

**Wildlife Restoration MULTI-YEAR GRANT
INTERIM 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-29

PROJECT NUMBER: P7.0

PROJECT TITLE: Unit 17 Wolf Abundance and Demography

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: 03/23/2018-10/31/2022

PERFORMANCE YEAR: March 23, 2018-March 23, 2019; year 1 of a 4-year grant

REPORT DUE DATE: Submit to Coordinator 1 June 2019; Submit to FAC 29 June 2019

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Nick Demma – ADF&G Wildlife Biologist III

COOPERATORS: Neil Barten – ADF&G Wildlife Biologist III

Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301
50 CFR 80.90

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR

OBJECTIVE 1: Determine annual abundance of wolves in the wolf control area (WCA) of Game Management Unit 17.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Capture and radiocollaring: We deployed 10 GPS radio collars on wolves found in/adjacent to the Mulchatna WCA during 2 capture events in 2018. The instrumented wolves comprised 5 packs and a single wolf, but do not represent all wolves/packs inhabiting the WCA. During both captures, we observed wolf tracks and wolf feeding sites in areas outside GPS location clusters of radioed wolves.

Territories and pack size: We documented spring and fall pack size of radiocollared wolves. We plotted locations from GPS collars and aerial observations to determine location and extent of radioed wolf pack territories through the reporting period.

Harvest: We are waiting for a final tabulation of reported wolf harvest for the 2017-2018 harvest season. These data are currently being checked for accuracy by the area biologist that manages the hunt, and should be available soon.

The season was marked by overall good snow conditions that facilitated a relatively high wolf harvest. Initial reports and preliminary analysis of sealing records indicate 31 wolves harvested by same-day-aerial (SDA) permittees and an additional 47 harvested by ground-based hunters and trappers. Once the harvest tally is finalized, we will combine that with the number of known remaining wolves to determine minimum 2018 spring abundance.

OBJECTIVE 2: Document annual demographic rates including productivity, survival, and dispersal.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: We calculate annual demographic rates when data are available, but small annual sample sizes typically result in wide confidence intervals, making comparisons between years difficult.

Productivity: We visited den sites (identified by GPS clusters and period of use) of radiocollared wolf packs after they were abandoned to document usage and whether pups had been present. We noted evidence of current-year's use and presence of pups (scat) at all 2018 den sites we examined. Visual observations of 4-6 pups in all 3 of these packs during October aerial surveys corroborated our identification of pup scat at their den sites.

Survival: This initial reporting period does not contain a full 'biological' year of risk for wolves radiocollared in 2018, so modeling individual characteristics or spatiotemporal aspects that may affect survival is not possible. All of the 6 wolves radiocollared in April 2018 were still alive when we collared an additional 4 wolves in November 2018. At the end of the reporting period, 5 of 10 were still alive. Of those that died, 1 wolf was killed by other wolves and 4 were harvested.

Dispersal: None of the 10 wolves radiocollared in 2018 have dispersed.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

This report covers year 1 of a 4-year study. We are still in the data collection phase of the project and do not have any results or findings to report.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

The following amendment (Amendment #1) was submitted in June 2018:

Project 7.0: This project was initially funded at \$243,589 with project end date of 30 June 2021, though the project statement specifies that the amount requested would only cover the first year of the project and that additional funds would be needed to cover subsequent years. The existing funding will be spent as described in the project statement and will be exhausted during FY19. This amendment added an additional **\$705,000** to the project and extended it through **FY22**. The request will supplement the funding already in place for FY19, fully fund field activities in FY20 and FY21 and fund project completion in FY22. Increasing the level of funding and extending the length of the project will allow the objectives described in the project statement to be addressed more thoroughly but no new objectives will be added.

IV. PUBLICATIONS Identify and attach (cite) selected publications, photographs, screenshots of websites, or other documentation (including articles in popular literature, scientific literature, or other public information products) that have resulted from this project that highlights the accomplishments of the project.

We are still in the data collection phase of the project and do not yet have any publications associated with this project.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

Continue project as proposed through 6/30/2021.

Prepared by: Nick Demma – ADF&G Wildlife Biologist III

Date: 30 May 2019