

**FEDERAL AID
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

**FURBEARER
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY**

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-7

PROJECT NO. 7.0

PERIOD: 1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009

PROJECT LOCATION: Statewide

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

REPORT DESCRIPTION: This performance report describes furbearer survey and inventory activities. Regionwide activities are listed before specific activities by game management unit.

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Collect harvest data on beavers, martens, otters, lynx, and wolverines as they are harvested and presented for sealing.

ADF&G Wildlife Conservation staff, FWP Troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed furbearer pelts harvested in the region. Area biologists and other staff tracked harvest trends and collected biological samples opportunistically. About 109 beaver, 2,277 marten, 281 otter, 21 wolverine, and 8 lynx pelts were harvested and sealed in the region.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 3: 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 sealing fur and conversations with trappers and hunters. Efforts were made to improve communication with authorized fur sealers where trappers are using temporary sealing forms that have been incompletely filled out.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 1C

ACTIVITY 1: Assess the population of wolverines in Berners Bay through the use of GPS radio collars and through the collection of hair for DNA samples.

Douglas office staff assisted in the trapping efforts to capture and collar wolverines. Eight wolverines were captured during this report period.

Submitted by: Neil L. Barten, Region I Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1 & 2: Collect harvest data when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters. Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Unit 6: Trappers reported taking 166 marten, 37 beaver, 16 wolverine, and 107 otter.

Unit 7 & 15: Trappers reported taking 12 beaver, 108 marten, nine wolverine and eight lynx.

Unit 8: During the 2007–08 season, 21 trappers brought in 122 otters for sealing yielding an average of 5.8 otters/trapper. The harvest was composed of 65 males (53%), 52 females (43%), and five of undetermined sex (4%). Most trappers were local residents (95%), and trapping was the most common method of take (92%). Boats were the most common mode of transportation used by otter trappers (48%), and December was the most productive month (46%). Fifty-two otters (30%) were harvested along the Kodiak road system.

There were 24 beavers brought in by eight trappers, yielding an average harvest of three beavers/trapper. All of the trappers were local (GMU 8) Alaska residents, and trapping was the most common method of take (100%). Four-wheelers were the most common method of transportation used by beaver trappers (33%), and the harvest was primarily occurred during November (42%). Eight (30%) 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.

Unit 9: Trappers reported taking 125 beaver, 32 wolverine, 102 otters and 12 lynx. Based on responses to the annual trapper questionnaire, furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally. No lynx transects flown spring 2008 due to poor weather conditions.

Unit 10: No furbearers were reported taken.

Unit 11: Trappers reported taking 18 beaver, eight wolverine, five otter and 337 lynx. Responses to the annual trapper questionnaire indicate furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally. Lynx are expected to start declining in the next couple years.

Unit 13: Trappers reported taking 172 beaver, 40 wolverine, 35 otters and 989 lynx. Responses to the annual trapper questionnaire indicate furbearer populations appear to be healthy and fluctuating normally.

Unit 14: Trappers reported taking 112 beavers, 22 otters, 431 marten, 10 wolverine and nine lynx.

Unit 15: Trappers reported taking 16 beaver, 21 marten, 16 otters and 29 lynx in 15A; one beaver, six marten, one otter and 34 lynx in 15B; 22 beaver, 14 wolverine, eight otter and 21 lynx in 15C.

Unit 16: Trappers reported taking 202 beavers, 19 otters, 1,307 marten, 20 wolverines and one lynx.

Unit 17: Trappers reported taking 200 beaver, 27 wolverine, 31 otter and six lynx.

Activities by Unit:

Unit 6

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct river otter latrine surveys.

We did not conduct river otter latrine surveys. These surveys require additional cooperative funding which was not available.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct furbearer track counts.

Track counts were aborted because of poor conditions (frequent freeze/thaw).

Unit 7 & 15

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct furbearer track count surveys.

Unit 7: No surveys were conducted during this reporting period.

Unit 15: No surveys were conducted during this reporting period.

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct wolverine survey.

No surveys were conducted during this reporting period. Poor snow conditions during the survey window precluded any attempt to survey wolverine.

Unit 8

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct river otter latrine surveys.

We did not do a latrine study in 2009 due to funding constraints. A study is scheduled to resume in 2010.

Unit 13

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial and ground transect surveys to determine status and trend of lynx populations.

No lynx transects flown spring 2009 due to poor weather conditions, although lynx numbers appeared very high from other observations.

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Use trapper questionnaires and interviews as a basis for determining the status of various furbearer populations.

Distributed trapper questionnaires region-wide to provide a basis for determining the status of furbearer populations.

ACTIVITY 2: Monitor the furbearer harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored preliminary harvest of 4,861 lynx, 74 river otter, and 224 wolverine through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters

ACTIVITY 3: Collect harvest information when pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected data on preliminary harvest of 5,159 furbearers when pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters, and analyzed harvest data.

ACTIVITY 4: Provide furbearer management information to State and Federal regulatory processes.

Provided information to 15 State fish and game advisory committees, the Alaska Board of Game, and 2 Federal regional advisory councils.

ACTIVITY 5: Develop specific population and harvest objectives for furbearers, as new research and management findings become available

Continued to review research and management findings in an attempt to formulate quantifiable furbearer management objectives, without success.

Activities by Unit

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

ACTIVITY 2: Conduct beaver cache surveys in Unit 20B.

