

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: 17.0

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

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

REPORT DUE DATE: Submit to Coordinator 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 3 investigations by 30-June-2021.

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

Units 1, 2, 3, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Solicit anecdotal observations from biologists, big game guides, and hunters for changes in black bear abundance.

In Region I all harvested black bears must be sealed, which provides an opportunity to collect information on harvested bears, hunting effort, and anecdotal information from hunters. Region I staff monitored black bear abundance throughout the region by analyzing hunt reports and sealing records including information on harvest, skull size, age, sex ratio, and effort required to harvest a bear.

ACTIVITY 1B: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring. Assess the number of black bears harvested by hunters and other sources of mortality that may influence each population.

Units 1, 2, 3, and 5

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Collect data, determine sex, and extract a tooth for aging from black bears presented for sealing by hunters or other human-caused bear mortality.

Sealing regulations provides an opportunity to collect information on harvested bears, hunting effort, and information from hunters. Region I staff monitored black bear harvest through sealing records, which included locations of harvest. Area management staff monitored all sources of mortality including harvest, agency kills, Defense of Life and Property (DLP) kills, disease, accidents, and parasites (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of black bear 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.

GMU	Regulatory Year					Average
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
01A	65	74	80	75	93	77
01B	9	17	11	10	28	15
01C	65	80	97	84	124	90
01D	26	37	33	45	33	35
02Z	147	174	188	116	222	169
03Z	184	205	219	114	213	187
05A	14	3	5	6	4	6
05B	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	510	590	633	450	717	73

Unit 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Monitor the annual harvest of glacier-colored black bears.

Area management staff monitored the number of glacier-colored black bears in the harvest.

ACTIVITY 1C: Habitat Assessment. Assess black bear habitat availability directly or indirectly in specified areas of the region and inform land use planning affecting black bear populations.

Units 1, 2, 3, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Participate in land use planning processes as needed to provide the most current information on effects of planned changes on black bear populations.

Regional management staff participated in land use planning processes by reviewing and providing comments on projects throughout the region. Information provided aided in the conservation of black bear habitat.

Units 1C

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Monitor black bear use of Sweetheart Lake Hydroelectric Project area using trail cameras, by identifying individuals through DNA analysis of hair samples, and by capturing and radio collaring several bears to learn about seasonal movements and habitat use before and after development.

No progress. Region I staff did not accomplish capture and collection of information on black bears using the proposed Sweetheart Lake Hydroelectric project area. The value and feasibility of this project needs to be reassessed, and we recommend discontinuing this portion of the project.

STRATEGY: PLANNING

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

ACTIVITY 2A: Black Bear Management with Public Participation and Outreach.

Manage each black bear population with an emphasis on engaging the public through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Prepare 5-year Bear Management Operational Reports and Plans for each unit/subunit inhabited by black bear.

Regional management biologists completed Bear Species Management Plans and Reports for bears reporting on the period RY2011 – RY2016 and planning for the period RY2017 – RY2022. Unit-specific reports and plans can be found at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Sitka+Black-tailed+Deer&submit=Search>

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Provide information to the public, state, and federal regulatory processes on black bear management.

Region I staff engaged with the public through Fish and Game Advisory Committees and with local agencies and residents. Staff discussed management issues and regulatory proposals at Fish and Game Advisory Committee meetings and Federal Regional Subsistence Advisory Council. Black bear Species Management Reports were published or are in the process of final review before publishing on the Departments website. Staff engaged with local communities and residents through ongoing efforts to educate the public on bear safety, proper storage of trash and other attractants, and managing small livestock such as chickens.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Work with local governments and the public to mitigate human-bear conflicts.

Management staff continue to provide educational programs to communities and to support efforts by community groups, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers, and local governments to minimize bear-human conflict.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

During this reporting period black bear harvest throughout Region I generally increased but remained within the historic range of harvest in all Units/Subunits. Biologists report increasing harvests in Units 1A, 1C, 2, and 3 reflects growing bear populations brought about by harvest restrictions enacted in RY12. At its January 2019 meeting the Alaska Board of Game liberalized black bear harvest regulations by replacing selected draw hunts with general season hunts and by increasing the number of permits that may be issued for remaining draw hunts. Draw hunts will be maintained in a portion of Unit 01C, 02Z, and a portion of 03Z. Unit 01A, 01B, 01D, and the remainder of 1C and 3 will be included in the general season. As suggested last year, we are discontinuing the black bear project at Sweetheart Creek. All objectives were accomplished.

COVID-19 restricted non-resident hunters from participating in black bear hunts across Alaska in the spring of RY19.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

For FY2021 the Douglas and Petersburg offices had a significant increase in human-bear conflicts which resulted in \$23.4K in overspending. A combination of a poor berry crop and poor salmon returns resulted in bears looking for food in urban areas to supplement dietary shortfalls.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Churchwell, R. T. 2020. Black bear 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-2020-23, Juneau.

Churchwell, R. T. 2020. Black bear 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-2020-21, Juneau.

Dorendorf, R. 2020. Black bear management report and plan, Game Management Unit 1A: 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-2020-27, Juneau.

Hasbrouck, T. R. 2020. Black bear management report and plan, Game Management Unit 2: 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-2020-31, Juneau.

Koch, C. H., 2021. Black bear management report and plan, Game Management Unit 1D: 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-2021-1, Juneau.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

We recommend continuing this project.

Prepared by:

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Date: August 2021