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

ELK
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Alaska **GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.:** W-27-5
PROJECT NR.: 13.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Game Management Regions 1 and 2

PERIOD: 1 July 2001–30 June 2002

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

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

The Status of Alaska Elk and Factors Influencing Their Population in Region I

Regionwide Activities

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

This document satisfies the described activity.

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

During the report period the Board of Game did not consider Region I elk issues.

Activity 3: Draft an elk management report.

The 2-year elk management report was completed in spring 2002 and submitted to headquarters.

Activities by Unit

Units 1A, 1B, 2 and a portion of Unit 3

Activity 1: Monitor for the presence of elk in southern Southeast Alaska through contact with deer, elk, and bear hunters.

Ketchikan and Petersburg area staff spoke with deer and black bear hunters opportunistically to gain an understanding of elk sightings and gather information on elk dispersal in southern Southeast Alaska.

Activity 2: Monitor the general elk hunt in Units 1, 2, and 3.

Staff received no verifiable reports of elk harvested other than from Etolin and Zarembo islands, despite rumors of harvest from POW Island.

Unit 3

Activity 1: Monitor the Unit 3 Etolin/Zarembo islands elk hunt and analyze the permit report data.

The Petersburg Assistant Area Biologist and other staff members contacted hunters before and after their hunts. Hunt-based parameters were evaluated by the use of drawing permits, incisors, and photos of antlers submitted by hunters. A total of 120 drawing and 3 raffle permits were issued for the hunt, and 69 hunters reported taking 19 bull elk. Eighteen incisors were collected and later aged, and antler photos were collected. Blood serum was also collected.

Activity 2: Conduct spring fecal pellet-group surveys on Etolin Island.

Staff conducted deer and elk pellet-group surveys on Etolin and Zarembo islands during the regulatory year.

Activity 3: Monitor browse condition at established exclosures.

There were no browse surveys conducted of the Etolin Island exclosures during the regulatory year.

Activity 4: Conduct one late summer aerial composition survey.

Conducted 1 summer aerial survey over southern Etolin Island. We counted 57 elk and estimated their age classes. An informal spring survey of western Zarembo Island revealed 31 elk.

Activity 5: Use established population-modeling techniques to estimate population growth.

Established modeling techniques were used during the year to estimate elk population growth and the carrying capacity of Etolin Island. The results were used in discussing elk management techniques with Southeast Alaska hunters.

Activity 6: Coordinate with research staff on the Etolin project.

The Petersburg Assistant Area Biologist stayed in regular communication with DWC elk researchers and spent time in the field with them on two occasions.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $22.8

Submitted by: Bruce Dinneford, Wildlife Biologist IV

The Status of Alaska Elk
and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region II

Regionwide Activities

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

This document satisfies the activity described.

Activity 2: Prepare an elk management report.

A draft elk management report was prepared for Region 2.

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

Provided information to the board as it considered one elk proposal during its spring 2001 meeting.

Activities by Mountain Range and Unit

Unit 8

Activity 1: Conduct aerial sex and age population composition surveys to determine status, trends, productivity, and mortality of elk.

We completed 4 summer aerial composition surveys and 1 winter survey for a portion of the herds. Survey results suggested a further decline in the Malina/Afognak Lakes herd with some increase in the eastern Afognak herds. The unit population of elk is estimated at 740 animals.

The elk population declined substantially from 1,300 animals in 1998 to further reduction of 740 animals in 2001. The reported 2001 harvest of 89 elk was about 12% of the estimated population, good weather and an early snowfall played a role with the increase in harvest from the 2000 season.

Activity 2: Monitor elk seasonal distribution through relocation of radiocollared elk.

Before 1998 the annual home ranges of most of the elk herds were relatively stable with little interchange between herds. Recent data indicate considerable mixing of herds and changes in traditional use areas during the winter and early spring. We suspect many of these changes are because of significant alteration to winter ranges by commercial logging operations and/or increased severity of winter/early spring weather. Recovery and analysis of movement data from the GPS collars deployed in 1999 has helped in determining the extent of these changes.

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

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): $17.8

Submitted by: Michael G McDonald, Assistant Management Coordinator

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):
State Share = $10.15 Federal Share = $30.45 Total Costs = $40.6