Conducted beaver cache survey in October in Unit 20B (n = 26 caches).

ACTIVITY 3: 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 1: Conduct a hare population trend survey.

Conducted a hare population trend survey during which 89 hares were counted along the survey route.

Submitted by: Roy A. Nowlin, Region III Management Coordinator

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

Regionwide Activities:

ACTIVITY 1: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on furbearer management.

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented furbearer information to the State Board of Game, State Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

ACTIVITY 2: 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 designated fur sealers in villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates. Staff supported 27 fur sealers in Unit 18, 17 in Unit 22, 6 in Unit 23, and 3 in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 3: 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 2008–2009 trapping season but only preliminary harvest figures are available. The reported harvests are 70 river otters, 166 lynx and 16 wolverine. We expect that harvests will be consistent with recent years.

Unit 22: The preliminary harvest report on 2008-2009 sealing certificates included 86 lynx: 16 taken in Unit 22A and 70 in Unit 22B. The total reported river otter harvest was 6 otters: 2 from Unit 22A and 4 from Unit 22B. Twenty-five wolverines were sealed in Unit 22: 7 from Unit 22A, 12 from Unit 22B, 2 from Unit 22C, 3 from Unit 22D, and 1 from Unit 22E. One DLP mink was reported in Unit 22C. Community based harvest assessment surveys were not completed in Unit 22 during the reporting period.

Unit 23: We monitored harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires, and community-based harvest assessment surveys in three communities (Deering, Kivalina, Noatak). The preliminary harvest report on 2008-2009 sealing certificates included 10 lynx all were taken by residents and by snowmachine. Two were shot and the remainder were trapped. The total reported river

otter harvest was 3 (two males, one female), all taken by trapping using snowmachine. Five wolverines were sealed (three males, two were females), all taken by trapping using snowmachine. Community harvest assessment survey data is not available at this time.

Unit 26A: We examined sealing certificates for wolverine and lynx. During 2008-2009, 13 wolverine were harvested and sealed by 7 Unit 26A residents. Eleven were male, 1 was female, and 1 was unknown. Eight were ground shot and 5 were trapped. Snow machines were used for transportation for 12 and a boat for 1. One wolverine was harvested in September, 2 in January, 9 in March, and 1 in April. Six lynx were harvested and sealed by one Unit 26A resident trapper. Four males and 2 females were sealed. The trapper used a snow machine for transportation and snared all of the lynx in March.

ACTIVITY 4: 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.

ACTIVITY 5: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Regionwide: Work on trapper questionnaires and trapper responses have been delayed due to staffing changes in headquarters. Regional staff will continue this activity when information becomes available.

Unit 18: We observed furbearers and furbearer sign opportunistically during aerial and ground based work for other species; and continue to interview trappers, pilots, and others regarding furbearers. We have determined there are no furbearer problems related to low populations in Unit 18.

Unit 22: Furbearers are currently plentiful, particularly in Units 22A and 22B where hare numbers continue to be high. In Unit 22A lynx are thought to be abundant and stable. In Unit 22B lynx appear to be common throughout the subunit. Lynx are uncommon in Units 22C and 22D and scarce in Unit 22E. The number of lynx harvested doubled from the last reporting period and trapper effort has increased in the area. River otters are believed to be more common than the low harvest numbers would indicate, but their abundance is unknown. Wolverines are thought to be common throughout the unit and increasing in Units 22D and 22E. In Units 22A, 22B, 22C and 22D beaver continue to be common or abundant with numbers stable or increasing.

Unit 23: Furbearer populations appeared to be within the range of levels observed in previous years based on sealing records, opportunistic observations of furbearers, contacts with hunter and trappers, and community-based harvest assessments. Lynx population levels appear to be stable although their distribution has varied substantially among drainages in recent years. Wolverine numbers appeared to be low throughout Unit 23 during the reporting period.

Unit 26A: Through opportunistic observations of fur bearers 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 medium population level. Coyotes are rare and river otter densities are very low. During 7 hours of moose surveys in April of 2009, we observed 2 wolverines, indicating that wolverine densities are probably stable. The number of wolverines that were sealed (n=13) was higher than last year (n=11), but not as high as some previous years. The number of wolverines sealed is probably more an indicator of trapper effort than of wolverine numbers. We saw 8 lynx during moose surveys and 6 were sealed, indicating that lynx numbers may be increasing in Unit 26A.

ACTIVITY 6: 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.

Submitted by: Peter Bente, Survey and Inventory Coordinator, Region V

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**STATEWIDE FURBEARERS
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STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NO. W-33-7
PROJECT NO. 7.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PERIOD: 1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009

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 raw trapper data sets as requested.

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

Accomplishments: Headquarters staff updated trapper contact information in the trapper database by removing 306 invalid trapper addresses.

ACTIVITY 3: Maintain and revise the statewide trapper questionnaire.

Accomplishments: Trapper questionnaires will be mailed in September 2009.

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

Accomplishments: We worked on a draft of the 2006–07 Trapper Questionnaire Report. This report will be distributed to 709 trappers who responded to the 2006–07 questionnaire.

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 approximately 900 trapper questionnaire replies, and 560 responses were recorded in a database. Data will be analyzed and extracted to produce the 2007–08 statewide trapper report.

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

Prepared by: Tom Schumacher, Wildlife Biologist