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-R1-2021

PROJECT NUMBER: 7.0

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

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

REPORT DUE DATE: August 24, 2021

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Richard Nelson

COOPERATORS: None

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Conduct 3 investigations by 06-30-2021.

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

Activity 1B: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring. Monitor the number of furbearers harvested by hunters and trappers and assess other sources of mortality that may influence each population.

Activity 1C: Habitat Assessment. Assess furbearer habitat availability directly or indirectly in specified areas of the state and inform land use planning affecting furbearer populations.

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

Region I – Units 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Collect female wolverine carcasses opportunistically for reproductive information.

Area management staff did not collect any female wolverine carcasses during this reporting period. This activity should be discontinued as part of the furbearer S&I duties.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Collect anecdotal information on furbearer, abundance, trend, etc. from trappers during sealing.

State and federal regulations require that certain furbearer species be examined by a state representative and that a seal be placed on each pelt. In Region I sealed furbearer species are wolf, wolverine, lynx, river otter, marten, beaver, and fisher. During sealing biologists engage trappers in conversation and solicit their observations of abundance and trends of furbearer populations.

Unit 1C

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During sealing collect carcasses of fishers for sex, age, reproductive status and genetic material to assess the fisher population in the unit.

Area management staff collected carcasses of two fishers trapped in Unit 1C during this reporting period. Those carcasses are stored frozen and will be analyzed as time allows. Because it is more efficient to process groups of carcasses, we will wait until we have accumulated 6-10 carcasses before processing.

Activity 1B: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring. Monitor the number of furbearers harvested by hunters and trappers and assess other sources of mortality that may influence each population.

Regionwide

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Collect harvest data on beaver, marten, otter, lynx, fisher, and wolverine when pelts are presented for sealing.

Management staff maintained and executed furbearer sealing programs as mandated by current regulation and collected a suite of data on furs presented for sealing.

		Regulatory Year					5-Year
Species	GMU	2016	2017	2018	2019	**2020**	Average
Beaver	01A	41	29	47	58	**19**	38.8
	01B	24	3	22	0	**8**	11.4
	01C	25	44	55	50	**34**	41.6
	01D	8	10	11	3	**0**	6.4
	02Z	51	67	93	84	**45**	68.0
	03Z	38	9	15	11	**29**	20.4
	04Z	35	32	25	8	**6**	21.2
	05Z	1	25	3	6	**1**	7.2
Lynx	01C	0	0	3	0	**3**	1.2

	01D	3	1	10	25	**26**	13.0
	05A	0	0	2	0	**1**	0.6
Otter	01A	19	44	43	34	**32**	34.4
	01B	12	1	1	5	**5**	4.8
	01C	8	22	27	27	**33**	23.4
	01D	12	8	9	12	**6**	9.4
	02Z	122	65	47	33	**33**	60.0
	03Z	26	16	32	23	**29**	25.2
	04Z	96	124	117	103	**71**	102.2
	05A	0	13	1	0	**0**	2.8
	05B	0	0	0	0	**0**	0.0
Wolverine	01A	1	2	1	0	**3**	1.4
	01B	5	7	7	1	**11**	6.2
	01C	7	5	16	8	**1**	7.4
	01D	6	12	3	3	**5**	5.8
	03Z	0	3	0	0	**1**	0.8
	05A	0	0	0	0	**5**	1.0
	05B	0	0	0	0	**0**	0.0
Marten	01A	260	248	222	115	**284**	225.8
	01B	181	167	169	70	**249**	167.2
	01C	169	177	213	160	**132**	170.2
	01D	195	304	9	36	**25**	113.8
	02Z	574	663	398	401	**374**	482.0
	03Z	116	97	217	66	**69**	113.0
	04Z	804	1211	1337	432	**642**	885.2
	05A	69	47	151	101	**54**	84.4
	05B	0	0	0	0	**0**	0.0
Fisher	01C	0	5	5	4	**3**	3.4

Table 1. Summary of furbearer harvest by GMU for Southeast Alaska, regulatory years 2016 – 2020. Lynx and fisher have limited distributions in Region I and other species like wolverines either do not occur or are not harvested in all units in all years. A regulatory year begins on July 1 of that year and extends through June 30 of the following year. Data on wolf and black bear are summarized in separate reports.

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

The sealing requirement provides data on harvest and an opportunity to converse with trappers about their observations of population trends. Management biologists compared current harvest with fur sealing summaries from recent years and trapper observations to ensure harvests remain sustainable.

Activity 1C: Habitat Assessment. Assess furbearer habitat availability directly or indirectly in specified areas of the state and inform land use planning affecting furbearer populations.

Regionwide

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Participate in formal and informal commenting processes on land management decisions affecting furbearer habitat or access for trapping.

Large-scale habitat changes usually result from natural processes like fire or human development including logging and other land uses. Management staff primarily monitored habitat changes through their own observations within their management areas, by participating in agency and public land management commenting processes, and from anecdotal accounts of people living and trapping throughout their management areas.

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

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

Regionwide

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Prepare 5-year Furbearer Management Reports and Plans.

Management staff completed Furbearer Species Management Reports and Plans reporting on regulatory years 2012 – 2017 with plans for regulatory years 2018 – 2022. Reports specific to each unit/subunit can be found at: https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifemanagement#furbearers

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Management staff summarized and analyzed furbearer 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 meetings.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

Furbearer harvest typically varies with population levels, fur prices, fuel prices, trapper effort, and trapping conditions. During this reporting period furbearer harvest throughout Region I varied by species, area, and year, but for RY20 within each GMU harvest was generally higher than the year before. Wolves and black bears have a dual classification as furbearers and big game, and data on harvest of those species are presented in separate S&I reports. All objectives were accomplished.

Staff sealed a similar number of furs over the last year compared to the 5-year average. Beaver harvest was a little lower than the 5-year average and lynx harvest was a little higher than the 5-year average with the other species showing a similar harvest to the average. The overall harvest recovered slightly from a slump in RY19, but not quite to the higher levels of harvest in RY17–18.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

None.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

None.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

We recommend continuing this project.

Prepared by: Roy T. Churchwell, Juneau/Douglas Area Biologist

Date: August 2021