

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

**FURBEARERS
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR: W-33-3

PROJECT NR: 7.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Game Management Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5

PERIOD: 1 July 2004–30 June 2005

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This statewide performance report includes the four regions involved in furbearer survey and inventory activities. Statewide and regional activities are listed before specific activities by herd and game management unit.

**The Status of Furbearers
and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region I**

Regionwide Activities

Activity: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

The Board of Game met in Juneau during November 2004. Staff prepared background material on furbearer management within each unit and provided recommendations to the Board for 8 proposals from the public to change harvest regulations.

Activity: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they harvested and presented for sealing.

Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. Data was collected on about 349 beaver, 3802 marten, 1085 otter, 18 wolverine, and 3 lynx pelts that were presented for sealing in the region.

Activity: Use trapper questionnaire, interviews, and other anecdotal information from reliable observers as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

This was done as opportunities allowed. This type of information helped managers with recommendations about changes to current trapping regulations.

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

This was done as opportunities presented themselves through data from fur-sealing reports and conversations with trappers and hunters.

Activities by Unit

Unit 4

Activity: Monitor sex and age ratios of marten on NE Chichagof Island using carcasses submitted by trappers, as part of a cooperative management program with the Forest Service.

Although marten carcasses were collected by the Forest Service, the information provided to us was incomplete, and we were unable to conduct an analysis of sex and age ratios. We will continue to work with the Forest Service and trappers for carcass collection and necropsy information to allow monitoring of this population.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project: None

Stewardship Investment items purchased: None

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$19.9

Submitted by: Dale L. Rabe – Region I Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region II

Regionwide Activities

Activity: Prepare a triennial furbearer management report.

A furbearer management report was completed.

Activity: Provide information to the Board of Game on furbearer management.

Specific furbearer management reports were provided to the Board of Game at its 2005 spring meeting in response to proposals that would have changed season and/or bag limits. Overviews on all furbearers were provided to the board in preparation for its spring meeting.

Activity: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

See individual unit reports below.

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

See individual unit reports below.

Activities by Unit

Unit 6

Activity: Conduct spring river otter latrine surveys.

We surveyed 610 latrine sites in Unit 6D during August 2004. Data analysis is ongoing.

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Fur harvest estimates from sealing reports:

Beavers	43
Land otters	178
Marten	140
Wolverine	10
Lynx	0

Units 7 and 15

Activity: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

Results: No surveys were conducted during this reporting period.

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Preliminary harvest results for 2004–05 were:

	Unit 7	Unit 15A	Unit 15B	Unit 15C	Total
Beaver	33	11	6	16	66
Marten	54	0	1	0	55
Wolverine	14	0	0	4	18
Otter	8	18	6	5	37
Lynx	0	1	5	0	6

Unit 8

Activity: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

During the 2004–05 season, we collected data on 327 furbearers presented for sealing.

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

During the 2004–05 season, 31 trappers harvested 309 otters, an average of 10 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 161 males (52%), 129 females (42%), and 19 of undetermined sex (6%). Most trappers were local residents (84%), and trapping was the most common method of take (84%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (67%), and January was the most productive month (44%). Forty-five otters (15%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

Ten trappers harvested 18 beavers, an average harvest of 1.8 beavers/trapper. Eight (80%) of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and trapping was the most common method of take (93%). Boats were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (55%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during November (44%) and January (39%). Five (27%) beavers were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

Trapper questionnaire respondents reported that furbearer populations were high. With the current low harvest in most areas, developing management objectives for furbearers is not a high priority.

Units 9 and 10

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Preliminary reported harvests in Unit 9 by species:

Beaver	66
Lynx	22
Otter	142
Wolverine	16

Units 11 and 13

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Preliminary Harvest 2004–05:

GMU 13	Lynx	98	24% Kittens
	Beaver	202	
	Otter	33	
	Marten (13E)	Sealing was discontinued 2003/04	
	Wolverine	43	
GMU 11	Lynx	5	0% Kittens
	Beaver	15	
	Otter	2	
	Wolverine	13	

Activity: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

Aerial transect surveys for lynx tracks were flown this spring.

