

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT No. W-33-9

PROJECT NO.

PERIOD: July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Population in Region II

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes Furbearer survey and inventory activities. Activities are listed by game management unit.

Statewide

I. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS IDENTIFIED IN ANNUAL PLAN THIS PERIOD

JOB/ACTIVITY 1: Trapping and furbearer-related materials including fur seals, sealing forms, and fur export permits were distributed to staff involved with furbearer management in a timely manner. The template for the Report on Acquisition of Furs and Hides by Fur Buyers was updated to include black bears and current mailing address information. Five hundred forms were printed and distributed to ADF&G regional furbearer coordinators.

JOB/ACTIVITY 2: Names and addresses of trappers contacted for the annual Trapper Questionnaire were updated as new information from a variety of sources became available.

JOB/ACTIVITY 3: The format of the Trapper Questionnaire form was updated so that data on forms returned by trappers can be scanned into a database by machine rather than typed by hand. A database to receive that data was also built.

JOB/ACTIVITY 4: Data from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 Trapper Questionnaires was analyzed.

JOB/ACTIVITY 5: Trapper Questionnaire Reports for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 seasons were written and produced, and six hundred copies of reports for the 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 seasons were printed.

JOB/ACTIVITY 6: Copies of the 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 Trapper Questionnaire Reports were mailed to trappers who responded to the 2008-09 Questionnaire. Copies of those reports were also posted on the Department of Fish and Game's website and e-mailed to involved staff.

JOB/ACTIVITY 7: The ideas of using e-mail to distribute Questionnaires to trappers or using a web-based Questionnaire were evaluated and found to be unworkable at this time because many trappers do not have access to e-mail or the internet.

II. PUBLICATIONS

Trapper Questionnaire Report, 2006-07

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Trapper Questionnaire Report, 2007-08
Trapper Questionnaire Report, 2008-09

Prepared by: Tom Schumacher
Date: July 21, 2011

Region 1

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Prepare furbearer management reports.

These reports were not due during this report period and therefore were not completed.

ACTIVITY 2: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they are 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 210 beaver, 2,521 marten, 514 otter, 25 wolverine, and 4 lynx pelts were harvested and sealed in the region.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 4: 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.

Seven camera traps were established in the Juneau area to attempt to capture images of fishers. No verifiable images of fishers were captured.

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

Region II

Regionwide:

Activity : Prepare a triennial regional furbearer management report.

Area staff continue to collect information in preparation for drafting report in 2013.

Activity : Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

All furbearers that require sealing in Region II were presented to staff for specimen collection and sealing. See area specific activities for additional information.

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

These are standard activities accomplished in each office. See Area specific activities.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: Furbearer management report was not due.

ACTIVITY 2: Collected harvest data for 88 marten, 27 beaver, 8 wolverine, 1 lynx, and 117 otters.

ACTIVITY 3: Conducted river otter latrine surveys in western Prince William Sound, collected habitat data at 453 sites.

ACTIVITY 4: No winter track counts were conducted because of poor freeze/thaw conditions.

Units 7&15

ACTIVITY 1: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Preliminary harvest results are:

	7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total
Beaver	30	24	6	6	66
Marten	95	25	0	0	120
Wolverine	9	0	2	4	15
Otter	4	28	5	5	42
Lynx	21	123	146	143	433

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct wolverine survey.

No wolverine surveys were conducted due to poor weather conditions.

Unit 08

Activity : Prepare a furbearer management report.

Activity : Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

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

Activity : Seal furbearer pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

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

Results : During the 2010–11 season, 27 trappers brought in 124 otters for sealing yielding an average of 4.6 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 67 males (54%), 55 females (44%), and 2 of undetermined sex (2%). Most trappers were local residents (74%), and trapping was the most common method of take (94%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (47%), and December was the

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most productive month (50%). Forty-three otters (35%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 55 beavers brought in by 15 trappers, yielding an average harvest of 3.7 beavers/trapper. Most of the trappers were local residents (93%), and trapping was the most common method of take (85%). Highway vehicles were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (31%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during November (53%). Thirty-six (65%) beaver was 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 14C

ACTIVITY 1: Harvest data was collected when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

ACTIVITY 2: Furbearer harvest was monitored through field observations, fur sealing reports, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Harvest:

Beaver: 8

Lynx: 1

River Otter: 1

Wolverine: 1

Marten: 24

Submitted by: Gino Del Frate

Date: 2 September 2011

Region III

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: 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 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored preliminary harvest of 2,084 lynx, 52 river otter, and 218 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest information when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

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Collected data on preliminary harvest of 2,354 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 4: Provide furbearer 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.

ACTIVITY 5: Develop specific population and harvest objectives for furbearers, as new research and management findings become available

Continued to review research and management findings in an attempt to formulate quantifiable furbearer management objectives, without success.

Activities by Unit

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

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache survey in October in Unit 20B (n = 26 caches).

ACTIVITY 2: Minimize beaver/human conflicts in the Fairbanks area by telling individuals with beaver problems how to protect their trees from beaver damage.

