

**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-R5-2020

PROJECT NUMBER: P6.0

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Dall Sheep and Factors Influencing Their Populations

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: Phillip Perry, Region V Management Coordinator

COOPERATORS:

Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

Region wide Activities:

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

Area management staff reviewed State and Federal regulatory proposals, attended regulatory process meetings, and presented Dall sheep information to the State Board of Game, State Fish and Game Advisory Committees, Federal Subsistence Board, and Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

Mountain Range or Use Area Activities:

Baird Mountains:

Conduct aerial sex and age composition surveys in established count areas.

The National Park Service (NPS) and ADFG staff conducted an aerial sex and age composition survey during June 2018. Results from the June 2017 sheep survey were 184 adult sheep, 57% lower than the last 20 previous survey average. (1988-2015)

Monitor the population by conducting minimum counts or generating population estimates with survey data.

The survey conducted by NPS in June 2019 will also produce a population estimate.

Monitor harvests through, federal permit hunts, Community-based Harvest Assessments, public contacts, and field observations.

All sheep hunts in the Baird Mountains in Units 23 and 26A were closed due to low populations. Results from the June 2018 Baird sheep survey were 160 adult sheep, 46% lower than the last 5 previous survey average. (2011-2017)

Update population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Sheep information was reported at Advisory Committee meetings and no hunting in Unit 23 and Unit 26A west of the Etivluk River drainage was recommended due to low populations and poor recruitment.

DeLong Mountains:

Conduct aerial sex and age composition surveys in established count areas.

NPS and ADFG conducted an aerial sex and age composition survey during June 2018. Results from the June 2016 Trail Creek-Kuguroruk area of the DeLongs was 230 adult sheep.

Conduct aerial sex and age composition surveys in established count areas.

ADFG conducted a limited aerial sex and age composition survey during July 2020. Results from the July 2020 Trail Creek-Kuguroruk area of the DeLongs was 83 adult sheep. Abundance of the estimate is possibly skewed due to new pilot and weather. 2018-2019 surveys resulted in 177 and 183, respectively.

Monitor the population by conducting minimum counts or generating population estimates with survey data.

The survey conducted by NPS and ADF&G in July 2020 will also produce a population estimate.

Monitor harvests through the harvest ticket system, permit hunts, Community-based Harvest Assessments, public contacts, and field observations.

All sheep hunts in the De Long Mountains in Units 23 and 26A were closed due to low populations. Results from the July 2020 Trail Creek-Kuguroruk area of the DeLongs was 83 adult sheep.

Update population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Sheep information was reported at Advisory Committee meetings and no hunting in Unit 23 and Unit 26A west of the Etivluk River drainage was recommended due to low populations and poor recruitment.

Schwatka Mountains:

Monitor harvests through the harvest ticket system, permit hunts, Community-based Harvest Assessments, public contacts, and field observations.

All sheep hunts in the Schwatka Mountains in Units 23 and 26A west of Etivluk River, were closed due to low populations.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

For FY2020 this project was underspent by about \$13,500 or about by 56%. Staff time was significantly lower than budgeted and expenses for supplies and contractual were also low. Sheep surveys are very weather dependent and did not occur in July 2019 or June 2020 because of poor weather. In July 2020 staff completed sheep surveys but those are not on this budget cycle.

The total operating budget available to Region 5 each year is determined by HQ. Region 5 has traditionally taken the approach of depositing these funds into projects based upon a very broad estimate, and then moving funds across grant projects throughout the year as project needs arise. This very generalized approach, while allowing needed spending flexibility, has resulted in large discrepancies between costs indicated in the grant request and the final expenditures of each project within the grant. This approach has also made it difficult for USFWS to determine if projects are cost-effective as the project budget estimates are not specific to the work described.

To rectify these discrepancies amongst individual species' survey & inventory projects between budget requests vs. expenditures, the Region 5 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 the budget/expenditures discrepancies problem while still maintaining maximum flexibility.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

None.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

Many expenditures varied from the original grant submission and there are several reasons for this:

1. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring and subsequent fallout to projects, the ADFG Commissioner mandated a 50% cut in travel.
2. The bulk of the region's travel budget was in the Coordination project.
3. The total operating budget available to Region 5 each year is determined by HQ. Region 5 has traditionally taken the approach of depositing these funds into projects based upon a very broad estimate, and then moving funds across grant projects throughout the year as project needs arise. This very generalized approach, while allowing needed spending flexibility, has resulted in large discrepancies between costs indicated in the grant request and the final expenditures of each project within the grant. This approach has also made it difficult for USFWS to determine if projects are cost-effective as the project budget estimates are not specific to the work described.
4. Staff in Region 5 are also being reminded to code time to individual projects as they conduct work by species.

To rectify these discrepancies amongst individual species' survey & inventory projects between budget requests vs. expenditures, the Region 5 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 the budget/expenditures discrepancies problem while still maintaining maximum flexibility.

Submitted by Phillip Perry, Region V Management Coordinator

