

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: – P6.0

PROJECT TITLE: Alaska's Region III Dall's Sheep S&I program: Dall's Sheep 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

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 Dall's sheep population to determine the 5-year trend.

1.1 Conduct summer aerial surveys in established count areas to determine status, trend, productivity, age, sex, and mortality of sheep.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Aerial trend count surveys were conducted to assess trend, distribution, productivity, and sex and age composition of the sheep population during July 2019 and/or June 2020. Survey areas included the following areas:
 - Nutzotin and northern Wrangell Mountains in Unit 12 (1 survey unit – survey unit

- 9, (10.5 hours of flight time);
- Tok Management Area in Units 12, 20D, and 20E (7 survey units, (44.3 hours of flight time);
- Glacier Mountain Controlled Use Area in Unit 20E (1 survey area, 4.25 hours of flight time);
- Western Alaska Range in Unit 19C (4 survey unit, (16 hours of flight time);
- Central Alaska Range in Unit 20A (6 survey units, 21.3 hours of flight time);
- White Mountains in 20B and 25C (4 survey units, 12 hours of flight time);
- Delta Controlled Use Area in Unit 20D, 20A, and 13B (all available sheep habitat, 48.2 hours of flight time);
- Mt. Harper and Tanana Hills area of Units 20B, 20D, and 20E — all available sheep habitat within the drawing hunt area), 14.2 hours of flight time);
- Central and Eastern Brooks Range in Units 24, 25, and 26: (2 survey units, 5.3 hours of flight time).

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

2.1 Monitor the sheep harvest through field observations, hunter harvest reports and contact with hunters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Sheep harvest was monitored through contact with 596 hunters during sealing, and through analysis of 1,407 hunt reports from hunting seasons open primarily during August 1–5 and August 10–September 30; including approximately 594 sheep taken in a general hunts applicable throughout most of the region, 5 drawing permit hunts, 2 registration permit hunts, 1 special permit.

2.2 Collect data from sheep presented for sealing by hunters, including the age of harvested sheep.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Harvest data were analyzed, and the results were applied to management planning and ongoing population assessment. A total of 594 rams and 2 ewes were harvested, 590 of which were aged by counting horn annuli.

2.3 Opportunistically test for the presence of potentially population-regulating disease

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We collected 48 nasal swabs from harvested rams and collected 4 dead sheep. Samples were sent to Veterinary Services for disease testing.

Objective 3: Habitat Enhancement and Assessment. Assess Dall's sheep habitat availability directly or indirectly in specified areas of the state and perform habitat enhancement in areas where it is feasible.

3.1 Record observations of biologists and hunters that relate to sheep distribution and habitat use and sheep body condition.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Biologists observed sheep distribution, habitat use, and sheep body condition during surveys listed under objective 1. Habitat plots in the Tok Management Area were observed from the air. No unusual observations were noted.

Objective 4: Dall's Sheep Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each Dall's sheep population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

4.1 Prepare Region III data and information for, or draft and complete 5-year Sheep Management Operational Reports and Plans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Three Sheep Management Operational Reports and Plans were published during FY2020, as listed in section IV, below.
- We compiled data and information for 8 five-year Sheep Management Operational Reports and Plans scheduled to be published by FY2024.

4.2 Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on Dall's sheep management.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We communicated and coordinated with and provided information at meetings of 15 local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Board of Game, 4 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 Dall's sheep management and to review and analyze biological information prepared to present regarding proposals for the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board.

4.3 Review population objectives to assess their relevance

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.

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 sheep management report and plan, scheduled to be published in FY2024.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

No SDRs were submitted for this project.

Budgeted amounts differed from those expected in the project statement as follows:

1. Travel costs were less than expected because travel was restricted due to COVID-19 travel restrictions during March–June 2020 and State of Alaska travel restrictions from July 2019 through June 2020.
2. Contractual costs were more than expected due to higher hourly rates of contract aircraft.
3. Supply costs were lower than expected because fuel costs were much lower than expected because of lower cost per gallon and less survey time than expected was conducted because of staff constraints and resources directed to other species, and due to COVID-19-related travel constraints.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

Schmidt, R. 2019. Dall sheep management report and plan, Game Management Unit 13B, 20A, and 20D, Delta Controlled Use Area: Report period 1 July 2011–30 June 2016, and plan period 1 July 2016–30 June 2020. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2019-4, Juneau.
https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/wildlife/speciesmanagementreports/pdfs/dallsheep_2011_2021_smr_gmu_13b_20a_20d_dcua.pdf

Hollis, A. L. 2019. Dall sheep management report and plan, Game Management Unit 20A: Report period 1 July 2011–30 June 2016, and plan period 1 July 2016–30 June 2021. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2019-6, Juneau.
https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/wildlife/speciesmanagementreports/pdfs/dallsheep_2011_2021_smr_gmu_20a.pdf

Wells, J. J. 2019. Dall sheep management report and plan, Game Management Units 12, 13C, and 20D, Tok Management Area. Report period 1 July 2011–30 June 2016, and plan period 1 July 2016–30 June 2021. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2019-5, Juneau.
https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/research/wildlife/speciesmanagementreports/pdfs/dallsheep_2011_2021_smr_gmu_12_13c_20d.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 Dall's sheep populations in Interior and Northeast Alaska.

Prepared by: Doreen Parker McNeill

Date: September 2020