

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: 14.0

PROJECT TITLE: Region I Wolf S&I program: Alaska's Wolf Populations and Factors Influencing Their Status

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

REPORT DUE DATE: Submit to Coordinator August 23, 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 3 investigations by June 30, 2021

ACTIVITY 1A: Population Size, Status, and Trend. Assess the size and status of each wolf population to determine the 5-year trend. In some cases, trend will be monitored over a shorter interval.

Units 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Area management staff maintained contacts with trappers, primarily when they brought furs in for sealing. Staff asked trappers about their experiences and observations in the field and on the status and trend of wolves in their trapping area. Area management biologists also monitored specific populations as follows:

Area management staff in Ketchikan asked for wolf observations in Unit 2 to monitor occupancy both spatially and temporally. ADF&G used the state website to solicit observations with exact locations with options to upload media files. Wolf sightings were reported here: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlivediversity.powwolves>

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Area management staff in Unit 1C maintained contacts with homeowners, trappers, and deer hunters to monitor anecdotal accounts of wolf abundance along the Juneau road system. Those accounts suggest wolf numbers have declined from a peak in RY2017 but remain high.

UNIT 2

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Staff conducted field work and SECR analysis to determine the Unit 2 fall 2019 population estimate was 316 wolves. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Board of Game, and US Forest Service agreed to a three-week trapping season with no quota in regulatory year 2020 and requested skin, muscle, and foreleg bone samples from harvested wolves. ADF&G worked with Hydaburg Cooperative Association and U.S. Forest Service to collect data for the estimate.

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

Units 1, 2, 3, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Management biologists conversed with hunters and trappers about their observations of wolf populations and made their own field observations. They also monitored harvest relative to previous years to ensure sustainability (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of wolf harvest by GMU for Region I, regulatory years 2016 – 2020. A regulatory year begins July 1 of that year through June 30 of the following year.

GMU	Regulatory Year					Average
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
01A	30	30	27	26	28	28
01B	24	7	4	25	18	16
01C	21	32	22	29	15	24
01D	12	10	3	7	2	7
02Z	30	64	46	165	68	75
03Z	59	42	36	42	40	44
04Z	2	3	2	0	2	2
05A	0	4	5	5	5	4
05B	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	178	192	145	300	178	199

In Alaska wolves are defined as both big game animals and furbearers. All harvested wolves must be sealed, which provides an opportunity to collect information on each harvested wolf, hunting or trapping effort, and anecdotal data from hunters and trappers.

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Harvested wolves were sealed throughout the region and data collected at sealing was archived in the statewide fur sealing database for use in analyses and reports.

ACTIVITY 1C: Habitat Assessment. Assess habitat issues related to wolves and their prey and inform land use planning affecting wolf populations.

Units 1, 2, 3, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Region I management staff actively participated in land use planning processes by providing comments on how activities, primarily logging, might affect wolves and their prey.

STRATEGY: PLANNING

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

ACTIVITY 2A: Wolf Management with public participation and outreach. Manage each wolf population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

Units 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Region I management staff completed Wolf Species Management Reports and Plans reporting on regulatory years 2010 – 2014 following plans for regulatory years 2015–2019. Wolf Species Management Reports for RY 2015–2019 are currently being written with additional planning periods for RY 2020–2024. Reports specific to each unit/subunit can be found at:
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifemanagement#furbeares>

Region I management staff summarized and analyzed wolf abundance and harvest data and presented those data at public forums including presentations to Fish and Game Advisory Committees and federal Regional Subsistence Advisory Council.

Wolf management is often controversial and polarizing. Region I staff provided information on the status and trend of wolf populations, wolf harvest management, abundance, and trend of prey populations, and plans for harvest management to fellow agencies in public forums like Fish and Game Advisory Committee meetings, Regional Subsistence Advisory Council meetings, and to the news media.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

Region I management staff successfully completed all activities described in the FY2020 Project Statement.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

Funds throughout Region I for wolf management were underspent by \$33K. The main factor contributing to underspending is surplus funds allocated for processing genetic samples for the Unit 2 population estimate. Sample collection varies by year and its advantageous to have extra funds available for extra samples that may be collected during the field season.

IV. PUBLICATIONS None.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

We recommend continuing this project.

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Date: August 2021