

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-R-4-2019

PROJECT NUMBER: 3.0

PROJECT TITLE: Intensive Management of Moose in Alaska, Game Management Units 20A, 20B, and 20D.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: 1 October 2018 – 30 June 2019

REPORT DUE DATE: September 28, 2019

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bob Schmidt

COOPERATORS:

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Monitor moose nutritional status by assessing the weights of short-yearlings in GMUs 20A, 20B, and 20D. Moose nutritional status will be monitored in Units 20A, 20B, and 20D using short-yearling mass as an index of the nutritional condition of the moose population. The mass of short-yearlings after population reduction aided by liberal antlerless harvest will be compared to the mass of short-yearlings weighed during 1997–2003 (before liberal antlerless harvest and population reduction) and to the 385-pound threshold identified to substantiate low twinning-based nutritional status (Boertje et al. 2007).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During 20–24 February, we captured and weighed 47 short-yearling females in Unit 20D. This required 48 hours of fixed-wing and 20 hours of helicopter flight time and 4 staff members. Skies were clear with calm winds and temperatures in the mid-20s.

Intensive management (IM) activities focused on Unit 20D, as there were many other projects that required biologists time. Additionally, limited availability of qualified helicopter and fixed-wing contract pilots and aircraft that were in high demand created a shortage of qualified individuals and equipment to conduct this highly-technical and dangerous work. We planned to capture more animals, but these were the only days the helicopter was available. We hope to capture more animals in FY2020.

OBJECTIVE 2: Monitor forage abundance and utilization (browse surveys) to evaluate browse abundance for moose and the habitat's capacity to support additional moose on the landscape in Units 20A, 20B, and 20D. Browse surveys will be conducted to evaluate forage

availability in Units 20A, 20B, and 20D to estimate browse production and removal. Survey design will estimate current annual growth of forage species and the amount removed each year as an index of forage availability. Results of these surveys are important factors in evaluating Intensive Management.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: No browse surveys were conducted due to unavailability of qualified staff during the timeframe needed to conduct these labor-intensive ground surveys. We hope to conduct these surveys in FY2020.

OBJECTIVE 3: Analyze data and report Intensive Management (IM) findings to Board of Game. It is important to analyze data and document the findings to provide a record of Intensive Management activities for moose in these areas. Findings will be reported to the Alaska Board of Game, Fish & Game Advisory Committees, federal committees, and other interested publics.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During the report period, we prepared data to present to the Alaska Board of Game, Fish & Game Advisory Committees, federal committees, and other interested publics. However, data were not presented due to the small timeframe between data collection and the end of the report period. These data and findings will be presented to these entities during FY2020.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

During 20–24 February, we captured and weighed 47 short-yearling females in Unit 20D. This required 48 hours of fixed-wing and 20 hours of helicopter flight time and 4 staff members. Skies were clear with calm winds and temperatures in the mid-20s. Sample size is too small to compare to the mass of short-yearlings weighed during 1997–2003 (before liberal antlerless harvest and population reduction) or to the 385-pound threshold identified to substantiate low twinning-based nutritional status.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

None.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT Because we were unable to attain the desired sample size for objective 1 due to helicopter constraints and the need to conduct this project during March when calves are the proper age to compare with other studies and when snow and other weather conditions are likely to be most conducive to successful capture. We recommend continued funding for this project in another grant to increase the sample size to make adequate comparisons and assessments. Additionally, we hope to conduct browse surveys

(objective 2) and will report our preliminary findings to the Alaska Board of Game, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, and the public (objective 3) in FY2020.

Prepared by: Doreen Parker McNeill

Date: September 1, 2019