

# **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-R2-2020 Amendment #1

**PROJECT NUMBER:** 13.0

**PROJECT TITLE:** Region 2 Elk S&I program: Elk Populations and Factors Influencing Their Status

**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:** Submit to FAC August 28, 2021

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Cynthia Wardlow

**COOPERATORS:** Jeff Selinger, Nathan Svoboda

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Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328  
2 CFR 200.301  
50 CFR 80.90

### **I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR**

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

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Aerial composition surveys indicate a stable to slightly increasing trend in the Unit 8 elk population. The population on Raspberry and Afognak islands was estimated to be approximately 1000–1200 animals in 2020–21.

With support from project collaborators including Afognak, Ouzinkie, Natives of Kodiak, and Koniag Native Corporations as well as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Kodiak Brown Bear Trust, global positioning system (GPS) collars were deployed in 2019 and 2020. Capture operations were conducted across Afognak and Raspberry Islands, including bull and cow elk from 7 of the 8 herds. Seasonal distribution of radiocollared elk is monitored through telemetry flights and GPS collar verification. Annual composition and recruitment flights were conducted for each herd using radiocollared animals to identify herd location.

OBJECTIVE 2: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring and Regulations. Assess the number of elk harvested by hunters and other sources of mortality that might have an impact on each population.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Hunt reports provided data on hunting effort and harvest. During RY20, we issued 641 drawing and registration permits resulting in 276 hunters going afield. Hunters reported harvesting 104 elk (57 males, 47 females), a slight decrease from the previous year's total harvest of 111 elk.

OBJECTIVE 3: Habitat Enhancement /Assessment. Assess elk habitat and browse availability directly or indirectly and work with project partners to perform habitat enhancement in areas where it is feasible.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Seasonal distribution of radiocollared elk is monitored through telemetry flights and GPS collar data analysis, as well as through observations by state and federal biologists and anecdotal information provided by hunters. Telemetry flights are conducted during the spring and fall to monitor herd composition and elk seasonal distribution. In addition, seasonal distribution is further assessed on an annual basis through re-location data provided by radio collared elk.

OBJECTIVE 4: Elk Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each elk population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, and educational materials.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: We recently completed a five-year elk Management Report and Operational Plan for Unit 8. This report includes historical and current data, management directions, methods, Board of Game actions, harvests and natural mortality, habitat assessments, and local and statewide non-regulatory issues. The completed report will be available at the following url: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Roosevelt+Elk&publicationtype=Species+Management+Report+%28and+Plan%29&submit=Search>

Herd-specific population objectives are being developed with additional information from ongoing habitat and distribution research.

We communicated with and attended meetings of the local Fish and Game Advisory Committee, the Alaska Board of Game, and Native corporations about elk management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Alaska Board of Game.

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

Additional flights were conducted opportunistically during this reporting period to assess wild elk herd locations and their proximity to an elk farm that regularly has domestic elk escape the confines of the farm.

Project results are not yet available. Summaries of past data trends are published at the following url:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Roosevelt+Elk&publicationtype=Species+Management+Report+%28and+Plan%29&submit=Search>

Summary results for FY2021 will be published at this location when analyses are completed.

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

None. Project number 13.0 was underspent in travel due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, but funds previously planned for travel were used to purchase commodities related to this project.

### **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

All publications for FY2021 are not yet available. Project publications for previous years are available at the following url:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Roosevelt+Elk&publicationtype=Species+Management+Report+%28and+Plan%29&submit=Search>.

The following Elk Management Reports and Plans were published in FY2014 at [http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static-f/home/library/pdfs/wildlife/mgt\\_rpts/elk\\_2014.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static-f/home/library/pdfs/wildlife/mgt_rpts/elk_2014.pdf)

Harper, P., editor. 2014. Elk management report of survey-inventory activities, 1 July 2011–30 June 2013. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report ADF&G/DWC/SMR-2014-1, Juneau. (*PDF*)

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

We recommend continued funding for this project to effectively manage Roosevelt elk populations in Southcentral Alaska.

**Prepared by:** Cynthia Wardlow

**Date:** September 2021