Advised members of the public with nuisance beaver problems and issued nuisance trapping permits where needed.

Unit 20D

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey during which 18 hares were counted along the survey route.

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

Region IV

Project Location: Game Management Units 9, 10, 11, 13, 14A, 14B, 16, and 17

Regionwide:

ACTIVITY 1: Collect furbearer harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit	beaver	lynx	marten	otter	wolverine
9	100	64	2	79	28
11	4	286	N/A	5	12
13	259	1297	N/A	43	37
14A	82	12	60	17	5
14B	53	5	50	3	3
16	183	3	446	24	28
17	206	7	N/A	71	62

No furbearer harvests were reported in Unit 10.

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ACTIVITY 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

The annual trapper questionnaire was completed. Furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 13

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

A total of 25 aerial lynx transects were flown in Unit 11 and 13 in March 2011. Lynx track observations were extremely abundant, and the highest ever recorded.

Submitted by: Lem Butler, Region IV Management Coordinator

Region V

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: 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 2: 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 25 fur sealers in Unit 18, 15 in Unit 22, 7 in Unit 23, and 3 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 2010–2011 trapping season. With improvement to the reporting process, these preliminary harvests should be very close to the final numbers. The reported harvests are 109 river otters, 491 lynx, and 62 wolverine. The high number of lynx and wolverines sealed in 2010 is related to better than average snow conditions, increased trapping effort, and high abundance of prey species.

Unit 22: To date the current harvest based on 2010-2011 sealing certificates included 71 lynx: 39 taken in Unit 22A and 32 in Unit 22B. The total reported river otter harvest was 11 otters: 9 from Unit 22A, 1 from Unit 22B, and 1 from Unit 22C. Twenty wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 9 from Unit 22A, 1 from Unit 22B, and 1 from Unit 22C. All furbearers were harvested by residents. Community-based harvest

assessment surveys were not completed in Unit 22 during the reporting period.

Unit 23: The preliminary harvest reported on 2010-2011 sealing certificates included 76 lynx (33 females and 34 males), all of which were taken by residents. Thirteen lynx were shot, and 59 were trapped. All of the lynx were taken using a snowmachine. The total reported river otter harvest was 3 (all male), one was shot and 2 were trapped, and all were taken by snowmachine. Fourteen wolverines were sealed (4 female and 10 males), eight were taken by ground shooting and six by trap, and all were taken using snowmachine. Community harvest assessment survey data is not available at this time but usually indicates dramatically higher harvest than sealing records indicate.

Unit 26A: We examined sealing certificates for wolverine and lynx. During 2010-2011, 24 wolverines were sealed by 8 Unit 26A residents. Eighteen were male and 6 were female. Twenty were ground shot and 4 were trapped. Snow machines were used for transportation for all 24. Three wolverines were harvested in November, 1 in December, 2 in January, 2 in February, and 18 in March. Two lynx were harvested and sealed by 1 Unit 26A resident trapper. One male and 1 female were sealed. The trapper ground shot both lynx, used a snow machine for transportation, and both were captured in March.

ACTIVITY 4: 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; prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data; and attended meetings hosted by local chapters of the Alaska Trappers Association.

ACTIVITY 5: 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: We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined there are no problems related to low furbearer populations in Unit 18. Lynx and wolverine numbers and harvest are at record highs in Unit 18. Interest in trapping wolverine, and lynx increased and trapping pressure targeting these species is high in some localized areas however most of the habitat in Unit 18 remains untapped.

Unit 22: Furbearers are currently plentiful, particularly in Units 22A and 22B where hare numbers continue to be high. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be high throughout the subunit this regulatory year along with a high number of hare sightings reported by trappers and pilots. The number of lynx

harvested in Unit 22B decreased 48% from the last reporting period likely due to decreased trapper efforts in 22B. River otters are believed to be more common than the low harvest numbers would indicate, but their abundance is unknown. Observations and public reports suggest wolverines are common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E. Wolverine harvest in Unit 22B decreased 46% and since the last reporting period likely due to decreased trapper efforts in Unit 22B.

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 high although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. Wolverine numbers appeared to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period however, the higher harvest this year may indicate an increase.

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. The number of wolverines that were sealed (n=24) was one of the highest years ever recorded. The number of wolverines sealed is probably more an indicator of trapper effort than of wolverine numbers. Two lynx were sealed, indicating that lynx numbers may have declined in Unit 26A since last year when 10 were sealed.

ACTIVITY 6: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

Work on trapper questionnaires and trapper responses have been delayed due to staffing changes in headquarters. All backlogged reports were finalized and distributed so regional staff will continue this activity with the current cycle questionnaire.

ACTIVITY 7: Record wolverine and lynx sightings during moose surveys in Unit 26A as an indicator of population trends.

During 31 hours of moose surveys in April of 2011, we observed 4 wolverines and 2 lynx compared to 3 wolverines and 4 lynx during 8 hours of surveys in 2010, indicating that wolverine and lynx densities are may be lower in the Colville River drainage than in past years.

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