

# 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-R3-2020

**PROJECT NUMBER:** P14.0

**PROJECT TITLE:** Alaska's Region III Wolf S&I program: Wolf Populations and Factors Influencing Their Status in Interior and Northeast Alaska

**PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2021

**PERFORMANCE YEAR:** July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021; year 2 of a 2-year grant

**REPORT DUE DATE:**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Darren L. Bruning, Fish and Game Coordinator, ADF&G

**COOPERATORS:** N/A

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## I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR

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

### Project statement objectives:

**Objective 1: Population Size, Status, and Trend.** Assess the size and status of each wolf population to determine the 5-year trend.

#### 1.1 Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain population assessment information.

##### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We used results of approximately 203 questionnaire responses from trappers in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C to assess relative wolf abundance and population trends for wolves. See Bogle, S.E. 2020.  
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=trapping.reports>

#### 1.2 Conduct 1–4 Minimum Wolf Count Aerial Surveys to estimate local wolf population status and trend.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: None

**1.3 Monitor wolf numbers and population characteristics through wolf survey results, incidental sightings, hunter and trapper interviews, trapper questionnaires, and evaluation of sealing documents.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Opportunistically conducted approximately 210 interviews with wolf hunters and trappers during sealing of wolves and in the field to understand wolf numbers and population characteristics.
- We monitored wolf numbers and population characteristics through wolf survey results, incidental sightings, approximately 210 interviews with hunters and trappers, approximately 203 trapper questionnaire results, and evaluation of 622 sealing documents.

**1.4 Model the potential effects of wolf predation on ungulates to evaluate potential for ungulate harvest.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We considered potential effects of wolf predation on allowable harvest for the Fortymile caribou herd.

**1.5 Capture and radiocollar wolves to aid in enumerating wolf distribution and abundance, particularly when surveys cannot be completed due to environmental and logistical constraints.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: None.

**Objective 2: Mortality, Harvest Monitoring, and Regulations.** Assess the number of wolves harvested by hunters and other sources of mortality that might have an impact on each population.

**2.1 Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest information**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Approximately 203 potential wolf trappers in region III responded to the statewide trapper questionnaire.

**2.2 Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.**

- We monitored harvest of 622 wolves through sealing reports, field observations, results of 140 trapper reports. Harvest data were analyzed, and the results were applied to management planning and ongoing population assessment.

**2.3 Collect data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We collected data from 622 wolves when pelts were presented for sealing, including harvest location, color, and number in pack.

#### **2.4 Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of lice and other abnormalities.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We examined 622 wolf pelts for presence of lice and other abnormalities.

#### **2.5 Monitor, capture, and assess wolves to assess fur condition and parasites**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- In Unit 20B, Minto Flats
  - We conducted 2 radiotracking surveys during February–April 2021 for a total of 9.5 hours of fixed-wing flight time.

**Objective 3: Habitat Assessment and Enhancement.** Assess wolf directly or indirectly in specified areas of the state and perform habitat enhancement in areas where it is feasible.

#### **3.1 No activity will be conducted on this objective that is not incidental to other work.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Staff from 6 area offices observed wolf distribution and habitat use opportunistically while conducting surveys for other species. No unusual observations were noted.

**Objective 4: 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.

#### **4.1 Compile information and data for, or draft and finalize 5-year wolf survey and inventory operational reports and plans for each area.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We compiled information and data in preparation for writing 9 five-year wolf Management Reports and Operational Plans for Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. These reports include historical and current data, management directions, methods, Board of Game actions, harvests and natural mortality, habitat assessments, and local and statewide non-regulatory issues. An additional 2 five-year wolf Management Reports and Operational Plans were published in FY2021 and can be located at the following url:  
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Wolf&publicationtype=Species+Management+Report+%28and+Plan%29&submit=Search>

#### **4.2 Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We communicated and coordinated with and attended meetings of 10 local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, and 3 Federal Regional Advisory Councils about wolf management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Federal Subsistence Board. The number of meetings attended was reduced, and many meetings, including the regular Statewide Board of Game meeting, were cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns.

**4.3 Develop and/or review population objectives to assess their relevance**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Data and information from activities in objectives 1–4 were used by biologists in 6 area offices to review population and harvest objectives to determine whether each objective remained relevant during the current year and assessed whether harvest was impacting each population.

**4.4 Prepare wolf portion of 3 Annual Intensive Management Reports for the Board of Game to comply with regulatory requirements for Intensive Management Programs.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We prepared the wolf portion of 3 Annual Intensive Management Reports for the Board of Game to comply with regulatory requirements for Intensive Management programs and are available at the following url: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=intensivemanagement.programs>. These publicly-available reports and plans help to increase public awareness of wolf population trends, effects on moose and caribou populations, and management directions through trapper education clinics, newsletters, brochures, news releases, and other documents.

**4.5 Increase public awareness of wolf population trends, effects on moose and caribou populations, and management directions through trapper education clinics, newsletters, brochures, news releases, and other documents.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Publicly-available publications in section IV help to increase public awareness of wolf population trends, effects on moose and caribou populations, and management directions through trapper education clinics, newsletters, brochures, news releases, and other documents.
- Six area offices communicated and coordinated with local residents to reduce wolf–human problems, improve understanding of safety around wolves, and reduce need for DLP kill. We also responded to and made recommendations in at least 2 instances of human–wolf interactions. Staff educated the public on wolf awareness and safety, used distributed wolf safety and predation control brochures and/or increased communication with the public to improve understanding of hunting and trapping regulations and the value of conserving wolf populations, and to obtain better harvest data through increased harvest reporting.

## **II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.**

Results of objectives 1–4 will be summarized in the report portion of the 5-year wolf management report and plan, scheduled to be published in FY2021 and FY2023.

## **III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.**

No SDRs were submitted for this project.

## **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

Wolf portion of the Annual Report to the Alaska Board of Game on Intensive Management for Moose with Wolf, Black Bear, and Grizzly Bear Predation Control in Game Management Unit 19A. February 2021.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2021\\_gmu\\_19a\\_intensive\\_management\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2021_gmu_19a_intensive_management_annual_report.pdf)

Wolf portion of the Annual Report to the Alaska Board of Game on Intensive Management for Moose with Wolf, Black Bear, and Grizzly Bear Predation Control in Game Management Unit 19D East. February 2021.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2021\\_gmu\\_19d\\_east\\_intensive\\_management\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2021_gmu_19d_east_intensive_management_annual_report.pdf)

Wolf portion of the Annual Report to the Alaska Board of Game on Intensive Management for Fortymile Caribou with Wolf Predation Control in the Upper Yukon–Tanana Predation Control Area of Game Management Units 12, 20B, 20D, 20E and 25C. February 2021.

[http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2021\\_uy\\_tpcp\\_intensive\\_management\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2021_uy_tpcp_intensive_management_annual_report.pdf)

No other publications were completed during the report period.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT**

We recommend continued funding for this project in order to effectively survey, inventory and manage wolves populations in Interior and Northeast Alaska.

**Prepared by:**

**Date:** August 2021