

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-R4-2020 Amendment #1

PROJECT NUMBER : 23.4

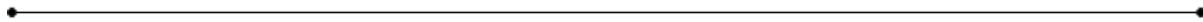
PROJECT TITLE: DWC Region IV Coordination – Central Southwest Region

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021

REPORT DUE DATE: September 1, 2021

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Gino Del Frate

COOPERATORS: Todd Rinaldi, Jeff Stetz, and Mark Burch



I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

OBJECTIVE: Administer 11 projects (Sub-objectives) under a grant that includes coordination and administration by 6-30-2021.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 1: Provide quality support for wildlife conservation programs including research, restoration, management, information dissemination, education, access, and associated recreational programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Coordinators ensure appropriate staff are tasked with duties to ensure all Region IV programs are accomplished. Many of the tasks are described below:

- Review and edit technical and non-technical products from Region IV.
- Review and edit technical products from statewide programs related to Region IV.
- Visited remote offices to communicate with staff provide new employee orientation and ensure progress on key projects and programs.
- Coordinated, edited, and submitted Federal Aid project statements and performance reports.
- Attended Region IV meetings, in person, through video conferencing or telephonically.
- Participated in multiple meetings to discuss wildlife management and public recreation (eg. Jonesville Public Use Area, Palmer Hay Flats state game refuge, Matanuska Susitna Borough, etc.).

- Participate in or helped coordinate outreach activities including Outdoor Youth Days, Alaska State Fair, and moose vehicle mitigation efforts.
- Assisting with the coordination of research proposals with external partners, including NPS, USFWS, USGS, AHTNA, AITRC, University of Alaska system, and Alaska Wildlife Troopers.
- Assisted with the development of education and outreach materials on moose vehicle collisions, Mulchatna Caribou management challenges and several educational projects geared for a statewide audience.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 2: Establish and maintain necessary practices to meet requirements for participation in and administration of the Wildlife Restoration (WR) program. Supervise DWC operations in Region IV area offices and facilities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Area management staff and public information staff routinely meet with other agencies, non -governmental organizations, native tribes and corporations, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, regional advisory councils, and members of the public to provide wildlife information necessary for the conservation of wildlife in their respective areas

- The management coordinator, research coordinator and the project coordinators ensure the staff mentioned above accomplish tier duties. In addition, the coordinators review and disseminate biological information to many of the entities described above.
- The regional supervisor ensures the staff accomplish their duties. In addition, the Regional Supervisor coordinates activities with other regions and with other programs across the state. Specific Activities include:
- Participated in and coordinated regional comments on large development projects that impact wildlife (Pebble mine proposal and DEIS, permitting etc.)
- Coordinated reviews of various small development project permit requests. These involve coordination with Access Defense program and Division of Habitat.
- Represented the Wildlife Highways Working Group at meetings and teleconferences. Worked with Department of Transportation and Public Facilities on highway improvement projects and future design to minimize impacts to wildlife. This included participation in at least 2 transportation fairs which are public involvement avenues to discuss current and future projects.
- Meetings with Matanuska Susitna Borough to discuss trail improvements and Jonesville Public Use Area planning on the Matanuska Valley Moose Range.
- Provide technical guidance, review, and editing of research related products for several undergraduate and graduated students and other professionals within and outside Alaska.
- Participated in the Federal Subsistence Board regulator process by attending meetings to discuss wildlife management and to provide biological information.
- Participated in the Board of Game process by attending multiple meetings and providing biological information and to discuss management strategies for wildlife in the region.

- Participate in the division's Wildlife Disease Working Group to discuss recent lab findings related to sheep diseases and to prepare a communication plan
- Coordinated with other state agencies on wildlife attacks by providing technical and biological expertise.
- Continued to work on the wildlife attack response protocol to improve employee safety and minimize impacts to wildlife.
- Met with University Staff to discuss collaborative management and research project within the region. Collaborated on graduate student research projects.
- Worked with education staff on a moose vehicle awareness program.
- Reviewed all documents, manuscripts and educational materials for publication and dissemination to the public.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 3: Plan, administer, coordinate, and provide regional oversight for the State of Alaska projects to ensure eligibility in the WR program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Administration and coordination of the regional programs fall primarily on the coordinators under this objective. Coordinators review draft proposals from staff, coordinate workflow, and review and edit popular technical, and federal aid report prior to publication. We participate in routine periodic meetings, video conferences and teleconferences to accomplish the objective. One or more staff accomplished the following during this period:

- Regional Supervisor holds monthly meetings by either teleconference or video conference to update staff on ongoing issues and to keep informed of regional issues.
- Attended one or more of the research coordination Team, Management Coordination Team or Division Management team meetings. Specific activities included assisting with development of guidelines for selecting graduate students at the Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit; prioritization guidelines for ADF&G staff to attend professional conferences and workshops; and providing updates on ongoing and proposed research in Region IV.
- Attended Region IV meetings and video conferences and teleconferences. Coordinated outside discussions when necessary.
- Advised Region IV leadership staff on various supervisory issues
- Research Coordinator led monthly meetings with research staff.
- Management coordinator led monthly meetings or as necessary with management staff.
- Facilitate coordination between research staff, their collaborators, Federal Aid staff and others within ADF&G.
- When necessary supervisory staff travelled to remote offices to coordinate activities and meet with staff. With many new staff this was also an opportunity to meet with and train incoming staff.
- All management and research staff worked to submit federal aid project statements and performance reports in a timely manner.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 4: Participate in local, regional, state, and national meetings as a representative of the DWC to address issues related to wildlife conservation and with WR-administered grants.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Staff requested and received approval to travel to meetings as budget and priorities allowed Staff routinely attended local meetings with other staff members of the public and agencies as needed.

