

**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: #F19AF00444

PROJECT NUMBER: AKW-R-13-2019

PROJECT TITLE: 4-Year Caribou Harvest Assessment for Communities Located in the Range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WAH)

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: March 1, 2019- June 30, 2023

PERFORMANCE YEAR: March 1, 2019- June 30, 2020; Years 1 and 2 of a 5 year project

REPORT DUE DATE: Submit to Coordinator June 12, 2020; due to FAC June 29, 2020

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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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:

Harvest Survey Expansion: Harvest surveys will be increased to implementation in 8 communities surveyed twice in 4 years. Household harvest surveys include questions about the number of caribou harvested, harvests by sex, location, timing, and participation in hunting for caribou.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Study communities for year 1 harvest survey implementation were chosen with input with DWC collaborators at the beginning of the project. The identified study communities are the Unit 22 communities of Golovin and White Mountain and the Unit

23 communities of Selawik and Shungnak. Division staff conducted approval meetings with tribal governments in March 2019, and received approval in the chosen communities. ADF&G Subsistence staff conducted household surveys in selected study communities from April to June 2019. Harvest surveys were conducted by local research assistants (LRAs) in each study community who were trained by Division staff. A census was attempted in each community and sample achievement was generally high. Staff surveyed 31 of 43 households in Golovin (72% sample), 128 out 150 households in Selawik (85%), 50 out of 63 households in Shungnak (79%), and 52 out of 62 White Mountain households (84%). Surveys were coded during fieldwork and sent to Information Management staff for data entry and analysis when staff returned from the field. Data analysis was conducted in the summer of 2019 and draft data was received in November 2019. The second round of data collection for these communities will occur in year 3 of the project.

Study communities for year 2 harvest survey implementation were also chosen with input from DWC collaborators in the fall of 2020. The identified study communities are the Unit 23 communities of Kobuk, Kiana, and Noatak, as well as the Unit 22 community of Shishmaref. Community approval meetings were conducted with tribal councils, and approval was received in each community. Fieldwork was planned for March and April 2020, however staff were forced to cancel planned visits to conduct survey administration. The COVID 19 pandemic made it inadvisable to travel to rural communities, and the decision to postpone fieldwork was made in collaboration with tribal governments. Fieldwork for the year 2 communities is planned for spring 2021 and will coincide with data collection in year 3 communities.

Information gathered in year 1 communities during the spring of 2019 represents an expansion of an existing harvest monitoring program within the range of the WAH. The goal of this project is record interannual variation of harvesting patterns in each study community, and data gathered in year 1 will provide valuable comparison to the future harvest survey effort conducted in Golovin, Selawik, Shungnak, and White Mountain in spring 2021. The collected data will also provide a point of comparison with historical harvest data collected prior to the beginning of this project and may allow for the identification of harvest trends over time. Additionally, a comparison of household harvest survey data to existing harvest permit data will give managers insight into permitting compliance. Costs of the harvest survey activity to date have been within the allotted budget. Because year 1 data collection was condensed, the cost of field trips was lower than expected. Due to the postponement of year 2 data collection, field trip money will be reserved for year 3 of the project. A significant development report will be included in this performance report to reflect the necessary change of doing both year 2 and year 3 harvest data collection in 2021.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Caribou Local and Traditional Knowledge: As a part of the survey effort, Division of Subsistence staff will conduct key respondent interviews with knowledgeable subsistence users in each study community. This effort will allow for an assessment of observed

changes to the herd over time, including the health and abundance of the resource, migratory patterns, and changes to harvest location, timing, and effort. Key respondents will also be asked to provide perspectives on the management of the herd and regulatory issues, which will give managers valuable feedback.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