1.2 new lynx tracks per transect in 2002

0.5 new lynx tracks per transect in 2003

6.5 new lynx tracks per transect in 2004 (only priority transects were flown)

1.6 new lynx tracks per transect in 2005

Unit 14

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Preliminary estimates for fur harvest:

Beaver 99

Land otters 32

Marten 90

Wolverine 5

Lynx 0

The lynx trapping season was closed during 2004–05

Unit 16

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

There was no lynx trapping season during 2004–05.

Preliminary estimate for fur harvest:

Beavers 77

Land otters 46

Marten 643

Wolverine 43

Lynx 0

Unit 17

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Fur harvest for 2004:

Beaver	186
Land Otter	131
Wolverine	55
Lynx	3

Stewardship Investment items purchased: None.

Total Regional Segment Period Costs (in thousands): \$102.1

Submitted by: Gino Del Frate, Regional Management Coordinator

The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region III

Regionwide Activities

Activity: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Distributed trapper questionnaires regionwide to provide a basis for determining the status of furbearer populations.

Activity: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored harvest of 985 lynx, 95 river otter, and 188 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters

Activity: Collect data on harvest when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected data on harvest of 1268 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and analyzed harvest data.

Activity: Provide information to advisory committees on furbearer management.

Provided information to advisory committees on furbearer management.

Activities by Unit

Units 12 and 20E

Activity: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased 56 lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx.

Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F and 25C

Activity: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Purchased lynx carcasses (n = 31) to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy

Activity: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache surveys in September in Unit 20B (n = 29 caches)

Activity: Minimize beaver/human conflicts in the Fairbanks area by telling individuals with beaver problems how to protect their trees from beaver damage.

Held discussions with several dozen people about how to protect their trees from beaver damage.

Unit 20D

Activity: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey on 21 June 2005 that showed an increasing trend in the hare population.

Activity: Purchase lynx carcasses to assess age and reproductive condition of harvested lynx to monitor impact of lynx tracking harvest strategy.

Did not purchase lynx carcasses because trappers did not offer any for sale.

Stewardship Investment items purchased: None.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$12.6

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

The Status of Furbearer and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region V

Regionwide Activities

Activity: Maintain the ability in all units to monitor harvests by collecting data through the furbearer sealing process.

The area offices in Barrow, Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome maintained staff throughout villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates.

Activity: Monitor the harvest through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest surveys conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 18: We analyzed fur sealing data for the 2004–2005 trapping season, but only preliminary harvest figures are available, including 56 lynx, 305 otters, and 4 wolverines. In 2003–2004 sealing certificates revealed 72 lynx, 330 otters, and 32 wolverines were harvested. Within the department, we commented that fur acquisition reports are poorly maintained and provide little useful information to area management staff. Trapper questionnaires for 2003–2004 were received and reviewed.

Unit 22: Harvest reported on 2004–2005 sealing certificates included 99 lynx—51 taken in Unit 22A, 44 in Unit 22B, 4 in Unit 22C, and no lynx in Units 22D and 22E. The total reported river otter harvest was 8 otters—3 from Unit 22A, 1 from Unit 22B, 3 from Unit 22C, and 1 from Unit 22D. Forty-five (45) wolverines were sealed in Unit 22—16 from Unit 22A, 12 from Unit 22B, 8 from Unit 22C, 5 from Unit 22D and 4 from Unit 22E. Community-based Harvest Assessment surveys were completed in Koyuk and Unalakleet, and we found additional wolverine harvest: 3 in Koyuk and 4 in Unalakleet. Sealing of beaver is no longer required in Unit 22, so we do not have harvest data for this species.

Unit 23: We monitored harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and Community-based Harvest Assessment surveys.

Unit 26(A): We examined sealing certificates for wolverines taken in Unit 26A. Seven wolverines were sealed, of which 6 were males, and 1 was a female. Six were ground shot, while 1 was trapped. Snowmachines were used for transportation in all 7 cases. One wolverine was harvested in November, 1 in February, and 5 in March. Four lynx were harvested from Unit 26A, 1 male and 3 females. Snowmachines were used to harvest 3 lynx and an ATV for 1. Three were ground shot, while 1 was trapped.

Activity: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Throughout Region V we communicated with local trappers to improve harvest reporting through the fur sealing process; explained the importance of harvest reporting at public meetings in villages; and prepared newspaper articles explaining the importance of sealing furs to obtain harvest data.

Unit 18: In Russian Mission we provided information regarding harvest reporting.

