

Wildlife Restoration OPERATING GRANT FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Restoration Grant

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-B-R1-2020 Amendment #1 SFY2021

PROJECT NUMBER: 12.0

PROJECT TITLE: Region I Mountain Goat S&I program: Alaska Mountain Goat Populations and Factors Influencing Their Status

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

REPORT DUE DATE: August 27, 2021

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Richard Nelson

COOPERATORS: None

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

STRATEGY: RESEARCH, SURVEY, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVE 1: Conduct 2 investigations by 06-30-2021

ACTIVITY 1A: Population Size, Status, and Trend. Assess the size and status of each mountain goat population to determine the 5-year trend.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Region I management staff surveyed mountain goat populations in key hunting areas during late summer and early fall to gather data used to set harvest quota point totals (adult male, Billy = 1 pt. and adult female, Nanny = 2 pts.) for specific hunt zones. Typically, 6 points are allotted for every 100 goats observed in each zone. When the harvest guideline point total for an individual zone is reached, that zone is closed by Emergency Order.

ADF&G was able to fly mountain goat surveys in various locations throughout the Region during the reporting period. However, survey flights in subunit 1A were constrained due to poor weather and the onset of COVID-19. Weather conditions and availability of pilots and funding dictate how many surveys are completed each year. In areas with mountain goats collared for a research project regional management staff monitored collared goats during surveys to estimate sightability.

Regional management staff also continued to monitor for potential effects of sightseeing helicopter flights during summer as well as heliskiing activity during winter. Regional

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management staff continued to monitor for potential effects of road construction, mining, or hydroelectric development in areas where those activities are ongoing or planned.

- Monitor mountain goat occupancy on the Cleveland Peninsula in subunit 1A with motion-sensor cameras.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: None. Poor weather and the onset of COVID-19 hindered ADF&G's ability to place motion-sensor cameras on the Cleveland Peninsula during RY 2020.

ACTIVITY 1B: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring. Document the number of mountain goat harvested and other sources of mortality that may influence each population.

Region I: Units 1, 4, and 5

- Monitor hunter effort and harvest from the registration and draw permit hunts and analyze the data.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: All mountain goat hunts in Region I are administered through registration or draw permits with mandatory reporting requirements. Regional management staff collected hunter effort and harvest data through mandatory permit hunt reports and entered that information into the statewide harvest database. Those data are annually compiled by GMU/subunit and analyzed for trends in hunter effort and harvest (Table 1).

Harvest throughout the Region in RY2020 were similar to the 5-year averages. We are confident that harvests remain sustainable.

Table 1. Summary of mountain goat harvest by GMU for Southeast Alaska, regulatory years 2016 – 2020. A regulatory year begins on July 1 of that year and extends through June 30 of the following year. Mountain goats do not occur in Units 2 and 3.

GMU	Regulatory Year					5-Year Average
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
01A	35	34	47	41	38	39
01B	22	21	17	22	27	22
01C	55	39	43	40	40	43
01D	28	21	27	23	24	25
04Z	25	28	30	38	38	32
05A	1	0	0	3	2	1

- Collect additional goat harvest information through field observations, hunter harvest reports and contact with hunters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: All mountain goat hunts in Region I are administered through

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registration or draw permits with mandatory reporting requirements. Regional management staff-maintained contacts with hunters when issuing permits. Successful hunters are required to report to ADF&G within 5 days, which provides an opportunity to obtain additional information through conversations with hunters.

- Monitor cases of contagious ecthyma (ORF) and other diseases that might affect goat populations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management staff monitored for outbreaks of ORF through conversations with hunters, biologist observations, and reports by the public. Management staff also collected nasal swabs as part of the statewide *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* surveillance program.

ACTIVITY 1C: Habitat Assessment. Assess habitat issues related to mountain goats and inform land use planning affecting mountain goat populations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management staff indirectly monitored goat habitat by asking hunters about body condition of harvested goats.

Region I, Units 1, 4, and 5

- Participate in land use planning processes as needed to provide the most current information on effects of planned changes, primarily logging, backcountry recreation, and mining activities, on mountain goats.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Region I management staff actively participated in land use planning processes by providing comments on how activities, primarily logging, backcountry recreation, and mining activities might affect mountain goats.

STRATEGY: PLANNING

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop/Revise 1 plan by June 30, 2021

ACTIVITY 2A: Mountain goat Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each mountain goat population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

Region I: Units 1, 4, and 5

- Prepare 5-year Mountain goat Management Operational Reports and Plans for each unit/subunit inhabited by mountain goat.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During this reporting period regional management biologists continued writing Mountain Goat Species Management Reports and Plans reporting on the period RY13 – RY18 and planning for the period RY19 – RY24. Reports were

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completed and published for GMUs 1C, 4 and 5. Remaining reports (GMUs 1A, 1B and 1D) have been completed and are awaiting final approval and publication.

- Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on mountain goat management.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management biologists regularly participated in public regulatory processes by providing data and guidance to Fish and Game Advisory Committees and members of the public to help develop proposals to the Alaska Board of Game, by providing data and commenting on proposals created by the federal subsistence Regional Advisory Council.

- Provide information on status of goat populations, likely trends, habitat use, and harvest management to other agencies and the public.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management biologists provided information on mountain goat population trends, habitat use, and harvest management to other agencies as requested and to the public at Fish and Game advisory committee meetings and other public meetings.

- Participate in agency reviews of land use decisions affecting mountain goats.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management biologists participated in new and ongoing reviews or land management decisions potentially affecting goat populations. Most commonly those involved use of helicopters in and around goat habitat in support of seasonal tourism activities, mining projects, road building, and hydroelectric development.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

Region I managers successfully administered mountain goat hunts and monitored populations as conditions allowed. During this reporting period populations trends for mountain goats throughout the region were monitored using aerial surveys. Mainland goat populations from Unit 1C south of the Taku River through Unit 1A and in Unit 4 appear stable or increasing.

Populations in northern Unit 1C, Unit 1D, and Unit 5 remain relatively low compared to historic abundance. We believe those populations continue to slowly recover from a series of deep snow winters that occurred from 2006 – 2012. Some hunt zones in these units were closed to hunting during RY20.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

During RY 2020 the Region I budget for mountain goat management was under spent by \$67K. This discrepancy was due to poor weather conditions throughout the fall when compositions flights are typically flown, and uncertainty over COVID-19 as the situation developed. Also, a camera project to determine occupancy of goats on the Cleveland

Peninsula in subunit 1A was not implemented due to poor weather.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Bethune, S. W. 2021. Mountain goat management report and plan, Game Management Unit 4: Report period 1 July 2013–30 June 2018, and plan period 1 July 2018–30 June 2023. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2021-15, Juneau.

Churchwell, R. T. 2021. Mountain goat management report and plan, Game Management Unit 1C: Report period 1 July 2013–30 June 2018, and plan period 1 July 2018–30 June 2023. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2021-7, Juneau.

Churchwell, R. T. 2021. Mountain goat management report and plan, Game Management Unit 5: Report period 1 July 2013–30 June 2018, and plan period 1 July 2018–30 June 2023. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2021-8, Juneau.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

The Department of Wildlife Conservation recommends continuing this project.

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Date: August 2021