As mentioned above, fieldwork for year 1 communities occurred in Golovin, Selwaik, Shungnak, and White Mountain from April to June of 2019. A total of 3 recorded ethnographic interviews were conducted with knowledgeable key respondents during 2019 fieldwork (one in each community with the exception of Selawik), as well as several informal conversations with members of all study communities. Common themes emerged during both interviews and informal conversations, including observed changes to migration patterns in both timing and location of migration, concerns regarding the overall abundance of the herd, environmental issues impacting access to the herd (thin river ice in the spring, snow conditions, etc), and questions and concerns over regulatory changes. The timing of survey administration made collecting additional key respondent interviews challenging. Community approval meetings for prior WAH surveys have generally been conducted in the fall preceding spring harvest survey administration. Division staff endeavor to conduct surveys from March to April in any given study year, however year 1 of this project had a later start. Because of the need to conduct harvest surveys prior to the busy summer subsistence harvesting season, staff were unable to extend trips. Another obstacle to ethnographic data collection was ideal spring hunting conditions in Unit 23 communities during data collection which made scheduling interviews difficult. However additional interviews in year 1 communities are planned during community review meetings. Draft data will also be available during future key respondent interviews, which will provide valuable context to explore harvesting patterns with knowledgeable subsistence users.

As mentioned in Objective 1, staff were forced to postpone data collection in year 2 communities due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Key respondent interviews will be collected during harvest survey administration in the spring of 2021, and, as in year 1 communities, will also be conducted during community review meetings of draft data. Costs of ethnographic data collection to date are lower than the allotted budget. Due to a condensed field season in year 1 and a postponement of fieldwork in year 2, the balance of the remaining money will be spent in fall 2020 (data review trips for year 1 communities) and spring 2021 (during harvest data collection in year 2 communities).

OBJECTIVE 3:

Outreach efforts: After each round of surveying, Division of Subsistence and DWC staff will return to study communities with the draft data results in order to review the data with tribal councils and residents. Harvest estimates from survey data will be presented alongside RC800 and RC907 permit data. These outreach meetings will open a dialogue between ADF&G staff and subsistence users about the importance of the permit, potential impediments to accessing or filling out permits, and will allow for a dialogue between subsistence users and managers.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

For year 1 communities, draft data was received in November 2019. Staff contacted tribal governments in each community to schedule community review meetings. Due to the winter holidays in December, the Region V Board of Game meeting in January, and staff travel commitments in February, community review meetings were planned for March and April 2020 to coincide with harvest survey administration in year 2 communities; this would have allowed for a savings in travel cost as staff would already be in the region and would save on airfare from the Unit 22 hub of Nome and Unit 23 hub of Kotzebue. Unfortunately, staff were unable to attend community meetings in March and April due to travel being inadvisable during the COVID-19 pandemic. PI Mikow contacted the tribal governments in year 1 communities about the possibility of conducting initial community review meetings via teleconference. Due to social distancing measures in the 4 study communities as well as meeting cancellations, preliminary data review has not yet occurred. Data review materials have been produced and staff are hopeful that travel will be possible in fall 2020. If travel needs to be delayed further, staff will continue to pursue teleconference meetings for data review. These meetings will be instrumental in helping to understand documented harvest data as well as providing a vital avenue for outreach to support the harvest permitting program.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Publication of results: After receipt of harvest data, ethnographic interviews, analysis of the data, and review with tribal councils, a final report will be published for each year of the project.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

As mentioned previously, the Division has produced draft data for the year 1 communities of Golovin, Selawik, Shungnak, and White Mountain and staff have collected initial ethnographic data during the 2019 field season. Division staff have written a draft report of year 1 data which includes a summary of harvest quantities, timing, location, and sharing data for each study community and an incorporation of preliminary ethnographic data. Select findings from these data will be presented in draft format in the following section. While this report is largely complete, staff have been unable to conduct data review meetings with study communities which are a prerequisite to publication. Additionally, these meeting will allow for the collection of additional ethnographic data which will provide important context to quantitative harvest data. Staff are hopeful that these data review meetings can be conducted in fall 2020 which will allow for the publication of the final report of year 1 data and the dissemination of the results to study communities through community summaries mailed to all boxholders in each community. As such, the allotted budget for publication has not yet been spent.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

This performance reported summarizes information from years 1 and 2 of a 5 year project. As of this reporting period, Division staff have completed data collection and analysis for the year 1 communities of Golovin, Selawik, Shungnak, and White Mountain. Because community review of the draft data has been delayed, selected results presented here are preliminary.

