed wolf pelts during the regulatory year. About 142 wolf pelts were sealed from the region.

ACTIVITY 3: Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including the use of an annual trapper survey.

This work was done throughout the region as opportunities permitted.

Activities by Unit

Unit 2

ACTIVITY 1: Use data generated from an ongoing wolf research radio-telemetry research project in the area and standard population modeling techniques to estimate the pre-season number of wolves on Prince of Wales Island.

The wolf research project is now in the writing phase and there are no wolves carrying radio collars. There are no wolves monitored as part of the research project making it impossible to produce an accurate and current Unit 2 wolf population estimate.

ACTIVITY 2: Closely monitor wolf harvest during seasons through information gathered during sealing process.

We continue to monitor the wolf harvest using both in-season sealing records and also by regular contacts with the sealers and trappers.

Submitted by: Dale L. Rabe, Region I Management Coordinator

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

Region-wide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare a triennial regional wolf management report.

Unit 6: Prepared a triennial regional wolf report.

ACTIVITY 2 & 3: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit 6: Collected harvest data from four wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 3: Monitored wolf harvest and pack size through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit 7 & 15: 2006/07 preliminary harvest: 26 wolves; Unit 7 = 7, Subunit 15A = 5, Subunit 15B = 2, Subunit 15C = 12.

ACTIVITY 4: Conduct aerial transect surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Unit 6: Aerial transect surveys conducted on 220 square miles in Unit 6C indicated 5 to 6 wolves in two packs.

ACTIVITY 5: Develop population estimates using the "Sample Unit Probability Estimator" (SUPE) technique in select areas.

Poor weather precluded planned wolf track survey. Other surveys were not funded.

Activities by Unit

Units 7, 13, 14, 15 and 16

ACTIVITY 1: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

Units 7 and 15: Most pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with *Trichodectes canis*.

Submitted by: Gino DelFrate, Region II Management Coordinator

The Status of Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region III

Region-wide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Provide wolf management information to State and Federal regulatory processes.

Provided information to 15 state fish and game advisory committees and 2 Federal regional advisory councils.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected harvest data when 494 wolf pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 3: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored harvest of 494 wolves through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contacts with trappers and hunters.

Activities by Unit

Unit 12

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter to estimate wolf population in northern Unit 12.

Conducted approximately 5 hours of aerial wolf survey in northern Unit 12 to help establish a wolf population estimate.

Units 19, 21A, 21E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct an aerial wolf population estimation survey in Unit 19A

Planned to conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in Unit 19A but poor weather/survey conditions prevented completion.

Unit 20A

ACTIVITY 1: Monitor, capture, euthanize, or treat up to 10 injured or diseased wolves.

Monitored 1-4 wolves in 11-12 packs, captured 27 wolves, euthanize 8 wolves, and radio-tracked wolves approximately every 10 days. Two wolves died as a result of capture.

Unit 20D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter to estimate the wolf population in portions of Unit 20D

Conducted approximately 30 hours of aerial wolf surveys.

Unit 20E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial surveys during winter to estimate the wolf population

Conducted approximately 40 hours of aerial wolf surveys in Unit 20E to help establish a wolf population estimate.

Units 21B, 21C, 21D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in cooperation with USFWS.

Did not conduct survey due to inadequate survey conditions.

ACTIVITY 2: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

In combination with Unit 24, mailed 162 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 15 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

Unit 24

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys in cooperation with USFWS.

Did not conduct survey due to inadequate survey conditions.

ACTIVITY 2: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

In combination with Unit 21B, 21C and 21D, mailed 162 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 15 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

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

The Status of Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region V

Region-wide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Provide information to State and Federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented wolf 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 wolf sealing process.

The area offices in Barrow, Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome maintained agents throughout villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates. Staff supported 29 fur sealers in Unit 18, 18 in Unit 22, 5 in Unit 23, and 5 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 3: Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

A general summary of wolf harvest and abundance for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A was written for the Trapper Questionnaire annual report. A list of active hunter/trappers was compiled, a cover letter was written, and trapper questionnaires with annual reports were sent from the Juneau office.

ACTIVITY 4: Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Unit 22: During Advisory Committee and Regional Advisory Council meetings and a public meeting in Unalakleet, staff discussed the desirability of reducing wolf numbers in Unit 22A to aid in moose population recovery.

ACTIVITY 5: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Staff discussed sealing and harvest reporting with trappers/hunters, and the public. During public meetings we explained the importance of harvest reports and encouraged trappers to report their harvest.

Unit 18

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

We monitored Unit 18 wolf harvests using fur sealing data for the 2006–2007 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 21 wolves.

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

Sealing data as well as observations by staff and public indicate that the Unit 18 wolf harvest is generally increasing. Winter weather, specifically snow conditions that are favorable for travel by snowmachine, plays a major role in harvest. The wolf population is increasing throughout Unit 18 as prey populations, particularly moose, increase and this is corroborated by hunter/trapper interviews, observations by staff and the public, and opportunistic track sightings made during aerial work for other species.

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

Hunters/trappers frequently comment during interviews that wolves are having a negative impact on moose populations and other prey species. However, moose populations are probably still growing throughout Unit 18, but the Mulchatna caribou herd is declining. The extent to which wolf predation contributes to the caribou decline is not known.

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

We discussed wolf numbers, regulations and management at the three Advisory meetings and with numerous trappers and hunters during this reporting period.

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.

Sealing records show a harvest of 25 wolves: 3 from Unit 22A, 14 from Unit 22B, 1 from Unit 22C, 7 from Unit 22D, and 1 from Unit 22E.

ACTIVITY 2: Assess population status and trends utilizing track surveys, sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, Community-based Harvest Assessments and observations by staff and the public.

Staff and local hunters report that wolves were scarce in Central Unit 22A this winter which is attributed to caribou wintering further north in the Nulato Hills. Wolves in Unit 22 are most abundant in areas where large numbers of caribou are wintering and during this reporting period that was in northern Unit 22A and eastern Unit 22B.

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

Nome staff participated in the annual Reindeer Herders Association meeting and addressed the herders' concerns about wildlife issues. Herders are concerned with the effect of increasing wolf numbers around their remaining diminished reindeer herds.

Units 23 and 26A

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 23: Sealing information for wolves taken in Unit 23 during this reporting period was not available at the time of this report.

Unit 26A: Sealing certificates indicated that only 2 wolves were sealed in 2006–2007. Both were males. Both were shot. A snogo was used as transportation for one and foot travel for the other. One was taken by a resident of Unit 26A and one by a nonresident.

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

Due to poor snow conditions, a sample unit probability estimate (SUPE) survey was not conducted.

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

Unit 23: Tracks and opportunistic observations of wolves indicated numbers were generally high during this reporting period compared to previous years.

Unit 26A: During the April 2007 spring moose count in the Colville trend area, 17 wolves were seen in approximately 7 hours of flying. Eight wolves were seen in approximately 14 hours of flying in 2006, indicating that wolf numbers are probably increasing in the area.

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Region V Management Coordinator