Unit 22: Staff traveled to 2 villages to discuss the reasons for and importance to conservation of license and harvest reporting requirements with the general public and at a high school. We opportunistically discussed sealing and harvest reporting with trappers/hunters and the public. During public meetings we explained the importance of harvest reports and encouraged trappers to report their harvest.

Activity: Assess population status and trends using sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Unit 18: Trapper questionnaires for 2003–2004 were received and reviewed. We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground-based work for other species; sent out trapper questionnaires; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined that there are no furbearer problems related to low populations in Unit 18.

Unit 22: Furbearers are currently plentiful and several species appear to be increasing in numbers. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D beavers continue to be common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be common east of the Darby Mountains and increasing in the remainder of the subunit. Lynx harvest was low in Units 22C and 22D, where they are uncommon, and they are scarce in Unit 22E. River otter are reported to be common and increasing in Units 22A, 22B and 22C, and their status in Units 22D and 22E is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E.

Unit 23: We assessed furbearer population status and trends using sealing records, opportunistic observations of furbearers, contacts with hunter and trappers, and community-based harvest assessments.

Unit 26(A): Through opportunistic observations of furbearers and interviews with local residents, we felt that the current population number of wolverines is fairly high and stable, while arctic and red foxes are both in a period of low population level. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. During 21 hours of moose surveys in 2004–2005, we observed 5 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities remain fairly high. The number of wolverines that were sealed was lower than in recent years, but that is probably an indication of low trapping effort rather than population decline. We also saw 2 lynx during moose surveys and 4 were brought in for sealing, indicating that the recent extension of the lynx range into Unit 26A is continuing.

Activity: Prepare unit summaries of furbearer population status and harvest to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire report.

We provided names and addresses of >100 known hunters/trappers that reside within Region V to assist the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire program. We prepared summary furbearer reports for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A to be included in the Statewide Trapper Questionnaire distributed to trappers in the region.

Stewardship Investment items purchased: None.

Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$11.9

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Management Coordinator

Statewide Project Costs (in thousands):

State Share = \$36.63 Federal share = \$109.88 Total costs = \$146.5

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**STATEWIDE FURBEARERS
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STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR: W-33-3
PROJECT NR: 7.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PERIOD: 1 July 2004–30 June 2005

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Furbearers and Factors Influencing their Populations
Statewide.

Project Activities Statewide and Accomplishments:

Activity 1: Distribute trapping/furbearer materials to staff involved in furbearer management.

Accomplishments: Headquarters staff provided DWC furbearer management staff completed trapper reports and raw trapper data sets as requested.

Activity 2: Maintain and revise a list of approximately 1500 trappers in the state.

Accomplishments: Headquarters staff worked with area offices and regional furbearer biologists to update trapper questionnaire mailing lists. There were a total of 1759 trappers on the 2003–2004 questionnaire mailing list.

Activity 3: Maintain and revise the statewide trapper questionnaire.

Accomplishments: Headquarters staff solicited input for the revised trapper questionnaire from division area offices and regional furbearer biologists. Trapper questionnaires were updated to meet area management biologist data requests. Questionnaires for the 2003–2004 survey were printed in three forms: General long form, general short form, and area specific, and were distributed by bulk mail to 1767 trappers at 216 different zip codes. Along with the questionnaire, trappers were sent copies of the 2002–2003 statewide trapper report. A copy of that report has been sent under separate cover.

Activity 4: Prepare a draft annual trapper questionnaire and report and distribute to approximately 1500 state trappers.

Accomplishments: We prepared the questionnaire and report and distributed it to 1767 state trappers.

Activity 5: Summarize information from the statewide trapper questionnaire regarding trapper demographics, trapper observations of furbearers and their prey, and population trends and abundance.

Accomplishments: Headquarters staff received 466 trapper questionnaire replies, and responses were recorded in a database. Data will be analyzed and extracted to produce the 2003–2004 statewide trapper report.

Other activities funded by federal aid on this project: None.

Stewardship Investment cost: None

Statewide Project Costs:

Federal Share = \$9,992 + State Share \$3,331 = Total Costs \$13,322

Note: Expenditures include publishing and mailing of final 2002–2003 trapper report and 2003–2004 trapper questionnaire.

Prepared by: Tim Peltier, Wildlife Biologist