

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: – P7.0

PROJECT TITLE: Alaska’s Region III Furbearers S&I program: Furbearers 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 furbearer population to determine the 5-year trend.

1.1 Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, cache surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We used results of approximately 140 trapper questionnaire responses from trappers in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C to assess relative species abundance and population trends for Arctic and red fox, beaver, coyote, ermine, lynx, marten, mink, muskrat, red squirrel, and river otter. (See Spivey, T. J. 2020. <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/hunting/trapping/pdfs/trap2018.pdf>)

1.2 Conduct beaver cache surveys.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- See accomplishments under objective 3.1 No formal beaver cache surveys are anticipated at this time and this objective will be removed.

1.3 Collect carcasses of marten for sex, age, reproductive status, and genetic material to better assess the marten population in the unit.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Collect age, sex, and reproductive status data from 254 marten by investigating carcasses received from trappers.

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

2.1 Collect harvest data on otter, lynx, and wolverine when pelts are presented for sealing.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We collected data from 1,766 lynx, 229 wolverine, and 59 river otter pelts that were presented for sealing, including harvest location, size measurements and sex determination. Harvest data were analyzed, and the results were applied to management planning and ongoing population assessment.
- We used results of approximately 140 trapper questionnaire responses from trappers in Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C to assess trapping areas used, frequency of trapping, distance travelled, transportation method used, trapline composition, target species, harvest methods, and harvest trends for Arctic fox, beaver, coyote, ermine, lynx, marten, mink, muskrat, red fox, red squirrel, and river otter (See Spivey, T. J. 2020. <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/hunting/trapping/pdfs/trap2018.pdf>)

2.2 Prepare an annual trapper questionnaire and report and distribute to trappers.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- No WSFR grant funds were expended preparing the annual trapper questionnaire and report or distributing it to trappers.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We monitored harvest of 1,766 lynx, 229 wolverine, and 59 river otter as well as Arctic fox, beaver, coyote, ermine, marten, mink, muskrat, and red fox through sealing reports, field observations, results of 140 trapper questionnaire reports, and interviews with more than 700 furbearer hunters and trappers in the field, and during sealing of lynx, wolverine, and river otter, and during marten carcass collections. Harvest data were analyzed, and the results were applied to management planning and ongoing population assessment.

2.4 Use public communication and education to obtain improve harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Staff educated the public and/or increased communication with the public to improve understanding of trapping regulations and the value of conserving furbearer populations, and to obtain better harvest data through increased harvest reporting.

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

3.1 Changes in furbearer habitat are monitored through anecdotal observations by biologists and the public.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We conducted a snowshoe hare population survey in 6 hours during April.
- Staff from 6 area offices opportunistically observed distribution of beavers, lynx and wolverine and their habitat use while conducting surveys for other species. No unusual observations were noted.

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.

4.1 Prepare 7 five-year Furbearer Management Operational Reports and Plans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We compiled information and data and continued writing drafts of 7 five-year Furbearer Management Reports and Operational Plans for Units 12, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26B and 26C. These reports will include historical and current data, management directions, methods, Board of Game actions, harvests and natural mortality, habitat assessments, and local and statewide non-regulatory issues. They are expected to be completed in FY2021 and will be available at the following url:
https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildliferesearch.smrfurbearer_2012_2022

4.2 Develop or review furbearer objectives to assess their relevance to furbearer management

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.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- 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 furbearer management and to review and analyze regulation proposals for the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board.

4.4 Respond to conflicts involving furbearers and inform the public about appropriate action.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Staff in 6 area offices communicated with the public to improve understanding of trapping regulations and the value of conserving furbearer populations, and to obtain better harvest data through increased harvest reporting. Staff communicated and coordinated with local residents to reduce furbearer–human problems, improve understanding of livestock, pet, and property safety around furbearers, and to reduce the need for DLP kills. We also responded to and made recommendations in instances of human–furbearer interactions, including recommendations for excluding red squirrels from buildings, preventing property damage by beavers, preventing livestock depredation by other furbearer species, and species identification from tracks, photographs, and descriptions.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

Results of objectives 1–4 will be summarized in the report portion of the five-year furbearers management report and plan, scheduled to be published in FY2021.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

No SDRs were submitted for this project.

In addition to progress noted in section I, budgeted amounts differed from those expected in the project statement due to

1. Staff time. Less staff time was devoted to furbearers because time was redirected to preparing biological information for other species for the Board of Game and because a substantial amount of time responding with biological information for emergency requests to extend or close hunting seasons for other species due to concerns about food shortage due to COVID-19 or spread of the disease among hunters in the field. This meant that Furbearer Management Reports and Plans were not published, as expected.
2. Supplies. We over-estimated the amount that would be spent on supplies needed to monitor furbearer populations.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

No 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 furbearers populations in Interior and Northeast Alaska.

Prepared by: Doreen Parker McNeill

Date: September 2020