

**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-B-R2-2020

PROJECT NUMBER: 17.0

PROJECT TITLE: Region 2 Black Bear S&I program: Black Bear 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: Submit to FAC August 28, 2020

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Cynthia Wardlow

COOPERATORS: Jeff Selinger, Jason Herreman, Dave Battle, Charlotte Westing

Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301
50 CFR 80.90

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.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Black bear population trends were evaluated based on harvest data collected from harvest tickets and during sealing, including male:female harvest ratios and percentage of harvest of subadult bears. Anecdotal information based on reports of bears in areas of high human populations indicates that the population is stable to slightly increasing in most areas of Region 2.

Radio-collared black bears in Unit 6 continue to be tracked as part of a cooperative study with USFS to document their movements, home range sizes, and survival to assess changes in relative abundance.

Objective 2: Mortality/Harvest Monitoring and Regulations. Assess the number of black bears harvested by hunters and other sources of mortality that might have an impact on each population.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

We monitored the harvest of black bears in Units 6, 7, 14C and 15 through harvest reports, field observations, interviews with successful hunters and analyses of harvest report data during bear hunting seasons. Additionally, when bears were presented for sealing, harvest was monitored through information and data taken on all black bears harvested in Region 2. Data were recorded for 728 sealed black bears through this process.

All bears taken in Region were presented to staff or appointed sealers for specimen collection and sealing. Bear skulls were measured, hides were examined for tattoos or marks and to determine the sex of the bear, and a premolar was removed to be sent in for aging on all bears. Collected teeth were sent in for aging during the reporting period.

As part of harvest monitoring, 4 area offices communicated and coordinated with local residents to reduce bear-human problems, improve understanding of defense of life or property (DLP) situations, and reduce need for DLP kills. Staff educated the public on hunting regulations and the value of conserving black bear populations, and to obtain better harvest data through increased harvest reporting. There were many instances of human-black bear interactions throughout the Region. Harvest data were analyzed, and the results were applied to management planning and ongoing population assessment.

Objective 3: Habitat Enhancement /Assessment. Assess habitat use of the black bear population directly or indirectly where it is feasible.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

We continued the cooperative study with the USFS that includes deploying radio collars on bears and analyzing location data. Analysis of collar data is ongoing. No other activities were conducted under this objective in Region 2 during the reporting period.

Objective 4: Black Bear Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each black bear population with an emphasis on engaging the public through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

As part of daily activities, 4 area offices communicated and coordinated with Alaska residents and non-residents to reduce bear-human problems, improve understanding of defense of life or property (DLP) situations, and reduce the need for DLP kills. We also responded to and made recommendations in multiple instances of human-black bear interactions. Staff educated the public on bear awareness and safety, used public education programs and/or increased communication with the public to improve understanding of hunting regulations and the value of conserving black bear populations. All offices responded to nuisance or habituated black bear situations from July- November 2019 and from April-June 2020. Worked with local residents and businesses to reduce bear attractants within each area and with local garbage collection agencies to provide bear-resistant tipper carts for garbage in areas where human-bear conflicts are common. The community of Girdwood voluntarily became a "bear aware" community, requiring bear resistant trash containers.

We communicated with and attended meetings of multiple local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Board of Game, Federal Regional Advisory Councils, the Federal Subsistence Board, Office of Subsistence Management, numerous local village councils, and Native corporations about black bear management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board.

We compiled information and data to finish the review of three 5-year black bear Management Reports and Operational Plans for Units 6, 7 and 15, and 14C. These reports are completed and are available at the following url:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Black+Bear&submit=Search>

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

This project is ongoing. Summaries of past data trends are published at the following url:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Black+Bear&submit=Search>

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

None. Project number 17.0 was overspent in Personal Services during the reporting period due to a high number of black bear-human conflicts requiring extensive staff time across the region, including overtime. Restrictions on travel due to COVID-19, and an overall budget shortage resulted in reduced spending in other lines to preserve Fish & Game matching funds.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Project publications for previous years are available at the following url:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=all&species=Black+Bear&submit=Search>

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

We recommend continued funding for this project to effectively manage black bear populations in Southcentral Alaska.

Prepared by: Cynthia Wardlow

Date: October 2020