

Wildlife Restoration MULTI-YEAR GRANT INTERIM 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 SFY21

PROJECT NUMBER: 9.0

PROJECT TITLE: Region IV Plains Bison S&I program: The Status of Plains Bison and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Units 11&13

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

PERFORMANCE YEAR: July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

REPORT DUE DATE: September 2021

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Todd Rinaldi, Region IV Management Coordinator

COOPERATORS: Heidi Hatcher, Glennallen Area Wildlife Biologist

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 plains bison population to determine the 5-year trend.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Units 11 and 13 Copper River and Chitna Bison Herds

- Conduct aerial sex and age population composition surveys to determine status, trend productivity and mortality of bison.

The Copper River bison herd survey was conducted on May 26 (after two reconnaissance flights) and required 7 hours total flight time with a contracted PA-18 and one department staff member as observer. A total of 72 bison were classified, which was recognized as a minimum count, as many bison were in the timber and/or high brush and difficult to locate. The five-year average of the herd is 159 bison and is reflective of the 50% growth the herd has experienced in a little over six years.

A survey was completed for the Chitina River bison herd survey on May 26, 2021 following an absence in 2020. One survey team in a Piper Super Cub observed 44 bison.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Units 11 and 13 Copper River and Chitna Bison Herds

- Monitor harvest from permit hunts and analyze harvest data to determine harvest rate and effect on population.

Two draw permits were issued during this performance period for the Chitina River herd; 1 permit holders hunted and 1 was successful. This level of harvest is having no effect on population levels. Twenty-five harvest permits were issued for the Copper River herd; 14 permit holders reported hunting with 88% success rate.

OBJECTIVE 3: Plains Bison Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each Plains Bison population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Units 11 and 13 Copper River and Chitna Bison Herds

- Develop and submit Five-year Plains Bison Management Report and Plans for the Copper River and Chitna herds.

The five-year Bison Management Report and Plan for the Copper River and Chitna herds are in final review and are expected to be published in RY2022.

- Provide bison management information to State and Federal regulatory processes.

All information collected is used inform state and federal regulatory processes. Outside of common communication with our federal counterparts There were no direct or substantial requests for information during this reporting period and no regulatory changes were proposed or created. Information on bison is readily available on our website.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=species&sort2=speciesname&speciesname=Wood%20Bison>

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

None during this reporting period.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Bison Management Reports and Plans are currently being drafted for the Copper River and Chitina River herds and is due during the next performance period. Past plans and information can be found here:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=species&sort2=speciesname&speciesname=Wood%20Bison>

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

We recommend continued funding for this project in order to effectively manage bison populations in east-central Alaska.

Prepared by: Todd A. Rinaldi

Date: 8/16/2021