

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Restoration Grant**

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-B-RI-2020

PROJECT NUMBER: P 12.0

PROJECT TITLE: Region I's Mountain Goat S&I program: Alaska's Mountain Goat Populations and Factors Influencing Their Status

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2021

PERFORMANCE YEAR: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020; year 1 of a 2-year grant

REPORT DUE DATE: August 28, 2020

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Richard Nelson

COOPERATORS: None.

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR

OBJECTIVE 1: Population Size, Status, and Trend. Assess the size and status of each population to determine the 5-year trend.

Region I, Units 1, 4, and 5

- Survey goat populations including adult/kid composition in key management areas within the region. Use survey findings to set annual harvest limits.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Region I management staff surveyed mountain goat populations in key hunting areas during late summer and early fall to gather data used to set harvest quota point totals (adult male, Billy = 1 pt. and adult female, Nanny = 2 pts.) for specific hunt zones. Typically, 6 points are allotted for every 100 goats observed in each zone. When the harvest guideline point total for an individual zone is reached, that zone is closed by Emergency Order.

We were unable to fly mountain goat surveys in Unit 5 during the reporting period. Unit 5 is remote and survey aircraft are often not available in Yakutat. Although staff plan to survey Unit 5 every year, frequently we are unable to complete surveys there.

Regional management staff also continued to monitor for potential effects of sightseeing helicopter flights during summer as well as heliskiing activity during winter. Regional management staff continued to monitor for potential effects of road construction, mining, or hydroelectric development in areas where those activities are ongoing or planned.

In areas with mountain goats collared for a research project regional management staff monitored collared goats during surveys to estimate sightability.

OBJECTIVE 2: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring and Regulations. Monitor hunter effort, harvest, and other sources of mortality that may influence the trend of each goat population.

Region I: Units 1, 4, and 5

- Monitor hunter effort and harvest from the registration and draw permit hunts and analyze the data.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: All mountain goat hunts in Region I are administered through registration or draw permits with mandatory reporting requirements. Regional management staff collected hunter effort and harvest data through mandatory permit hunt reports and entered that information into the statewide harvest database. Those data are annually compiled by GMU/subunit and analyzed for trends in hunter effort and harvest.

Harvest throughout Unit 1 was similar to recent years and within the 5-year average. Harvest in Units 4 and 5 increased and were the highest within the 5-year period. Despite those increases we are confident harvest remains sustainable.

GMU	Regulatory Year					5-Year Average
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
01A	33	35	34	47	41	38
01B	24	22	21	17	22	21
01C	38	55	39	43	40	43
01D	20	28	21	27	23	24
04Z	23	25	28	30	38	29
05A	1	1	0	0	3	1

Table 1. Summary of mountain goat harvest by GMU for Southeast Alaska, regulatory years 2015 – 2019. A regulatory year begins on July 1 of that year and extends through June 30 of the following year. Mountain goats do not occur in Units 2 and 3.

- Collect additional goat harvest information through field observations, hunter harvest reports and contact with hunters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: All mountain goat hunts in Region I are administered through

registration or draw permits with mandatory reporting requirements. Regional management staff maintained contacts with hunters when issuing permits. Successful hunters are required to report to ADF&G within 5 days, which provides an opportunity to obtain additional information through conversations with hunters.

- Monitor cases of contagious ecthyma (ORF) and other diseases that might affect goat populations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management staff monitored for outbreaks of ORF through conversations with hunters, biologist observations, and reports by the public. Management staff also collected nasal swabs as part of the statewide M.ovi surveillance program.

OBJECTIVE 3: Mountain Goat Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each mountain goat population with an emphasis on engaging the public through public meetings, working groups, and educational materials.

Region I: Units 1, 4, and 5

- Prepare 5-year Mountain goat Management Operational Reports and Plans for each unit/subunit inhabited by mountain goat.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: During this reporting period regional management biologists continued writing Mountain Goat Species Management Reports and Plans reporting on the period RY13 – RY18 and planning for the period RY19 – RY24. Once published that report will be publicly available at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Mountain+Goat&submit=Search>

- Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on mountain goat management.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management biologists regularly participated in public regulatory processes by providing data and guidance to Fish and Game Advisory Committees and members of the public to help develop proposals to the Alaska Board of Game, by providing data and commenting on proposals created by the federal subsistence Regional Advisory Council.

- Provide information on status of goat populations, likely trends, habitat use, and harvest management to other agencies and the public.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management biologists provided information on mountain goat population trends, habitat use, and harvest management to other agencies as requested and to the public at Fish and Game advisory committee meetings and other public meetings.

- Participate in agency reviews of land use decisions affecting mountain goats.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional management biologists participated in new and ongoing reviews or land management decisions potentially affecting goat populations. Most commonly those involved use of helicopters in and around goat habitat in support of seasonal tourism activities, mining projects, and hydroelectric development.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

Region I managers successfully administered mountain goat hunts and monitored populations as conditions allowed. During this reporting period populations trends for mountain goats throughout the region were monitored using aerial surveys. Mainland goat populations from Unit 1C south of the Taku River through Unit 1A and in Unit 4 appear stable or increasing.

Populations in northern Unit 1C, Unit 1D, and Unit 5 remain relatively low compared to historic abundance. We believe those populations continue to slowly recover from a series of deep snow winters that occurred from 2006 – 2012. Some hunt zones in these units were closed. For most populations sustainable hunting opportunity is offered when populations exceed a 70-goat threshold.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

During the reporting period staff were unable to use the allotted funds as inclement weather prevented conducting all surveys. The availability of suitable survey planes and pilots is also limited in some areas.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

None.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

The Department of Wildlife Conservation recommends continuing this project.

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