

**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-SW-2020 Amendment #1

PROJECT NUMBER: 29.0

PROJECT TITLE: Alaska Wildlife Coordination – ANILCA Access Defense

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

REPORT DUE DATE: August 27, 2021

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Amy Wiita and Marla Carter, ANILCA and Access Defense

COOPERATORS: NA

Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301
50 CFR 80.90

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Coordinate ADF&G reviews of federal plans, regulations, permits, and policies and submit comments, resource information, or recommendations to the authorizing agency to avoid or minimize effects to wildlife habitat and/or populations, or public access and use of those resources.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Staff reviewed 100% of identified federal plans, regulations, permits, and policies to avoid or minimize effects to wildlife habitat and/or populations, or public access and use of those resources. ANILCA staff identified hunter access and wildlife-related public use issues, information, and solutions, as well as wildlife habitat information, for comment on and review of the following:

- Nine Bureau of Land Management actions including plans, environmental assessments and impact statements, ANILCA Section 810 analyses, and rulemakings;
- Ten National Park Service actions including management and facility plans, environmental assessments, information collection requests, jurisdiction assessments, projects, and regulatory actions

- Ten U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service actions including rulemakings, compatibility determinations, environmental assessments, information collection requests, projects, special use authorizations, and scoping and regulatory actions;
- Thirteen U.S. Forest Service actions including environmental assessments and impact statements, memoranda of understanding, special use authorizations, projects, and policy and scoping actions;
- One Office of Management and Budget action;
- One U.S. Army Corps of Engineers action;
- Three federal actions for the Department of Interior and Office of the President including an interim final ruling, a Migratory Bird Treaty action, and an Executive Order; and
- Three Department of Defense military site Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan action throughout the state.

OBJECTIVE 2: Coordinate ADF&G reviews of State area plans, land sales, leases, easements, permits, land acquisitions, and regulations and submit comments, resource information, or recommendations to the authorizing agency to avoid or minimize effects to wildlife habitat and/or populations, or public access and use of those resources.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Staff reviewed and provided comment on approximately 270 land use permits, leases, land disposals, plats, easement vacations, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act conveyances (with 17(b) easements), native allotments, and municipal entitlements to conserve wildlife habitats and populations, and public access for hunters and other wildlife recreation users. Staff continued to provide information on wildlife habitats and populations, public use, and made management recommendations for three State land management plans (North Slope Area Plan, Copper River Basin Area Plan, and Kachemak Bay State Park). Staff worked with Department of Natural Resource and Department of Transportation and Public Facilities staff to draft revisions to Alaska Statute 19.40. Access Defense (A-D) staff have been working with Department of Natural Resources staff to develop permit stipulations for authorizations that involve helicopter use near goat and sheep habitat. This will ensure these species are protected during critical life stages and both hunters and wildlife viewers will benefit. Staff finalized work on a land acquisition project approved by P-R grant funding to conserve valuable wildlife habitat adjacent to Creamer's Field in Fairbanks and we worked closely with the ADF&G Lands and Refuges program to acquire new lands within or adjacent to our refuges.

OBJECTIVE 3: Coordinate ADF&G input to DNR and the Department of Law (DOL) for navigability assertions (Recordable Disclaimers of Interest or questions of ownership) and assertions of RS2477 rights-of-way.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: A-D staff worked in partnership with the Alaska Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Law (DOL) for navigability assertion, planning and review, and land status research for the following water bodies: Colville River,

Tustamina Lake, Mulchatna River, Birch Creek, Kobuk River, Noatak River, Kuskokwim River, North Fork – Middle Fork Fortymile River, Lemon Creek, and Nabesna River which provide public access for hunting and wildlife viewing, and wildlife management activities. A-D staff continued to support the State's claims to RS 2477 rights-of-way that have direct implications for hunter access and potential effects to ADF&G management of wildlife. We participated in research for the following RS 2477 ROWs in the Fortymile/Chicken area and Klutina Lake Road near Chitina.

OBJECTIVE 4: Assist ADF&G staff with federal lands related issues and permits.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: ANILCA staff fulfilled 100% of ADF&G staffs' informal and formal requests for assistance with federal lands issues and permits and also responded to ANILCA related public inquiries. They advised ADF&G staff on cultural resource and sampling permit implications related to administrative research activities; successfully assisted staff in obtaining a permit for Alexander Archipelago wolf research in the Tongass National Forest Wilderness on Pleasant Island; and began assisting staff in obtaining renewed Special Use Permits for administrative uses associated with Pacific Salmon Treaty research of an ADF&G owned cabin and a U.S. Forest Service owned cabin in the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness. Negotiations of these SUPs are on-going at the time of this report submission

OBJECTIVE 5: Assist ADF&G staff with land status research and public access issues and to research and develop new hunter access sites.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: A-D staff responded to ADF&G staffs' requests for assistance with land status research related to wildlife management activities and public access, including on trails and to waterbodies.

- Assisted Wildlife Habitat Enhancement staff with land status for the Alphabet Hills Burn
- Researched Tom Cat Drive Easement for Refuge program near Homer
- Assisted Waterfowl program with land status research for project near Safety Sound Native Corporation lands
- Assisted the public on various land ownership questions including access into Ram Valley (Eagle River), access to a remote parcel near Matanuska Glacier, and on lands near Lake Iliamna.
- Conservation Easement questions on a private parcel within Goose Bay State Game Refuge

A-D staff worked the ADF&G Lands and Refuge program to research and improve access within Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, Goose Bay State Game Refuge, Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, Anchor River/Fitz Creek Critical Habitat Area, and Fox River Flats Critical Habitat Area. A-D staff managed a total of seven existing hunter access improvement projects and two ADF&G projects across southcentral, interior, and southeast Alaska, funded under separate multi-year Pittman-Robertson (P-R) grants, and

received new federal grant awards for three new hunter access projects. Staff were successful in closing three of these projects.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

See Section I.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

There were no Significant Development Reports (SDR) or amendments submitted during FY2021.

Funding was not completely utilized by either program due to staff vacancies and travel limitations due to COVID-19 during this funding cycle.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

NA

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

Continue programs.

Prepared by: Amy Wiita and Marla Carter

Date: August 2021