

**FEDERAL AID  
FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

**FURBEARER  
SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-33-5

**PROJECT NR.:** 7.0

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2006 – 30 June 2007

**PROJECT TITLE:** The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Population

**Project Location:** Statewide

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

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

**Region-wide Activities**

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare a triennial furbearer management report.

Furbearer management reports were written and submitted for each unit and sub-unit within the region where furbearers occur. These reports provide updated harvest and management information through 2006.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

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

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they harvested and presented for sealing.

ADF&G Wildlife Conservation staff, FWP Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed furbearer pelts harvested in the region. Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. About 92 beaver, 3,862 marten, 399 otter, 17 wolverine, and 2 lynx pelts were harvested and sealed in the region.

ACTIVITY 4: Use trapper questionnaire, interviews, and other anecdotal information from reliable observers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

This was done as opportunities allowed. This type of information helped managers with recommendations about changes to current trapping regulations.

ACTIVITY 5: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

This was done as opportunities presented themselves through sealing fur and conversations with trappers and hunters. Efforts were made to improve communication with authorized fur sealers where trappers are using temporary sealing forms that have been incompletely filled out.

### **Activities by Unit**

#### **Unit 4**

ACTIVITY 1: Monitor sex and age ratios of marten on NE Chichagof Island using carcasses submitted by trappers, as part of a cooperative management program with the Forest Service.

Although marten carcasses were collected by the Forest Service, the information provided to us was incomplete and we were unable to conduct an analysis of sex and age ratios. We will continue to work with the Forest Service and trappers for carcass collection and necropsy information to allow monitoring of this population.

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

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

### **Region-wide Activities**

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare a triennial regional furbearer management report.

Prepared a triennial regional furbearer management report for *Unit 6* and *17*. Triennial report will be completed in 2007 for *Units 11, 13, 14, and 16*.

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

*Unit 6*: Preliminary 2006/07 harvest: 177 martens, 34 beavers, 26 wolverines, and 137 otters.

*Unit 8*: During the 2006/07 season, 26 trappers brought in 146 otters for sealing, an average of 5.6 otters per trapper. The harvest was composed of 71 males (49%), 65 females (45%), and 10 of undetermined sex (6%). Most trappers were local residents (88%), and traps were the most common method of take (92%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (51%), and December was the most productive month (57%). Twenty-four otters (16%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 31 beavers brought in by nine trappers, an average harvest of 3.4 beavers per trapper. All of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and traps were the most common method of take (77%). Four-wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (35%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during December (42%). Sixteen (47%) beavers were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

Trapper questionnaire respondents reported that furbearer populations were high. With the current low harvest in most areas, developing management objectives for furbearers is not a high priority.

*Unit 7 & 15*: Preliminary harvest results.

	Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total
Beaver	8	24	5	19	56
Marten	115	16	0	3	134
Wolverine	10	1	3	5	19
Otter	4	16	8	9	37
Lynx	1	3	2	1	7

*Unit 9*: Preliminary harvest: 139 beavers, 25 lynx, 122 otters, and 31 wolverines.

*Unit 10*: No furbearers were harvested.

*Unit 11:* Preliminary harvest: 97 lynx, 7 beavers, 3 otters, and 7 wolverines. The annual trapper questionnaire was completed. Furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally.

*Unit 13:* Preliminary harvest: 327 lynx, 215 beaver, 41 otters, and 42 wolverines. The annual trapper questionnaire was completed. Furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally.

*Unit 14:* Preliminary harvest: 2 lynx, 50, beavers, 25 otters, 12 wolverines, and 12 marten.

*Unit 16:* Preliminary harvest: 100 beavers, 26 otters, 17 wolverines, and 701 marten.

*Unit 17:* Preliminary harvest: 188 beavers, 112 otter, 35 wolverine and 3 lynx.

## **Activities by Unit**

### **Unit 6**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct river otter latrine surveys.

We did not conduct river otter latrine surveys. These surveys require additional cooperative funding which was not available.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct furbearer track counts.

We conducted five furbearer track counts which indicated stable mustelid populations and moderate snowshoe hare density with an increasing trend.

### **Units 7 and 15**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

No track counts were conducted during this reporting period. Poor weather precluded planned wolverine track survey. Other surveys were not funded

### **Unit 13**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

Lynx transects flown in 2006/07: R3, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16 [each 4 miles long]

**Submitted by:** Gino DelFrate, Region II Management Coordinator

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

### **Region-wide Activities**

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial regional furbearer management reports.

Prepared triennial regional furbearer management reports.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide furbearer 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 3: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Distributed trapper questionnaires region-wide to provide a basis for determining the status of furbearer populations.

ACTIVITY 4: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored harvest of 2,789 lynx, 95 river otter, and 213 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters

ACTIVITY 5: Collect data on harvest when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected data on harvest of 3,097 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and analyzed harvest data.

### **Activities by Unit**

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

ACTIVITY 1: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased lynx carcasses (n = 66) to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache surveys (n = 29 caches) in October.

ACTIVITY 3: Minimize beaver/human conflicts in the Fairbanks area by telling individuals with beaver problems how to protect their trees from beaver damage.

Held discussions with several dozen people about how to protect their trees from beaver damage.

**Unit 20D**

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey that showed an increasing trend in the hare population.

ACTIVITY 2: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased 5 lynx carcasses for tracking harvest strategy.

