

# **Wildlife Restoration MULTI-YEAR 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 SFY21

**PROJECT NUMBER:** 3.0

**PROJECT TITLE:** Region 2 Caribou S&I program: Caribou 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, Nick Fowler, Jason Herreman, Nate 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 population to determine the 5-year trend.

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

#### **Kenai Lowland, Kenai Mountain, Killey River, and Fox River Herds (Units 7 and 15)**

The Kenai Lowland herd was surveyed in June of 2020 on the calving grounds and 68 animals were counted. This herd continues to remain stable at low numbers.

A survey was conducted in February 2021 for the Kenai Mountain. Only 143 animals were counted. This herd continues to remain stable about around 150 animals.

A survey was conducted in February 2021 for the Killey River Herd and the Fox River Herd. Count numbers for the Killey River Herd were down slightly from our recent high of 531 to 479. Similar to the previous year only Twenty-six animals were counted in the Fox River Herd during February survey flights. It appears that animals from the Fox River and Killey River Herds

continue to comingle during the winter returning to traditional summer ranges in time for hunting season. Hunters continue to be successful finding animals in the Fox River herd.

### **Kodiak Herd (Unit 8)**

An aerial survey was conducted in July 2020 and a total of 310 animals were counted indicating a significant increase from the previous survey when 233 animals were counted. This survey identified 2 separate caribou groups comprised of 310 adults and 0 calves. It is important to note caribou calves were difficult to distinguish from adults due to their larger size this time of year so calf estimates are likely underestimated. In addition, due to financial constraints the entire caribou range was unable to be surveyed so a complete count was not feasible. Population levels appear to continue to fluctuate between 300 and 400 animals.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

### **Kenai Lowland, Kenai Mountain, Killey River, and Fox River Herds (Units 7 and 15)**

Caribou in Units 7 and 15 are managed under a state drawing permit. Hunters reported harvesting 28 caribou (19 males and 9 females) during this reporting period, which is a slight decrease compared to previous years. No animals were harvested under the Federal subsistence season.

### **Kodiak Herd (Unit 8)**

Unit 8 caribou harvest is managed under a general season hunt. Hunters reported harvesting 37 caribou (22 males and 15 females) during this reporting period, slightly lower than the 2019–20 reported harvest of 37.

OBJECTIVE 3: Caribou Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each caribou population with an emphasis on engaging the public through public meetings, working groups, and educational materials.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

We communicated and coordinated with and attended meetings of local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Board of Game, local village councils and Native corporations about caribou management. The next Board of Game meeting for Region 2 is scheduled for winter of 2021/2022.

We compiled information and data to inform the next five-year caribou Management Reports and Plans for Units 8 and 7 & 15. 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. Reports were last completed in FY2018 and are

available at the following url:

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

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

This project is ongoing. Summaries of past data trends are published at the following url:

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

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

None. Project number 3.0 was significantly underspent during the reporting period due to a staff vacancy in the Soldotna office, restrictions on travel due to COVID-19, and an overall budget shortage which resulted in a request to reduce planned spending to preserve Fish & Game matching funds.

## **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

Project publications for previous years are available at the following url:

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

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

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

**Prepared by:** Cynthia Wardlow

**Date:** September 2021