

**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:** P23.0

**PROJECT TITLE:** Headquarters Statewide Federal Aid Coordination

**PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2021

**PERFORMANCE YEAR:** 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021; year 2- of a 2-year grant

**REPORT DUE DATE:** August 27, 2021

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Brenda Bowers

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Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328  
2 CFR 200.301  
50 CFR 80.90

**I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE**

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Establish and maintain necessary practices to meet requirements for participation in and administration of the Wildlife Restoration (WR) program.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** We continue our efforts to streamline the overall grant process, resulting in more improvements in our grant administration. Regional supervisors and coordinators are working more closely with their administrative staff and principal investigators on project submissions, confirming that internal budgets match grant submissions and are in compliance with federal requirements outlined in 2 CFR 200. Even though reporting expenditures on a project level to USFWS is no longer a requirement due to the lift of a years-long special condition, the staff have incorporated the year end practice into their process voluntarily as they have found it to be quite helpful for future project planning.

There has been a significant amount of staff turnover in the past year, which has resulted in a steep learning curve for some regions among regional coordinators and admin leads. Fortunately, staff in the regions are able to support the new staff as they get up to speed and to take over federal aid responsibilities as vacancies are being filled.

OBJECTIVE 2: Administer, coordinate, and provide oversight for the State of Alaska Pittman- Robertson projects to successfully manage and conserve Alaska’s wildlife and ensure eligibility in the WR program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: It has been a challenging year for administering grants, as well as coordinating project work in the field due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic affecting virtually every aspect of conservation work, especially ability to travel for field work. This resulted in field seasons being delayed or cancelled altogether. Ordering and receiving supplies and equipment necessary to meet the objectives of the projects was also difficult and at times impossible due to back orders, delayed or suspended production, and shipping issues around the world. To attempt to avoid de-obligation and potential reversion of SFY2019 grant funds, the decision was made to amend DWC’s operating grants to extend the period of performance one year. The strategy was to gain more time to accomplish SFY2020 objectives as well as SFY2021 objectives. We were successful in that endeavor: no de-obligations occurred on operating grants because pandemic rules allowed SFY19 obligations to be used for another year. We continue to carefully monitor SFY2022 projects and funding during the pandemic, which unfortunately has shown no signs to date of subsiding.

Several new projects and grants were submitted in SFY21 and the Division was able, for the third year in a row, to reach a substantial safety margin (\$5.1 million) in the federal fiscal year 2021. The new grants listed below are our normal operating, hunter education, range operations and maintenance, research, and hunter access projects.

