

**WOLF  
ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY  
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**STATE:** Alaska

**GRANT AND SEGMENT NR:** W-33-4

**PROJECT NR:** 14.0

**PERIOD:** 1 July 2005–30 June 2006

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Statewide

**PROJECT TITLE:** The Status of Wolf and Factors Influencing Their Populations

**REPORT DESCRIPTION:** This performance report describes statewide wolf survey and inventory activities. Regionwide activities are listed before specific activities by herd and game management unit.

---

**The Status of Wolf  
and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region I**

**Regionwide Activities**

Activity: Prepare triennial management report on wolves.

A wolf management report was written and submitted for each unit and subunit within the region where wolves occur. These reports provide updated harvest and management information through the 2005 hunt.

Activity: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing.

Harvest data were collected when about 145 wolf pelts were presented for sealing.

Activity: Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including through the use of an annual trapper survey.

This was done throughout the region as opportunities permitted.

**Activities by Unit**

**Unit 2**

Activity: Use data generated from an ongoing wolf research radiotelemetry research project in the area and standard population modeling techniques to estimate the preseason number of wolves on Prince of Wales Island.

The wolf research project is winding down at this point, and consequently, the numbers of wolves carrying radio collars has declined. At present only 3 wolves have functional radio collars, and these marked animals are no longer monitored as part of the study project. This small sample makes it impossible to infer an accurate Unit 2 population estimate from the few remaining study animals.

Activity: Closely monitor wolf harvest during season through information gathered during sealing process.

We continue to monitor the wolf harvest using inseason sealing records and regular contacts with the sealers and trappers to ensure we stay within the established 30 percent harvest guideline for wolf conservation.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$3.6**

**Submitted by:** Dale L. Rabe – Region I Management Coordinator

## The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region II

### Regionwide Activities

Activity: Prepare a triennial regional wolf management report.

Triennial wolf management reports were prepared in all units where wolves occur.

Activity: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by hunters and trappers.

Collected harvest data when wolf pelts were presented for sealing.

Activity: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored the harvest, collecting the following preliminary harvest information:

Unit 6            7 wolves

Units 7 & 15

Subunit 7 = 5    Subunit 15A = 6    Subunit 15B = 6    Subunit 15C = 8    Total 25

Unit 9            69 wolves

Unit 10          4 wolves

Unit 11          18 wolves

Unit 13          141 wolves

Unit 14

14A	Males 5	Females 6	Unknown 0	Total 11
-----	---------	-----------	-----------	----------

14B	Males 1	Females 2	Unknown 0	Total 3
-----	---------	-----------	-----------	---------

14C	Males 0	Females 0	Unknown 0	Total 0
-----	---------	-----------	-----------	---------

Total	Males 6	Females 8	Unknown 0	Total 14
-------	---------	-----------	-----------	----------

Unit 16

16A	Males 12	Females 3	Unknown 0	Total 15
-----	----------	-----------	-----------	----------

16B	Males 20	Females 20	Unknown 1	Total 41
-----	----------	------------	-----------	----------

Total	Males 32	Females 23	Unknown 2	Total 56
-------	----------	------------	-----------	----------

Unit 17    55 wolves

Activity: Conduct systematic aerial transect surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Surveys were conducted in Units 11 and 13 with the following results:

Unit 11	110 wolves	15 packs
---------	------------	----------

Unit 13	280 wolves	51 packs
---------	------------	----------

Activity: Develop population estimates using the “Sample Unit Probability Estimator” (SUPE) technique in select areas.

No SUPE population estimates were accomplished this reporting period because of poor weather and survey conditions.

---

## **Activities by Unit**

### **Units 7 and 15**

Activity: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

Most pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with *Trichodectes canis*.

### **Unit 13**

Activity: Examine pelts when presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

No packs were identified with lice during this reporting period although one pack was previously identified.

Activity: Implement and monitor wolf predation control programs.

Monitored wolf predation control program. Of the 141 wolves taken in Unit 13, 61 (33 males, 28 females) were taken by pilot-gunner teams unaffiliated with the department.