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

## **The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region V**

### **Region-wide Activities**

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare triennial regional furbearer management reports.

A furbearer management report was prepared during the reporting period.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to State and Federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented furbearer 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 furbearer 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 29 fur sealers in Unit 18, 18 in Unit 22, 5 in Unit 23, and 5 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 4: Monitor the harvest through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest surveys conducted annually in selected villages.

*Unit 18:* We analyzed fur sealing data for the 2006–2007 trapping season but only preliminary harvest figures are available. The reported harvests are 185 river otters, 46 lynx and 11 wolverine. We expect that harvests will be consistent with recent years.

*Unit 22:* Harvest reported on 2006-2007 sealing certificates included 85 lynx: 25 taken in Unit 22A, 60 in Unit 22B, and no lynx in Units 22C, 22D and 22E. The total reported river otter harvest was 7 otters: 2 from Unit 22A, 3 from Unit 22B, 1 from 22C, and 1 from Unit 22E. Twenty-eight (28) wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 9 from Unit 22A, 11 from Unit 22B, 7 from Unit 22C, and 1 from Unit 22D. Community based harvest assessment surveys were completed in Brevig Mission and Elim, but data from these surveys is not yet available.

*Unit 23:* We monitored harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and Community-based Harvest Assessment surveys. Sealing information for 2006-2007 was not available at the time this report was prepared.

*Unit 26A:* We examined sealing certificates for wolverine taken in Unit 26A. During 2006-2007, 6 wolverines were sealed, of which 5 were males, 1 was female; 2 were ground shot, while 4 were trapped. Snow machines were used for transportation in all 6 cases. One wolverine was harvested in January, 2 wolverines were harvested in February, 2 in March, and 1 in April. One lynx was sealed from Unit 26A which was a male. A snow machine was used for transportation and the lynx was ground shot.

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

Throughout Region V we communicated with local trappers to improve harvest reporting through the fur sealing process; explained the importance of harvest reporting at public meetings in villages; and prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data.

ACTIVITY 6: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

*Unit 18:* Trapper questionnaires for the previous year (2005-2006) were received and reviewed. We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; sent out trapper questionnaires; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined there are no furbearer problems related to low populations in Unit 18.

*Unit 22:* Furbearers are currently plentiful particularly in Units 22A and 22B where hare numbers have been high for a number of years. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be common throughout the subunit. Lynx are uncommon in Units 22C and 22D and scarce in Unit 22E. River otters are believed to be more common than the low harvest numbers would indicate, but their abundance is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D beaver continue to be common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing.

*Unit 23:* Furbearer populations appeared to be within the range of levels observed in previous years based on sealing records, opportunistic observations of furbearers, contacts with hunter and trappers, and community-based harvest assessments. Lynx population levels appear to be stable although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. Wolverine numbers appeared to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period.

*Unit 26A:* Through opportunistic observations of fur bearers and interviews with local residents, we felt that the current population number of wolverines is fairly high and stable, while arctic and red foxes are both in a period of medium population level. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. During 7 hours of moose surveys in April of 2007, we observed 3 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities remain fairly high. The number of wolverines that were sealed was not as high as last year (27), but we feel that it was more a result of reduced effort than a reduction in wolverine numbers. We saw one lynx during moose surveys and one was sealed, indicating that lynx continue to exist on low numbers in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 7: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

We provided names and addresses of >100 known hunters/trappers that reside within Region V to assist the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire program. We prepared summary



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furbearer reports for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire distributed to trappers in the region.

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

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
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**STATEWIDE FURBEARERS  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

**STATE:** ALASKA

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-33-5

**PROJECT NR:** 7.0

**WORK LOCATION:** Statewide

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2006 – 30 June 2007

**PROJECT TITLE:** The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations Statewide.

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**Project Activities and Accomplishments:**

ACTIVITY 1: Distribute trapping/furbearer materials to staff involved in furbearer management.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff provided Division of Wildlife Conservation furbearer management staff completed trapper reports and raw trapper data sets as requested.

ACTIVITY 2: Maintain and revise a list of approximately 1500 trappers in the state.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff updated trapper contact information in the trapper database using sealing records, the 2006 license database, and by consulting area offices and regional furbearer biologists. A total of 2612 trappers were mailed 2006–07 questionnaires.

ACTIVITY 3: Maintain and revise the statewide trapper questionnaire.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff solicited input for the revised trapper questionnaire from division area offices and regional furbearer biologists. Trapper questionnaires were updated to meet area management biologist data requests. Questionnaires for the 2006–07 (FY07) survey were printed in three forms: General long form, general short form, and area specific, and were distributed to 2612 trappers across the state.

ACTIVITY 4: Prepare a draft annual trapper questionnaire report and distribute to approximately 1500 state trappers.

**Accomplishments:** We prepared a draft of the 2005–06 Trapper Questionnaire Report. This report will be distributed to 549 trappers who responded to the 2005–06 questionnaire.

ACTIVITY 5: Summarize information from the statewide trapper questionnaire regarding trapper demographics, trapper observations of furbearers and their prey, and population trends and abundance.

**Accomplishments:** Headquarters staff received 549 trapper questionnaire replies, and responses were recorded in a database. Data will be analyzed and extracted to produce the 2005–06 statewide trapper report.

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

**Prepared by:** Karen Blejwas, Wildlife Biologist