

# 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-R4-2020

**PROJECT NUMBER:** 23.4 Regional Coordination

**PROJECT TITLE:** DWC Region 4 Coordination– Central/Southwest Region

**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:** Gino Del Frate

**COOPERATORS:**

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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:** Provide quality support for wildlife conservation and research, restoration, management, information dissemination, education, access and associated recreational programs.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Coordinators ensure appropriate staff are tasked with duties to ensure all region 4 programs are accomplished. Many of the tasks are described below.

- Review and edit technical and non-technical products from Region IV.
- Review and edit technical and non-technical products from various sources across the state.
- Visited remote offices to facilitate communication, new employee orientation and ensure progress on projects.
- Coordinated, edited and submitted Federal aid project statements and performance reports.
- Attended Region IV meetings video conferences and teleconferences
- Participated in multiple Jonesville Public Use Area Management Planning meeting to discuss wildlife and public recreation.

- Participated in or helped coordinate various outreach efforts including Outdoor Youth Days, Alaskans Afield Firearms training, MatSu Outdoorsman Show, and moose vehicle collision mitigation efforts.
- Assisting with coordination of research proposals with external partners, including NPS, USFWS, USGS, Ahtna, Inc., University of Alaska (Anchorage and Fairbanks), and AWT.
- Assisted with development of education and outreach materials on moose-vehicle collisions.
- Provide biological expertise and represented the department on a large mine draft Environmental Impact Statement.

OBJECTIVE 2: Establish and maintain necessary practices to meet requirements for participation in and administration of the Wildlife Restoration (WR) program. Supervise DWC operations in Region 4 area offices and facilities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Area management staff and public information staff routinely meet with other agencies, non-governmental organizations, native tribes and corporations, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Regional Advisory Councils and members of the public to provide wildlife information necessary for the conservation of wildlife in their respective areas.

The Management Coordinator, Research Coordinator and the Project coordinators ensure the staff mentioned above accomplish their duties. In addition, the coordinators review and disseminate biological information to many of the entities described above.

The Regional Supervisor ensures the staff accomplish their duties. In addition, the Regional Supervisor coordinates activities with other regions and with other programs across the state. Specific activities include:

- Participated in and coordinated regional comments on large development projects that impact wildlife (Pebble mine proposal and draft Environmental Impact Statement, permitting, etc.).
- Coordinated reviews of various small development project permit requests-These involve coordinating mostly with Access Defense program.
- Represented the Wildlife Highways Working Group at meetings and teleconferences – Worked with Department of transportation and Public Facilities on highway improvement projects and future design to minimize impacts to wildlife.
- Met with Matanuska Susitna Borough to discuss trail improvements, and Jonesville Public Use Area planning on Matanuska Valley Moose Range.
- Provide technical guidance, review, and editing of research-related products for several undergraduate and graduate students and other professionals within and outside Alaska.
- Participated in the Federal Subsistence Board regulatory process by attending meetings representing the state and providing biological information.
- Participated in the Board of Game regulatory process by attending multiple meetings and providing biological information.
- Participate in the division's Wildlife Disease Working Group to discuss recent lab findings related to sheep diseases and to prepare a communication plan.
- Coordinated with other state agencies on wildlife attacks by providing biological expertise.
- Continued work on the Wildlife attack response protocol to improve employee safety and minimize impacts to wildlife

- Met with university staff to discuss collaborative management and research projects within the region.

OBJECTIVE 3: Plan, administer, coordinate, and provide regional oversight for the State of Alaska projects to ensure eligibility in the WR program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Administration and coordination of the regional programs fall primarily on the coordinators for this objective. Coordinators review draft proposals from staff, coordinate workflow, and review and edit popular, technical, and federal aid reports prior to publication. We participate in routine periodic meetings, video conferences and teleconferences to accomplish this objective. One or more staff accomplished the following during this reporting period.

- Regional Supervisor holds monthly meetings by either teleconference or video conference to update staff on ongoing issues and to keep informed of regional issues.
- Attended one or more of the Research Coordination Team, Management Coordination Team or Division Management Team meetings. Specific activities included assisting with development of guidelines for selecting graduate students at the Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit; prioritization guidelines for ADFG staff to attend professional conferences and workshops; and providing updates on ongoing and proposed research in Region IV.
- Attended Region IV meetings and video conferences and teleconferences. Coordinated outside discussions when necessary.
- Advised Region IV leadership staff on various supervisory issues
- Reviewed reports and provided support to a graduate research project on moose vehicle collisions – Utah State University. Concluded one project during this period and initiated a second complimentary project.
- Reviewed and revised position descriptions for the Special Projects Coordinator and new WBIII position.
- Research coordinator led 2 meetings with all regional research staff.
- Management Coordinator led 2 meetings with management staff outside of regional and board of game planning meetings.
- Facilitate coordination between research staff, their collaborators, Federal Aid staff, and others within ADFG.
- When necessary supervisory staff traveled to remote offices to coordinate activities and meet with staff.
- All management and research staff worked to submit federal aid project statements and performance reports in a timely manner.

OBJECTIVE 4: Participate in local, regional, state, and national meetings as a representative of the DWC to address issues related to WR-administered grants.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Staff requested and received approval to travel to meetings as budget and priorities allowed. Staff routinely attended local meetings with other staff, members of the public, and agencies as needed.

