

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
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**WOLF
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-6

PROJECT NO. 14.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2007 – 30 June 2008

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

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

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

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: 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 95 wolf pelts were sealed from the region.

ACTIVITY 2: 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.

Unit 2:

ACTIVITY 1: 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: Neil Barten, Region I Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1 AND 2: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers, monitor wolf harvest through field observations, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit 6: Collected harvest data from seven wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. Recorded wolf and track observations during moose surveys.

Units 7 and 15: Forty wolves were taken by trappers and hunters

Unit 9: Preliminary Wolf Harvest - 88 Wolves

Unit 10: 0 Wolves harvested.

Unit 11: 23 wolves harvested. No lice were reported or found.

Unit 13: 90 wolves harvested.

Unit 17: 71 wolves were reported killed (45 males, 26 females).

ACTIVITY 3: Conduct aerial surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

No surveys were conducted due to budgetary and/or weather constraints. When surveys are not completed, wolf populations are monitored incidental to other wildlife surveys and through conversations with hunters.

ACTIVITY 4: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.

Units 7 and 15: No SUPE surveys were conducted due to budgetary constraints.

Unit 17: No SUPE was scheduled or conducted.

Units 7 and 15:

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

Most pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with lice.

Unit 13:

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

No lice reported or found.

Submitted by: Bruce Bartley

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

Regionwide Activities:

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

Monitored preliminary harvest of 365 wolves through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contacts with trappers and hunters.

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

Collected harvest data when 365 wolf pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 3: Provide wolf management information to State and Federal regulatory processes.

Provided information to 15 State fish and game advisory committees, the Alaska Board of Game, and 2 Federal regional advisory councils.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 12:

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

Conducted approximately 6 hours of aerial wolf survey in northern Unit 12 to help establish a wolf population estimate.

Units 19:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct an aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted an aerial wolf survey in Unit 19A during February 2008 and found 74 wolves in 17 packs.

Unit 20A, 20B, 25C:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not conduct aerial wolf surveys due to poor survey conditions.

Unit 20D:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted approximately 45 hours of aerial wolf surveys.

Unit 20E:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys

Conducted approximately 15 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.

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 163 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 15 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

Unit 24:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

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 163 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 15 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

Units 25D, 25B:

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Did not conduct survey due to inadequate survey conditions.

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

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

Regionwide 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 designated fur sealers in villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates. Staff supported 32 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 6 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.

During Advisory Committee, Regional Advisory Council, and other public meetings, staff discussed wolf numbers and their potential impacts on prey species as part of the process to update population objectives.

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 2007–2008 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 55 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.

Unit 22 sealing records show a harvest of 18 wolves: 1 from Unit 22A, 11 from Unit 22B, 3 from Unit 22C, 2 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 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 26(A): Sealing certificates indicated that 9 wolves were sealed in 2007–2008; five were males and 4 were females. Eight were ground shot and 1 was trapped. Snogos were used as transportation for one and airplanes for 2. All the wolves were gray. Seven wolves were taken by 4 residents of Unit 26A and 2 wolves were taken by 2 nonresidents.

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

We flew a wolf reconnaissance survey on April 7-10, 2008. We surveyed a 17,800 km² area that included the Killik River drainage to the west, Anaktuvuk River Drainages to the east, the Colville River drainage to the north, and the 68° 17' latitude line to the south. We spotted 59 wolves and found fresh tracks for 19 more. The calculated density of observed wolves was 3.3 /1000 km² and 4.4/1000 km² for observed wolves plus wolf tracks. This indicates a substantial increase for wolf numbers in that area.

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 26(A): During the April 2008 spring moose census, 68 wolves were seen in approximately 17 hours of flying. Eight wolves were seen in approximately 14 hours of flying in 2006, indicating that wolf numbers have increased substantially in the area.

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Survey and Inventory Coordinator, Region V