CFDA Number	DWC Fed PR Grant #	Awarding Agency Identification Number	Award Title	Period of Performance Start Date	Period of Performance End Date	Number of Projects	SFY21 Federal Amount	Match Source
15.611	AKW-E-3-2020-01	FAIN: F19AF00939	Basic Hunter Education 4C (HIT) and Enhanced Hunter Education Section 10 (HEE) (AKW-E-3-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	2	2,467,938.12	Operating FGF In-Kind Volunteers
15.611	AKW-B-R2-2020-01	FAIN: F19AF00965	Region 2 Survey & Inventory, Coordination & Support & Research Projects (AKW-B-R2-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	15	2,239,746.60	Operating FGF
15.611	AKW-B-R3-2020-01	FAIN: F19AF00941	Region 3 Survey & Inventory, Coordination & Support & Research Projects (AKW-B-R3-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	18	4,604,989.00	Operating FGF
15.611	AKW-B-R4-2020-01	FAIN: F19AF00928	Region 4 Survey & Inventory, Coordination & Support & Research Projects (AKW-B-R4-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	11	2,336,627.00	Operating FGF In-Kind Waived Indirect
15.611	AKW-B-R5-2020-03	FAIN: F19AF00942	Region 5 Survey & Inventory, Coordination & Support & Research Projects (AKW-B-R5-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	8	2,738,367.00	Operating FGF
15.611	AKW-B-SW-2020	FAIN: F19AF00960	Statewide Programs (AKW-B-SW-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	11	8,499,534.00	Operating FGF, in-kind 3RD Party SDPR waived indirect
15.611	AKW-B-VERS-2020	FAIN: F19AF00974	Viewing and Education at Refuges and Sanctuaries (AKW-B-VERS-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	2	541,565.00	Operating FGF FGF Program Income 3rd Party SDPR
15.611	AKW-B-R1-2020	FAIN: F19AF00940	Region 1 Survey & Inventory, Coordination & Support & Research Projects (AKW-B-R1-2020 A#1)	7/1/2019	6/30/2021	16	3,066,182.00	Operating FGF 3rd Party SDPR
15.611	AKW-B-OM-2021	FAIN: F21AF00068	ADF&G Range Operations and Maintenance	10/1/2020	6/30/2021	1	650,943.00	ADFG Range program income
15.611	AKW-D-7-2021	FAIN: F21AF00429	Starrigavan Trail and Wetlands Mitigation	11/20/2020	12/31/2022	1	498,695.00	SDPR DOT Public Facilities Roads to Resources match funds
15.611	AKW-D-8-2021	FAIN: F21AF00806	Oliver Inlet Access Improvement	3/1/2021	12/31/2022	1	75,206.00	DNR cash match and FGF
15.611	AKW-R-2021	FAIN: F21AF01425	Reg 1 Wold Field Data Collection	4/1/2021	6/30/2022	1	75,000.00	Operating FGF
15.611	AKW-D-9-2021	FAIN: F21AF00807	Eklutna Lake Trail Expansion	3/1/2021	12/31/2023	1	189,375.00	DNR DPOR and FGF

The FY21 grant cycle was the second year of the separate regional, statewide, and special areas/viewing grants. Previously, we had one large operating grant with 50+ projects. We broke apart the operating grant into regional grants 1-5 and created two others—the statewide grant and a special areas/viewing grant. The intent of making the grants regional is to enable the regions to maintain control over their own grant budgets, to maintain a safety margin for years to come, and to halt reversion of federal funds. These outcomes have been met: we currently maintain a safety margin (\$5.1 million in FY21) and have had no reversion of federal funds back to the WSFR program.

To prepare for the shift towards using the new TRACS reporting system, the federal aid coordinator (FAC) coordinated several TRACS training opportunities to assist principal investigators in shifting from previous, individualized objectives within the proposals to the uniform TRACS objectives. While this year's operating project proposals were not required to go into TRACS (grants with a start date of 01/01/2021 on were required), the division recognized the benefit of beginning the process. Identifying the appropriate TRACS objectives early prepared PIs to create the new TRACS-ready proposals needed for FY22 submissions.

During this time, a significant effort went into a second major restructure of our operating grants: combining individual survey & inventory and coordination—including management and planning—into one project statement per region. This effort was conducted by the federal aid coordinator to resolve the issue of having separate, difficult to determine budgets by species. Regions consider S&I work to be quite fluid with many variables affecting what surveys can be conducted, such as secondary surveys may be conducted opportunistically with other surveys, or weather may prohibit some surveys. In any given year, survey needs by species must necessarily be flexible and funds are made available by those needs. The FAC utilized TRACS objectives to combine the previously separate projects by species into one project statement that organized by objective rather than species, thereby solving the problem of having to create separate, difficult to determine budgets while still maintaining adherence to federal regulations. Regional supervisors received their regional drafts during this reporting period and made further revisions suitable for the respective region.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Provide quality assurance with objectives that support wildlife conservation, restoration, management, research, information dissemination, education, access, and associated recreational benefits.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** The division published approximately 40 area specific species management reports (“unit” reports), wildlife research reports, and other types of reports within its technical report categories in FY21. Additionally, division staff authored or coauthored approximately 20 technical/scientific or professional articles or external publications that related to management or research activities funded by Federal Aid. The division also produces a wide variety of informational and educational materials related to management and research efforts funded by Federal Aid. Several online articles, brochures, newsletters, videos, curricula and other informational and educational materials published in FY21 were entered into the division's Wildlife Publications Database (WPD). Several hundred new item records (approximately 400) for all types of publications, including newly published and historical, were entered into the WPD in FY21 as part of the division's effort to create a bibliography of division works that is

available to the public via a search interface to the database on the department website. The bibliography effort also includes a process of discovery to locate citations of works produced by division staff that are not already listed in the database, occasional scanning of print copies and processing of PDFs to create an electronic version of an historical report, refinement of the database fields and tagging, and other activities. Items in the publications database may be found by using the online search interface at [www.Wildlifepublications.adfg.alaska.gov](http://www.Wildlifepublications.adfg.alaska.gov)