- Attended Region IV meetings, video conferences and teleconferences

- Participated in the Wildlife Highways working group to coordinate statewide efforts to improve Department of Transportation highway designs to minimize wildlife vehicle accidents. Worked with DOT&PF on project design in region IV.
- Discussing ongoing and future grizzly bear research in GMU 13 with Ahtna Corp, AITRC, and USGS Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.
- Coordinating ongoing and new research on moose-vehicle collisions with partners at Utah State University
- Served on multiple hiring panels for ADFG research and management positions.
- Monitor and coordinate training and professional development for research staff.
- Met with Federal agencies (Tetlin NWR and Wrangell St Elias NP) to discuss moose and caribou management strategies. Also provided staff for coordinated management work.
- Met with Matanuska Susitna Borough to discuss Matanuska Valley Moose Range management and planning.

OBJECTIVE 5: Develop new research project proposals.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: One new research proposal was developed and approved during this period. AKW-R-15-2020: “Abundance, survival, and body condition in the Mulchatna caribou herd: evaluating the status, health, and drivers of decline.”

In addition, at least 3 additional project proposals were drafted and submitted but not funded during this reporting period.

OBJECTIVE 6: Supervise the research program in Region 4 such that budgeting, planning, implementation, coordination/collaboration, and reporting are achieved.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: See below:

- Successfully recruited/hired a Wildlife Physiologist II (due to retirement)
- Completed all evaluations for research staff; exercised flex option for PCN 11-2059 to a WBIII
- Developed a cooperative research program with Ahtna, Inc., AITRC, and the ACFWRU to explore genetic sampling of bears in GMU 13
- Established telework policies/agreements with research staff following COVID-19 concerns; conducted team meetings as-needed
- Coordinating multiple data sharing and cooperative agreements with various organizations, including Utah State University, Southern Oregon University, and the University of Alaska – Anchorage, with others in-development.
- Ongoing reassessment of research programs in response to challenges related to COVID-19, changes to staffing and associated expertise, and budgets.
- Overseeing ongoing recruitment of a new LTNP WBI
- Coordinate development and renewal of IACUC protocols for Region IV.
- Delegating research staff to various hiring and review panels
- Assisting with developing graduate programs related to ADFG research

OBJECTIVE 7: Oversee the development of operational plans, reports, and project statements for research.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Management coordinator led 2 meetings with management staff. Management coordinator maintains regional calendar of events to keep track of staff progress on projects. Coordinated the preparation and review of 5-year Species Reports and Management Plans for Black Bear, Furbearers, Mountain Goats and Brown Bears.

The project coordinator worked with contractors on the “Maud Road Extension” project which included site monitoring and reviewing deliverables to ensure they were allowable.

OBJECTIVE 8: Prepare and coordinate with the Federal Aid Coordinator all research grant submissions, amendments, and performance report submissions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Coordinators set timelines, received draft documents for review and submitted reports and project statements to the Federal Aid Coordinator as required.

OBJECTIVE 9: Oversee review and finalization of regional research technical reports and publications. Served as an Associate Editor for the Journal of Wildlife Management and Wildlife Monographs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: See the list below:

- Ecological insights from three decades of animal movement tracking across a changing Arctic. In Revision. Science. Davidson, et al. (There are about 145 total authors on this one, Nick Demma being one of them).
- DeCesare, N.J., K.E. Colson, .... 2020. Phylogeography of moose in western North America. Journal of Mammalogy 10:10-23.
- Effects of fire on diet composition, foraging behavior, and nutritional status of moose in southcentral and interior Alaska. 2020. Katie Anderson. Master’s Thesis, University of Alaska – Anchorage. 118 pages.
- An Overview of Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Research in Region IV. 2020. Poster to Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Collins, Colson, Demma, Inokuma, Sattler, and Stetz.
- Behavioral modifications by a large-northern herbivore to mitigate warming conditions. In Revision. Movement Ecology. Jennewein, J.S., et al. (Kim Jones and a few others from ADFG are authors.)
- Brockman et al. 2020. Effect of Harvest on a Brown Bear Population in Alaska. JWM.
- In addition, coordinators review all Species Management Reports and plans. See Accomplishments under Objective 7.

OBJECTIVE 10: Supervise the biometric support program in Region 4 such that budgeting, planning, and implementation are completed.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Completed annual performance evaluation and training plan for biometrician.
- Monitored progress of various biometric services efforts through biweekly progress reports.

- Ensured that clients (region 4 staff) were satisfied with consultation and other biometrics products through periodic checks with research biologists.
- Provided necessary support to staff to ensure adequate training, experience and equipment were available.

1. OBJECTIVE 11: Maintain the regional aircraft to support research and management projects

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Regional Supervisor coordinated with staff to ensure that all maintenance needs were met. One airplane was shared between Regions 2 and 5. The other airplane maintained in Fairbanks and utilized in regions 3,4 and 5 to assist in wildlife research and management programs.

- Worked with education staff on a moose vehicle awareness program.
- Reviewed all documents, manuscripts and educational materials for publication and dissemination to the public.

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

The coordination project is not a product-oriented project. Rather this project is a description of the process staff utilize to see that other management, research, and education projects are fulfilled. Staff assigned to this project ensures that all projects are completed in an efficient and effective manner and that procurement, budgeting and reporting rules are followed.

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.

As a result of the global pandemic the Federal Aid office received approval for grant expenditures to be rolled into FY21 as needed. This grant is now a 2-year grant and we are reporting for year 1.

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

As mentioned above the global pandemic caused work to be significantly be delayed or postponed. Work not accomplished in FY20 will be accomplished in FY21.

During this reporting period and related to loss of revenue from COVID-19 travel restrictions we reduced our spending plan within this grant. In addition, we left one position vacant and applied the salary savings to balance the budget. This resulted in underspending for this grant.

#### **IV. PUBLICATIONS**

Publications under this project are not usually produced. Rather staff ensures that other project reports are completed in a timely fashion and according to Federal Aid guidelines.

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

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 budget/expenditures discrepancy problems in the S&I projects while still maintaining maximum spending flexibility.

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**Date:** 8/20/2020