

Wildlife Restoration OPERATING 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-R4-2020

PROJECT NUMBER: 14.0

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Region IV Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Central/Southwest Alaska

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

REPORT DUE DATE: September 2020

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Todd A. Rinaldi

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Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301
50 CFR 80.90

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Population Size, Status, and Trend. Assess the size and status of each wolf population to determine the five-year trend.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Regionwide

- Record anecdotal information from pilots, hunters, trappers, and other outdoor enthusiasts on wolf activity and numbers is used as a general gauge into wolf abundance and distribution trends.

Reports by hunters, trappers, and rural residents, combined with reconnaissance flights, suggest that the wolf populations in Units 9, 10, 11, 13, 14A&B, 16 and 17 are stable.

Unit 16

- Conduct periodic telemetry flights to document wolf movements, distribution, and abundance

No activities were conducted in Unit 16 due a failure of radio collars in the field.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Collect data when wolf pelts are presented for sealing by trappers and hunters and examine pelts for the presence of lice and other abnormalities.

Two-hundred and thirteen wolves were harvested and sealed from Region IV. No abnormalities were noted.

- Monitor wolf harvest through field observations, sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters to determine harvest rate and effect on population.

Harvest has declined in Unit 9 wolf populations are believed to be naturally regulated with the possible exception of the Intensive Management area in Unit 9B. The same can be said about Unit 10 where little harvest occurs. The harvest rate in Unit 13 was determined to be ~28% but are not calculated for Units 14A, 14B, or 16 as the population size is currently unknown, however it is believed to be at a low-level and increasing. Intensive Management activities in Unit 13 provided a significant amount of demographic data.

In Unit 17, 76 wolves were harvested which may have reduced wolf populations specifically in areas of caribou calving but are likely stable elsewhere.

OBJECTIVE 3: Wolf Management with Public Participation and Outreach. Manage each wolf population with an emphasis on engaging the public in management goals and objectives through public meetings, working groups, educational materials, and incentive programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

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

All information collected is used to inform state and federal regulatory processes. Outside of common communication with our federal counterparts there was one federal proposal addressing wolves during this reporting period. Staff compiled and presented biological, population, and hunting information at more than 12 Advisory Committee meetings, 4 Resource Advisory Council meetings, Subsistence Resource Commission meetings, numerous local village councils, Native corporations and the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission. There were no state Board of Game proposals addressing wolves.

- Prepare Annual Intensive Management Report to the Board of Game.
Reports were prepared and provided to the Board of Game for areas in Units 9, 17, and 13.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=librarypublications.wildlifepublications&sort=species&sort2=speciesname&speciesname=Wolf>

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

No capture, collaring, tracking, or surveys occurred during this reporting period due the constraints from the COVID-19 pandemic leaving a considerable amount of time (25%) travel (100%) and contractual (100%) money left unspent.

AKW-29 Project 7.0: Unit 17 Wolf Abundance and Demography provides funding to conduct wolf work in Unit 17.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

None during this reporting period.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

To continue with the Unit 16-specific portion of Objective 1, additional funding will need to allocated to deploy collars and to monitor demography. It is recommended that funding be continued, and additional sources explored.

Expenditures deviated from the original grant submission because of the following:

- In early 2020, a human virus (now named SARS COV2 or COVID19) caused a global pandemic. While much of the work accomplished was similar to the previous year staff were challenged with working remotely under telework agreements, postponing some critical field work, and altering work plans in an effort to protect employee health. The ADFG Commissioner also mandated a 50% cut in travel.
- As a result of the global pandemic, the USFWS WSFR office approved extending the grant another year and we are reporting for year 1.
- Staff in Region 4 are also being reminded to code time to individual projects as they conduct work by species.

The total operating budget available to each region is determined by Divisional leadership. At times, a region must take a more broad-based approach to budgeting with the understanding that they may then move funds across grant projects throughout the year as project needs arise. For example, the bulk of Region 4's travel and supplies budget was allocated to Caribou S&I and Coordination, to be dispersed to other species' projects if needed. This approach, while allowing needed spending flexibility, sometimes results in larger than anticipated discrepancies between grant requests and actual expenditures.

To rectify the challenge of budgeting specifically per individual species' survey & inventory projects, the Region 4 grant will be restructured to create an operating grant that encompasses all survey, inventory, and coordination activities for all species into one project (the new TRACS reporting platform allows for this type of restructure). This should alleviate any budget/expenditures discrepancy problems in the S&I projects while still maintaining maximum flexibility.

Prepared by: Todd A. Rinaldi

Date: 8/17/2020