Many of the Division's projects continue to be affected by the myriad challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic, including travel, surveys, field and tele-work. The decision was made at the recommendation of Alaska's WSFR program staff to not close our FY20 operating grants but rather extend the period of performance by another year for FY21. While this enabled the state to continue to expend FY20 funds remaining, and we submitted our FY21 funding request at only 80% of projected project costs, the benefit of this approach was not realized. The process to obligate additional funds at the end of the grant cycle was more complex than was originally communicated to DWC, resulting in a less than optimal end of the grant cycle. DWC agrees that using the strategy of obligating only partial funding at the beginning of a grant cycle, Covid notwithstanding, is not a strategy the division intends to continue. FY22 operating grants were obligated at 90%, but we will likely amend the grants sooner to avoid the challenges presented by the previous strategy.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Participate in local, regional, state, and national meetings as a representative of the DWC to address issues related to WR-administered grants.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

No outside travel occurred in FY21; however, the FAC participated on planning committee for the Federal Aid Coordinator/WSFR National Virtual meeting. Brenda represented the states and territories of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and Nevada and coordinated a virtual "field trip" of successful WSFR-funded projects across these states and territories.

**OBJECTIVE 5:** Monitor state legislation, regulations, and policies that may impact State eligibility to receive the benefits of the WR-administered grant programs.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The FAC has participated monthly on the TRACS working group but will hand off that responsibility to another state's FAC. This came as a result of the Alaska FAC being selected as chair of the Federal Aid Coordinators Working Group in the spring of 2021. This group is responsible for representing states' interests to the WSFR program leadership, as well as being a conduit for WSFR program information, updates, and changes to be communicated to the states. Brenda has presented updates to the Trust Funds Committee at the North American Conference and AFWA Annual meeting.

Brenda is also on a sub-team designated to address problems associated with the advent of the TRACS reporting system and Grants Solutions grant platform. There are many issues that will take time to identify, address, and rectify such as increased workload, functionality of both systems, duplicative effort required, and problems associated with workflow. Despite these

challenges, every effort is being made to meet TRACS timelines for project data entry and to work within Grants Solutions.

**OBJECTIVE 6:** Work and collaborate with partners and the public to improve the management, understanding, and conservation of wildlife in Alaska, including work with other state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

DWC has worked collaboratively with many agencies, organizations, and universities such as the North Slope Borough, AK Dept. of Natural Resources, the Annenberg Foundation, Mat-Su Trails, University of Alaska, the Council to Advance Hunting & Shooting Sports, State University of New York, Founding Forty, Alaska Sea Life Center, Utah State University, to name a few. Some have provided in-kind match in the form of volunteer hours, others in the form of waived indirect or even cash.

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

This is an ongoing project and accomplishments are reported above.

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

A Significant Development Reports (SDR) was submitted in P35.0 Small Game Survey & Inventory and is reported there. A second amendment to AKW-B-SW-2020 was approved on 12/16/2020 to:

- Identify in-kind match to utilize the contribution of waived indirect from University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) as match to our PR funds for P23.0 HQ Coordination.
- Reconcile discrepancy in project 1.33 to include in-kind contribution for SY20 and SFY21
- Move 5.5 months of the statewide biometrician III position from P23.0 HQ Coordination to P28.0 Data Analytics and Processing
- Correction cost categories amounts in P24.0 WHESAP; no change to direct project cost.

**IV. PUBLICATIONS**

None

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT**

Continue statewide project.

**Prepared by:** Brenda Bowers

**Date:** September 22, 2021