Percentages of households that used caribou was similar between study communities in the same GMU. For Unit 22 communities, 65% of Golovin households used this resource; as did 64% of White Mountain households (Table 1). Caribou use rates were significantly higher in the Unit 23 communities of Selawik (96% of households) and Shungnak (98%). Golovin and White Mountain are situated just inside of the commonly understood peripheral range of the Western Arctic caribou herd. Selawik is located in the herd's migratory range. Shungnak is located in the winter range, near migratory areas. Although access to caribou may be more difficult for hunters in communities in the peripheral, and migration, area of the range, traditional food distribution networks based on sharing and barter may account for the high levels of use. There was greater variability in the percentage of households that hunted caribou between communities. Shungnak had the highest percentage of households attempting to harvest caribou (60%), followed by Selawik (49%), White Mountain (29%) and Golovin (26%).

The percentages of households in the Unit 22 study communities that harvested caribou were similar; in Unit 23 study communities, the rates varied significantly. Overall, rates of households harvesting caribou in Unit 23 study communities were much higher than Unit 22 study communities. In Golovin, 10% of households harvested caribou during the study year (Table 1). In Selawik 29% of households harvested caribou during the study year. The percentage of households that harvested caribou were greatest in Shungnak (46%). In White Mountain, a slightly higher percentage of households harvested caribou (12%) than in Golovin. Household success rates (roughly measured by dividing the percentage of households that harvested caribou by the percentage of households that attempted to do so) were significantly higher in Shungnak than the rest of the study communities during the study year.

Community	Percentage of Households Reporting					Estimated Harvest			
	Use	Attempt	Harvest	Give	Receive	Total Amount	Mean HH Amount	Percapita Lbs	95% CI Harvest
Golovin	64.5%	25.8%	9.7%	9.7%	58.1%	40.2	0.9	48.1	51.7%
Selawik	96.1%	49.2%	28.9%	55.5%	84.4%	252.0	1.7	50.4	11.3%
Shungnak	98.0%	60.0%	46.0%	46.0%	78.0%	365.4	5.8	207.6	17.4%
White Mountain	63.5%	28.8%	11.5%	25.0%	55.8%	27.4	0.4	19.2	24.4%

Source ADF&G Division of Subsistence household surveys, 2018.

The final report for year 1 communities will include a much greater level of detail, including harvest timing and location, sex of harvested animals, ethnographic context, and comparison of these data to earlier harvest studies. A second round of data collection for year 1 communities will occur in year 3 and will provide valuable comparable

interannual harvest information. Year 2 harvest data for the communities of Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, and Shishmaref has not yet been collected.

Current budget expenditures for FY19 and FY20 are presented in the table below. The SF425 Federal Financial Status Report will be sent separately by the Division of Administration, Accounting Section.

	FY2019	FY2020
Federal Funds	\$16,152.43	\$40,222.75
State Funds	\$41,385.13	\$18,473.02
Total	\$57,537.56	\$58,695.77

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

While no significant development reports (SDRs) have been submitted for this project to date, the impact of COVID-19 has impacted project timelines. Year 2 data collection was scheduled to begin in March 2020 and was initially delayed as the pandemic situation progressed. Due to statewide mandates limiting travel between communities in Alaska as well as consultation with tribal councils in study communities, staff made the decision to postpone planned 2020 fieldwork until the following year to coincide with the second year of data collection in year 1 communities. The pandemic also impacted data review meetings planned for spring 2020 in year 1 communities, which are tentatively scheduled for fall 2020 should travel conditions allow. This SDR would request that harvest survey and ethnographic data collection for year 2 communities (Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, and Shishmaref) be postponed until spring 2021 and data review meetings for year 1 communities (Golovin, Selawik, Shungnak, and White Mountain) be postponed until fall 2020. Additionally, the publication of the final report for year 1 communities is contingent on data review with study communities, and Division staff anticipate that it will be published in fall 2020.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

No publications for this project are available at this time. The publication of the final report for year 1 communities is contingent on data review meetings with tribal governments in Golovin, Selawik, Shungnak, and White Mountain which have been delayed due to public health concerns. The draft report is written and is awaiting community review.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

As mentioned in the SDR above, the PI recommends that data collection for year 2 communities occurs in spring 2021(year 3) because of the need to postpone due to COVID-19. This fieldwork would coincide with the second round of data collection for

year 1 communities, which would not change the overall end date of the project on June 30, 2023.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Mikow

Date: 6/10/2020