### **Unit 14**

Activity: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There were 6 reported cases of lice infestation and 6 confirmed reports of lousy wolves in Unit 14A during this reporting period. No lousy wolves were reported in Units 14B or 14C.

### **Unit 16**

Activity: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There were 4 confirmed cases of lice or evidence of lice on wolves sealed this season from Unit 16B and 1 confirmed case of lice from Unit 16A. Also, some of the private same-day airborne wolf control pilots reported aerial observations of several wolves with very poor hide and/or hair condition.

Activity: Implement and monitor wolf predation control programs.

Monitored wolf predation control program. Of the 41 wolves taken in Unit 16B, 23 (10 males, 13 females) were taken by same-day-airborne permitted pilot-gunner teams unaffiliated with the department.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): \$68.5**

**Submitted by:** Gino Del Frate, Regional Management Coordinator

## **The Status of Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region III**

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity: Prepare triennial wolf management reports.

Prepared triennial wolf management reports.

Activity: Provide wolf management information to state and federal regulatory processes.

Provided information to the Alaska Board of Game, state Fish and Game advisory committees, federal regional advisory committees, and the Federal Subsistence Board

Activity: Collect harvest data when wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and analyze harvest data.

Collected harvest data when 341 wolf pelts were presented for sealing by trappers and hunters; analyzed harvest data.

Activity: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Monitored harvest of 341 wolves through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires and contacts with trappers and hunters.

### **Activities by Unit**

#### **Units 19, 21A, 21E**

Activity: Conduct an aerial wolf population estimation survey in Unit 19A

Conducted 2 wolf surveys in 19A, estimating 93–97 wolves during a January survey south of the Kuskokwim River and 28–31 wolves during a March survey north of the Kuskokwim and within the Holokuk and Oskawalik River drainages

#### **Unit 20A**

Activity: Monitor, capture, euthanize, or treat up to 10 injured or diseased wolves.

Radiocollared 14 wolves in 10 packs, monitored biweekly after pups emerged from dens, and administered antiparasite medication via oral baits dropped from aircraft. (No mortalities resulted from capture and collaring)

#### **Units 21B, 21C, 21D**

Activity: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

In combination with Unit 24, mailed 163 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 9 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

**Unit 24**

Activity: Encourage participation in the statewide trapper questionnaire when wolf trappers present pelts for sealing.

In combination with Unit 21, mailed 163 trapper questionnaires and interviewed 9 trappers for determining various furbearer population trends.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands):** \$134.4

**Submitted by:** Roy A. Nowlin, Management Coordinator

## **The Status of Wolf and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region V**

### **Regionwide Activities**

Activity: Prepare triennial regional wolf management reports.

A wolf management report was prepared during the reporting period.

Activity: Provide information to state and federal regulatory processes on wolf management.

Area management staff reviewed state and federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented wolf information to the Alaska Board of Game, state Fish and Game advisory committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and federal subsistence regional advisory councils.

During the November 2005 Board of Game (BOG) meeting, the department provided information regarding population status of wolves in Units 18, 23, 22, and 26A. We commented on and provided additional information at the board's request on one advisory committee proposal for Unit 22. That proposal was deferred to March 2006, when it was adopted, allowing snowmachines, ATVs and boats to be used to take wolves in Unit 22.

Activity: Maintain the ability in all units to monitor harvests by collecting data through the wolf sealing process.

The area offices in Barrow, Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome maintained agents throughout villages in each Game Management Unit to collect harvest information through sealing certificates.

Activity: Distribute the annual statewide trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

A general summary of wolf harvest and abundance for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A was written for the Trapper Questionnaire annual report. A list of active hunter/trappers was compiled, a cover letter was written, and trapper questionnaires with annual reports were sent from the Juneau office.

Activity: Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Unit 22: During advisory committee meetings and a public meeting in Unalakleet, staff discussed the desirability of reducing wolf numbers in Unit 22A to aid in moose population recovery. The Southern Norton Sound Advisory Committee submitted a proposal, which the BOG adopted, allowing the use of snowmachines, ATVs, and boats to take wolves in Unit 22. The department also helped coordinate a wolf trapping clinic in January 2006 in Unalakleet.