- Attended Region IV meetings, video conferences and teleconferences.
- Participated in the Wildlife Highways Working Group to coordinate statewide efforts to improve Department of Transportation highway designs to minimize wildlife vehicle accidents Worked with DOT&PF on several project designs in Region IV.
- Discussed ongoing and future grizzly bear research in Unit 13 with Ahtna Corp., AITRIC, and USGS Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.
- Coordinated ongoing and new research on moose vehicle collisions with partners at Utah State University.
- Served on multiple hiring panels for ADF&G research and management positions.
- Monitor and coordinate training and professional development for staff.
- Met with Federal agencies (Tetlin NWR, and Wrangell St. Elias NP to discuss moose and caribou management strategies. Also provided staff for coordinated management work.
- Met with Matanuska Susitna Borough to discuss Matanuska Valley Moose Range management and planning.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 5: Develop new research project proposals, project statements and operational plans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Due to expected limitations to research funding related in part to the Covid-19 pandemic, no formal proposals were submitted during FY21. Instead, we largely focused on developing new, and expanding existing, collaborations and data sharing agreements with other agencies and academic institutions. We continue to assess ongoing projects in terms of progress toward their objectives, remaining within budget, and timelines.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 6: Supervise the research program in Region IV such that budgeting, planning, implementation, coordination/collaboration, and reporting are achieved.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Successfully recruited and hired a Wildlife Physiologist II.
- Completed the planned upgrade of a Biologist II to a Biologist III.
- Completed all evaluations for research staff.
- Coordinated telework agreements with most research staff due to COVID19 pandemic mitigation.

- Conducted remote team meetings as needed to stay abreast of work.
- Coordinated multiple data sharing agreements with various organizations, including Utah State University, Southern Oregon University, and the University of Alaska.
- Ongoing assessment of research programs in response to challenges related to COVID19, changes to staffing, and associated expertise and budgets.
- Oversaw recruitment of one STNP WBI and one LTNP WBI.
- Coordinated development and renewal of IACUC protocols for Region IV.
- Delegated research staff to various hiring and review panels.
- Assisted with developing graduate programs and related to ADF&G research.
- Submitted all interim reports to satisfy Federal Aid requirements.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 7: Oversee the development of operational plans, reports, and project statements for management.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Management Coordinator led multiple planning and strategy meetings with management staff.

- The Management Coordinator maintains the regional calendar of events and deadlines to keep track of staff workload and progress on projects.
- Coordinated the preparation and review of 5-year Species Management Reports and Plans (SMRPs). Ten reports were submitted during this performance period which includes furbearer (5), mountain goat (3) , and plains bison (2).

SUB-OBJECTIVE 8: Prepare and coordinate with the Federal Aid Coordinator all grant submissions, amendments, and performance report submissions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The Federal Aid Coordinator sets deadlines for submission of all deliverables. Coordinators set timelines for staff received draft documents for review and submitted reports and project statements to the Federal Aid Coordinator as required.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 9: Oversee, review, and finalize research technical reports and publications.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Anderson, K.L. 2020. Effects of fire on diet composition, foraging behavior, and nutritional status of moose in southcentral and interior Alaska. Master's Thesis. University of Alaska Anchorage. Anchorage, AK.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/8476dbd022e99f2b9913c540398e415a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

Richert, J. C., A. J. Leffler, D. E. Spalinger, and J. M. Welker. 2021. Snowier winters extend autumn availability of high-quality forage for caribou in Arctic Alaska. *Ecosphere* 12(7):e03617. 10.1002/ecs2.3617

Scharhag, J.M., C. Sartini, S.M. Crimmins, S.E. Hygnstrom, and J.B. Stetz. 2020. Characteristics of non-fatal attacks by black bear: conterminous United States, 2000-2017. *Human-Wildlife Interactions* 15:191-202
<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1726&context=hwi>

SUB-OBJECTIVE 10: Supervise the biometric support program in Region IV such that budgeting, planning, and implementation are completed.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Continued to implement training plan for the biometrician.
- Monitored progress of various biometric services efforts through biweekly progress reports.
- Ensured that clients (Region IV staff) were satisfied with consultation and other biometric products through periodic checks with research biologists.
- Provided necessary support to staff to ensure the adequate training, experience and equipment were available.

SUB-OBJECTIVE 11: Maintain the regional aircraft to support research and management projects.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional supervisor coordinated with staff to ensure that all maintenance needs were met. One airplane was shared between Regions II and V and the other between Region IV and statewide programs. Region IV hired a STNP Wildlife biologist with piloting experience to fly one of these planes during critical periods. fulfilled. Staff assigned to this project ensures that all projects are completed in an

efficient and effective manner and that procurement t, budgeting and reporting rules are followed.

In early 2020 COVID19 caused a global pandemic which persisted into this performance period. While much of the work accomplished was similar to the previous year, staff were challenged

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

The coordination project is not a product-oriented project. Rather this project is a description of the process staff utilize to see that other management, research, and education projects are

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

As mentioned above the global pandemic caused work to be significantly delayed or postponed. Work not accomplished in FY20 was completed in FY21.

During this reporting period and related to loss of revenue from Covid19 travel restrictions, we reduced our spending plan within the grant. In addition, we left 2 positions vacant and applied salary savings to the budget. This resulted in some underspending in FY21.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Publications under this project are not usually produced. Rather, staff ensures that other project reports and materials are completed in a timely fashion and according to Federal Aid guidelines. These products are reported under specific project reports.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

The Region IV grant will be restructured to create an operating grant that encompasses all survey, inventory, and coordination activities for all species into one project (the new TRACS reporting platform allows for this type of restructure). This should alleviate budgeting challenges within S&I projects and maximize spending flexibility.

Prepared by: Gino Del Frate and Todd Rinaldi

Date: September 20, 2021