

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

**GRANT NUMBER:** AKW-B-R1-2020

**PROJECT NUMBER:** P 7.0

**PROJECT TITLE:** Region I Furbearer S&I program: Alaska's Furbearer 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

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**I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR**

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

**Region-wide**

- Distribute the annual Trapper Questionnaire to obtain population assessment information.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** The Statewide Trapper Questionnaire was distributed to trappers through a statewide program through the Headquarters Office and is not specific to any region. Data collected through the Questionnaire were compiled and analyzed and an annual report was published. Reports published since 1990 can be found at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=trapping.reports>

**Region I - Units 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5**

- Collect female wolverine carcasses opportunistically for reproductive information.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Area management staff did not collect any female wolverine carcasses during this reporting period. This activity should be discontinued as part of the furbearer S&I duties.

- Collect anecdotal information on furbearer, abundance, trend, etc. from trappers during sealing.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: State and federal regulations require that certain furbearer species be examined by a state representative and that a seal be placed on each pelt. In Region I sealed furbearer species are; wolf, wolverine, lynx, river otter, marten, beaver, and fisher. During sealing biologists engage trappers in conversation and solicit their observations of abundance and trends of furbearer populations.

### **Unit 1C**

- During sealing collect carcasses of fishers for sex, age, reproductive status, and genetic material to assess the fisher population in the unit.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Area management staff collected carcasses of two fishers trapped in Unit 1C during this reporting period. Those carcasses are stored frozen and will be analyzed as time allows. Because it is easier to process these samples in larger groups biologists will wait until we have 6-10 carcasses.

OBJECTIVE 2: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring and Regulations. Assess the number of furbearers harvested by hunters and trappers and assess other sources of mortality that might have an impact on each population.

### **Region-wide**

- Collect harvest data on beaver, marten, otter, lynx, fisher, and wolverine when pelts are presented for sealing.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Management staff maintained and executed furbearer sealing programs as mandated by current regulation and collected a suite of data on furs presented for sealing.

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Species	GMU	Regulatory Year					5-Year Average
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Beaver	01A	56	41	29	47	<b>58</b>	46
	01B	0	24	3	22	<b>0</b>	10
	01C	62	25	44	55	<b>50</b>	47
	01D	5	8	10	11	<b>3</b>	7
	02Z	103	51	67	93	<b>84</b>	80
	03Z	35	38	9	15	<b>11</b>	22
	04Z	45	35	32	25	<b>8</b>	29
	05A	16	1	25	3	<b>6</b>	10
Lynx	01C	0	0	0	3	<b>0</b>	1
	01D	0	3	1	10	<b>25</b>	8
	05A	0	0	0	2	<b>0</b>	0
Otter	01A	30	19	44	43	<b>34</b>	34
	01B	15	12	1	1	<b>5</b>	7
	01C	44	8	22	27	<b>27</b>	26
	01D	10	12	8	9	<b>12</b>	10
	02Z	153	122	65	47	<b>33</b>	84
	03Z	27	26	16	32	<b>23</b>	25
	04Z	165	96	124	117	<b>103</b>	121
	05A	4	0	13	1	<b>0</b>	4
	05B	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	0
Wolverine	01A	0	1	2	1	<b>0</b>	1
	01B	5	5	7	7	<b>1</b>	5
	01C	4	7	5	16	<b>8</b>	8
	01D	4	6	12	3	<b>3</b>	6
	03Z	0	0	3	0	<b>0</b>	1
	05A	1	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	0
	05B	1	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	0
	Marten	01A	243	260	248	222	<b>115</b>
01B		409	181	167	169	<b>70</b>	199
01C		295	169	177	213	<b>160</b>	203
01D		62	195	304	9	<b>36</b>	121
02Z		491	574	663	398	<b>401</b>	505
03Z		171	116	97	217	<b>66</b>	133

	04Z	484	804	1211	1337	<b>432</b>	854
	05A	105	69	47	151	<b>101</b>	95
	05B	12	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	2
Fisher	01C	2	0	5	5	<b>4</b>	3

Table 1. Summary of furbearer harvest by GMU for Southeast Alaska, regulatory years 2015 – 2019. Lynx and fisher have limited distributions in Region I and other species like wolverines either do not occur or are not harvested in all units in all years. A regulatory year begins on July 1 of that year and extends through June 30 of the following year. Data on wolf and black bear are summarized in separate reports.

- Monitor the furbearer harvest through fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contact with trappers and hunters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The sealing requirement provides data on harvest and an opportunity to converse with trappers about their observations of population trends. Management biologists compared current harvest with fur sealing summaries from recent years and trapper observations to ensure harvests remain sustainable.

OBJECTIVE 3: Habitat Enhancement. Assess furbearer habitat availability directly or indirectly in specified areas and use those assessments to inform land management decisions.

**Region-wide**

- Participate in formal and informal commenting processes on land management decisions affecting furbearer habitat or access for trapping.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Large-scale habitat changes usually result from natural processes like fire or human development including logging and other land uses. Management staff primarily monitored habitat changes through their own observations within their management areas, by participating in agency and public land management commenting processes, and from anecdotal accounts of people living and trapping throughout their management areas.

OBJECTIVE 4: Furbearer Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each furbearer population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

**Region-wide**

- Prepare 5-year Furbearer Management Reports and Plans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Management staff completed Furbearer Species Management Reports and Plans reporting on regulatory years 2012 – 2017 with plans for regulatory years 2018 – 2022. Reports specific to each unit/subunit can be found at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifemanagement#furbearers>

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Management staff summarized and analyzed furbearer abundance and harvest data and presented those data at public forums including presentations to Fish and Game Advisory Committees and federal Regional Subsistence Advisory Council meetings.

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

Furbearer harvest typically varies with population levels, fur prices, fuel prices, trapper effort, and trapping conditions. During this reporting period furbearer harvest throughout Region I varied by species, area, and year, but for RY19 within each GMU harvest was generally lower. Wolves and black bears have a dual classification as furbearers and big game, and data on harvest of those species are presented in separate S&I reports. All objectives were accomplished.

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

Staff sealed over 1,000 fewer animals for all furbearer species across Region I in RY19 compared to the 5-year average, and 1,500 animals fewer than in RY18 resulting in less time spent on furbearer sealing activity.

## **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

None

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT**

We recommend continuing this project.

**Prepared by:** Roy T. Churchwell, Juneau/Douglas Area Biologist

**Date:** August 2020