Activity: Use public communication and education to obtain better harvest data through increased observance of sealing requirements.

Staff discussed sealing and harvest reporting with trappers/hunters and the public. During public meetings we explained the importance of harvest reports and encouraged trappers to report their harvest.

## **Activities by Unit**

### **Unit 18**

Activity: Monitor wolf harvests through the fur sealing program, fur acquisition reports, interviews with village residents, and annual hunter/trapper questionnaires.

We monitored Unit 18 wolf harvests using fur sealing data for the 2005–2006 trapping season. Harvest figures are preliminary, but include at least 65 wolves.

Activity: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, track surveys, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, and observations by staff and the public.

We analyzed sealing data over several years and determined that the Unit 18 wolf harvest is generally increasing, but during years with poor travel conditions or when caribou are not readily available, the harvest is low and doesn't follow the trend. The wolf population is increasing throughout Unit 18 as prey populations, particularly moose, increase. This is corroborated by hunter/trapper interviews, observations by staff and the public, and opportunistic track sightings made during aerial work for other species.

Activity: Assess the effects of wolf predation on prey populations through field observations and interviews with hunters/trappers.

Hunters/trappers frequently comment during interviews that wolves are having a negative impact on moose populations and other prey species. However, moose populations are probably still growing throughout Unit 18, but the Mulchatna caribou herd is declining. The extent to which wolf predation contributes to the caribou decline is not known.

Activity: Provide public education regarding wolves through the media, during public meetings, and through other opportunities.

We taught a wolf trapping clinic in Bethel in mid October 2005, which addressed the need to seal furs for harvest reporting, provided an opportunity for trappers to learn effective trapping techniques, introduced methods to avoid catching nontarget species, and provided instruction regarding wolf biology. We also provided wolf education through newspaper articles.

### **Unit 22**

Activity: Monitor wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and community-based harvest assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 22 sealing records show a harvest of 28 wolves: 11 from Unit 22A, 9 from Unit 22B, 1 from Unit 22C, and 7 from Unit 22D. Community-based harvest assessment surveys were organized in Brevig Mission, Elim, and Teller, but data from these surveys is not yet available.



Activity: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, community-based harvest assessments, and observations by staff and the public.

Staff and local hunters report that wolves were scarce in Central Unit 22A this winter, which is attributed to caribou wintering farther north in the Nulato Hills. Wolves in Unit 22 are most abundant in areas where large numbers of caribou are wintering, and during this reporting period that was in northern Unit 22A and eastern Unit 22B.

Activity: Cooperate with reindeer herders to evaluate methods for reducing adverse interactions between wolves and reindeer while conserving wolves.

Nome staff participated in the annual Reindeer Herders Association meeting and addressed the herders' concerns about wildlife issues, but wolves were not brought up for discussion.

### **Units 23 and 26A**

Activity: Monitor wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires, and community-based harvest assessments conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 23: Thirty wolves (12 males, 14 females and 4 of unknown sex) were reported taken during this reporting period. Five wolves were trapped and 25 were shot. Airplanes were used for transportation to take 4 wolves and snowmachines for 26 wolves.

Unit 26A: Sealing certificates indicated that only 1 wolf was sealed in 2005–2006. It was a male. It was shot, and a snogo was used as transportation. It was taken by a resident of Unit 26A.

Activity: Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Unit 26A during late winter to assess population status.

Unit 26A: Due to poor snow conditions, a sample unit probability estimate (SUPE) survey was not conducted.

Activity: Record wolf sightings during moose censuses in Units 23 and 26A as an indicator of wolf population trends.

Unit 23: An unusually high number of wolves were opportunistically observed during the upper Kobuk moose census during early April 2006. Tracks and opportunistic observations of wolves indicated numbers were also in the middle and lower Noatak drainage during this reporting period.

Unit 26A: Two wolves were seen during 10.5 hours of moose composition counts along the Colville drainage trend count area in October 2005. During the April 2006 spring moose count in the Colville trend area, 8 wolves were seen in approximately 14 hours of flying.

**Total Regional Segment Period Project Costs (in thousands): 5.4**

**Submitted by:** Peter Bente. Management Coordinator