

# 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-R3-2020

**PROJECT NUMBER:** – P17.0

**PROJECT TITLE:** Alaska's Region III Black Bear S&I program: Black Bear Populations and Factors Influencing Their Status in Interior and Northeast Alaska

**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:** Doreen Parker McNeill

**COOPERATORS:** N/A

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Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328  
2 CFR 200.301  
50 CFR 80.90

## I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR

OBJECTIVE 1: Conduct 3 investigations by 06-30-2021.

### Project statement objectives:

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

**1.1 Assess population trends through anecdotal field observations made by biologists and members of the public.**

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We noted black bear locations during aerial surveys for other species.

- We discussed black bear observations across the region with hunters, guides, troopers, and members of the public.
- We discussed black bear observations with moose hunters at the Koyukuk check station during a 6-week period in August and September.

### **1.2 Obtain estimates of ages of harvested bears by tooth sectioning and counting annuli.**

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We obtained estimated ages of 142 black bears harvested during the previous year primarily in Unit 20B by results of tooth sectioning and age analysis by counting cementum annuli.

### **1.3 Conduct a photo and hair sample survey to assess bear occurrence.**

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We conducted a photo and hair sample survey during April–June at 10 sample locations. Five of the locations were accessed by air with chartered fixed-wing float plane for 36 hours of flight time.

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

### **2.1 Monitor the black bear harvest through field observations, black bear sealing reports, and interviews with hunters.**

### **2.2 Monitor black bear bait station permit distribution and harvest over bait.**

### **2.3 Collect a tooth for aging black bears harvested in Unit 20B and presented for sealing by hunters**

### **2.4 Collect data, determine sex, and extract a tooth for aging from black bears presented for sealing by hunters or as a result of other human-caused mortality.**

### **2.5 Monitor and analyze black bear bait station permit distribution.**

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We monitored the harvest of black bears in Units 12, 19D, and 20 through harvest reports, field observations, interviews with successful hunters, bait station registrations, and analyses of harvest report data during a 365-day season. Additionally, when bears were presented for sealing, harvest was monitored through information and data taken on 1) all black bears harvested in Unit 20B and 2) black bears taken in Units 12, 19, the remainder of Unit 20, and Units 21, 24, and 25 by hunters who took their bear hides and/or skulls out of state. Harvest

data were analyzed, and the results were applied to management planning and ongoing population assessment.

- Data were recorded for 207 black bears through this process. Results include the following:
  - We analyzed harvest data, including hunter effort and sex of 187 black bears harvested.
  - Premolar teeth for aging were collected from 120 black bears harvested primarily in Units 20B and 20D.
  - We monitored distribution of approximately 879 black bear bait stations throughout Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, and 25 and analyzed their distribution in relation to roads, communities, black bear harvest, and grizzly bear bait stations. A total of 116 black bears were harvested over bait.

**Objective 3: Habitat Enhancement and Assessment.** Assess black bear habitat directly or indirectly in specified areas of the state.

**3.1 Monitor blueberry abundance through monitoring of permanent blueberry sample areas or through interviews with blueberry pickers and anecdotal evidence.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- During July–August we assessed blueberry abundance at 20 permanent blueberry plots located in Units 12 and 20E.

**Objective 4: Black Bear Management with Public Participation and Outreach.**

**4.1 Compile information and data for, or draft and finalize 5-year black bear survey and inventory operational reports and plans for each Unit inhabited by black bears.**

- Accomplishments: We compiled information and data in preparation for writing 5 five-year black bear Management Reports and Operational Plans for Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. These reports and plans will be available at the following site when completed:

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

**4.7 Develop or review population objectives for black bears in each of 6 areas.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Data and information from activities in objectives 1–4 were used by biologists in 6 area offices to review population and harvest objectives to determine whether each objective remained relevant during the current year and assessed whether harvest was impacting each population.

**4.2 Provide black bear information to state and federal regulatory processes on black bear management.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We prepared the black bear portion of 2 Annual Intensive Management Reports for the Board of Game to comply with regulatory requirements for Intensive Management programs. See Section IV, publications, below.
- We communicated and coordinated with and attended meetings of 15 local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Board of Game, 3 Federal Regional Advisory Councils, the Federal Subsistence Board, Office of Subsistence Management, numerous local village councils and Native corporations, and the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission about black bear management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board.

**4.3 Respond to issues and public reports involving black bears associated with conflict behavior, injuries, habituation, and bear–vehicle collisions to help alleviate such conflicts and inform the public about safety.**

**4.5 Work with local residents and businesses to reduce black bear–human conflicts and minimize attractants that may lead to defense of life or property kills (DLP).**

**4.6 Educate the public on bear awareness, bear behavior and safety, and provide demonstrations of how to minimize attractants and/or use electric bear fences to reduce bear/human problems as requested.**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Six area offices responded to and made recommendations in 8 reports of human–black bear interactions.
- Staff educated the public on bear awareness and safety, used education and/or increased communication with the public to improve understanding of hunting regulations and the value of conserving black bear populations, and to obtain better harvest data through increased harvest reporting.
- We worked with local residents and businesses to reduce black bear–human conflicts and minimize attractants that may lead to defense of life or property kills (DLP).

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

Results of objectives 1–4 will be summarized in the report portion of the 5-year Black Bear management report and plan, scheduled to be published in FY2021 (see objective 4.1, above.)

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

No SDRs were submitted for this project.

Reports and plans listed in objective 4.1 were expected to be published in FY2020, but were delayed due to biologists' preparation for and attendance at the Alaska Board of Game meeting to provide biological information and a substantial amount of time responding with biological information for emergency requests to extend or close hunting seasons for all species (including black bear) due to concerns about food shortage due to COVID-19 or spread of the disease among hunters in the field.

In addition to progress noted in section I, expenditures differed from amounts budgeted in the project statement for the following:

1. Travel
  - i. Biologists were scheduled to gather in Fairbanks in January for a meeting to discuss black bear management strategies. This meeting was cancelled due to State of Alaska travel restrictions, so no money was expended.
2. Contractual
  - i. Hourly fixed-wing costs increased. Along with these increases, more time than expected was needed to deploy and retrieve cameras, and at the more expensive float-plane rate.
3. Supplies
  - i. We overestimated the cost of supplies needed to deploy cameras and hair snares and the amount of data collection supplies needed regionwide during sealing.

#### **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

Black bear portion of the Annual Report to the Alaska Board of Game on Intensive Management for Moose with Wolf, Black Bear, and Grizzly Bear Predation Control in Game Management Unit 19A. February 2020.

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2020\\_gmu\\_19a\\_intensive\\_management\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2020_gmu_19a_intensive_management_annual_report.pdf)

Black bear portion of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 2020. Annual Report to the Alaska Board of Game on Intensive Management for Moose with Wolf, Black Bear, and Grizzly Bear Predation Control in Game Management Unit 19D East. February 2020.

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2020\\_gmu\\_19d\\_east\\_intensive\\_management\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/programs/intensivemanagement/pdfs/2020_gmu_19d_east_intensive_management_annual_report.pdf)

No other publications were completed during the report period.

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

We recommend continued funding for this project in order to effectively survey, inventory and manage black bear populations in Interior and Northeast Alaska.

**Prepared by:** Doreen Parker McNeill

**Date:** September 2020