

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
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**WOLF
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-7

PROJECT NO. 1.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009

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: Prepare biennial management reports.

Wolf management reports were written and submitted for each unit and sub-unit within the region where wolves occur. These reports provide updated harvest and management information through RY 2008.

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 146 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 1C

ACTIVITY 1: Continue to monitor the black wolf on Mendenhall Lake through conversations with public and communication with the USFS.

For the 6th consecutive winter, the black wolf was a daily visitor to Mendenhall Lake. Douglas area staff monitored the situation closely and worked cooperatively with the USFS to assure the public behaved appropriately around the wolf.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor wolves in Berners Bay through the use of downloadable GPS radio collars.

Telemetry flights to locate these wolves provided area staff with information on pack size, color, and general home range size of the wolves in Berners Bay.

Submitted by: Neil L. Barten, Region I Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY 1 & 2: 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 eight wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Units 7 & 15: Collected harvest data from 38 wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Unit 9: Collected harvest data from 49 wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Unit 10: No wolves were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Unit 11: Collected harvest data from 16 wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Unit 13: Collected harvest data from 119 wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Unit 14: Collected harvest data from seven wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. The harvest in 14A was four males and two females; in 14B it was one male and in 14C it was zero.

Unit 16: Collected harvest data from 43 wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. The harvest was one male and seven females in 16A and 19 males and 16 females in 16B. Of the eight wolves taken in Unit 16A, three (two males, one female) were taken by Unit 16 SDA wolf-control permittees. Of the 35 wolves taken in Unit 16B, 21 (10 males, 11 females) were taken by same-day-airborne (SDA) permitted wolf-control pilots and shooters in conjunction with the department's on-going wolf control program in Unit 16.

Unit 17: Collected harvest data from 71 wolves (39 males, 32 females) presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

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

Unit 6: Recorded wolf and track observations during moose surveys.

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

Unit 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16 and 17: 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 6-11 and 13-17: No SUPE surveys were conducted due to budgetary constraints.

ACTIVITY 5: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

Unit 6: All pelts brought in by hunters and trappers are visually inspected during the sealing process. Some pelts are submitted for further analysis if suspected of a parasite infestation.

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

Unit 9: Most pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with lice.

Unit 10: No pelts were brought in for examination.

Unit 11: No pelts were found to be infested with lice.

Unit 13: No pelts were found to be infested with lice.

Unit 14: Pelts examined during this reporting period showed no signs of being infested with lice.

Unit 16: There were no confirmed cases of lice or evidence of lice on wolves sealed this season from Unit 16B, although a pilot suspected one case. There were no confirmed cases of lice from Unit 16A.

Unit 17: No cases of lice or evidence of lice reported or found on wolves sealed this season.

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare a wolf management report.

Prepared wolf management reports.

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

Monitored preliminary harvest of 574 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 574 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 wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted partial 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 no wolf survey due to lack of funding.

Unit 20A, 20B, 25C

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Completed aerial wolf population estimation survey in Unit 20A in March (preliminary estimate 224-229 wolves during fall 2008).

Unit 20D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted a spring-2009 wolf survey for approximately 47.5 hours of survey time.

Unit 20E

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Conducted aerial wolf survey in Unit 20E to help establish a spring wolf population estimate of 114 wolves.

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 162 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 5 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

Unit 24

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Survey not conducted 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 5 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

Units 25D, 25B, 26B, 26C

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial wolf population estimation surveys.

Completed an aerial wolf survey in the western portion of GMU 25D (survey area=8,580 mi²; estimated population=98-120).

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: Prepare triennial regional wolf management reports.

A wolf management report was prepared during this reporting period.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 3: 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 27 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 6 in Unit 23, and 3 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 4: 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 5: 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 6: 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: Complete a population estimate in the Paimiut moose census area to determine wolf density and estimate predation rates on moose in this census area.

No surveys were flown during the reporting period because of poor weather and limited aircraft availability.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 2008–2009 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 28 wolves.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 4: 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.

We received several reports of high moose mortality in March and April of 2009 on the Yukon River. We flew in early April of 2009 to evaluate snow conditions and document wolf kills from St. Marys upriver to between Russian Mission and Paimiut. We observed several wolf kills, but did not see what we considered an unusual number of kills or wolf activity.

ACTIVITY 5: 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 Committee 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 24 wolves: 4 from Unit 22A, 13 from Unit 22B, 3 from Unit 22C, and 4 from Unit 22E. One male wolf was taken in Defense of Life or Property (DLP) in Unit 22C for getting into a resident dog lot. The head was sent into the State Virology Lab for rabies testing with the test result being negative.

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 22E and eastern Unit 22B.

Nome staff will complete a wolf survey in Units 22B and 22C in spring 2010 in response to interest from the Reindeer Herders Association. The department will continue to make observations on wolf and track sightings within Unit 22.

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 have been concerned with increasing wolf numbers and their effect on remaining diminished reindeer herds. Wolf harvest trends and sighting information in Unit 22 were also reported to the herders.

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 certificates indicated that 34 wolves were sealed in 2008–2009, of which 16 were males, 11 were females and 7 did not indicate sex. All that reported method of take indicated firearm. Snowmachines were indicated as transportation method for 15 and airplanes were indicated in 11. One certificate indicated the use of a 3 or 4-wheeler. Of the 34 wolves harvested, 23 were gray, 5 were white, and 6 were black. Seven wolves were taken by non residents, 11 were taken by non-local residents the remaining 16 were taken by area residents.

Unit 26A: Sealing certificates indicated that 26 wolves were sealed in 2008–2009. Fourteen were males, 10 were females, and 2 were unknown. Twenty-five were ground shot and 1 was trapped. Snogos were used as transportation for 24 and airplanes for 2. Two wolves were white, 17 were gray, 6 were black, and 1 was blue. Twenty-four wolves were taken by 6 residents of Unit 26A and 2 wolves were taken by 2 non-local residents.

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

We did not conduct a wolf survey in 2009, but we followed wolf tracks that were found during moose surveys and found 23 wolves during 7 hours of flying.

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, similar to the previous year.

Unit 26A: During the April 2009 spring moose trend count, 23 wolves were seen in approximately 7 hours of flying. During previous trend counts: 21 wolves were seen in 2008, 11 wolves were seen in 2007, and 8 wolves were seen in 2006, indicating that wolf numbers have increased substantially in the area.

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