

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Restoration Grant**

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-R-17-2020

PROJECT NUMBER: 1.0

PROJECT TITLE: DWC-SUB Wildlife Harvest Assessment in Unit 18 Communities

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: February 10, 2020 – June 30, 2020

PERFORMANCE YEAR: February 10, 2020 – September 30, 2020

REPORT DUE DATE: December 29, 2020

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: David Runfola

Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301
50 CFR 80.90

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING PERFORMANCE YEAR

OBJECTIVE 1: Conduct 200 large land mammal harvest survey investigations by June 30, 2020.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Progress toward completion of this objective included community outreach activities and attendance at tribal council meetings in the two study communities of Kwethluk and Akiachak. During in-person community consultation meetings, both Kwethluk and Akiachak tribal councils approved project activities in their communities. Research staff then scheduled household harvest surveys to begin during the first week of April 2020.

OBJECTIVE 2: Conduct 25 large land mammal harvest and use ethnographic key respondent interview investigations by October 31, 2020.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Progress toward completion of this objective included community outreach activities and attendance at tribal council meetings in the two study communities of Kwethluk and Akiachak. During in-person community consultation meetings, both Kwethluk and Akiachak tribal councils approved project activities in their communities. Research staff then scheduled the initial key respondent interviews to begin during the first week of April 2020.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

As described in Section I herein, project staff initiated outreach activities and attended tribal council meetings in the two study communities of Kwethluk and Akiachak. All preliminary community consultation activities occurred in February and March 2020. Project staff conducted telephonic and written communications with tribal council staff to introduce the project, including information describing the study goals and objectives. The P.I. and key project staff attended tribal council meetings during which they formally introduced and described the project. At these meetings staff invited the tribal councils to approve completion of household harvest surveys, key respondent interviews, and participant observation in their communities. Both Kwethluk and Akiachak tribal councils approved project activities to commence. Research staff then scheduled fieldwork to begin during the first week of April 2020.

In mid-March State of Alaska health advisories and non-essential travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented project staff from commencing with 2020 season fieldwork. Further community consultations resulted in tribal council staff directing researchers not to travel to Kwethluk or Akiachak for fieldwork. In consultation with Division of Subsistence regional and headquarters staff, the P.I. postponed fieldwork plans until 2021.

Despite the unavoidable delay in project activities, project staff were able to make very positive connections with community leaders. Tribal council staff in both Kwethluk and Akiachak expressed interest in the project. They also shared the department’s concern regarding the status of the Mulchatna caribou herd and the need for more information to support effective management of big game populations in Game Management Unit 18. The P.I. cannot overstate the value to the project and the department of establishing these positive relationships in communities that are typically reluctant to cooperate with management agencies. Collaborative relationships with Kwethluk and Akiachak will increase Division of Subsistence and DWC’s likelihood of success in completing project objectives when conditions allow for project activities to commence.

In addition to community consultations, project staff initiated final project report writing activities, which included literature searches and composition of draft introductory and background information. Staff also initiated development of contingency plans to prepare for the possibility of completing project objectives remotely in the event that non-essential will be prohibited during the 2021 field season. As of the end of this reporting period staff had not completed preparations for remote survey formats; however, analysts were in the process of drafting survey formats that could be administered telephonically and online.

The following table summarizes budget allocations and expenditures during the reporting period.

<u>Fund source</u>	<u>FY20</u>
Federal Funds	\$ 9,998.32
State Funds	\$10,630.71
Total	\$20,629.03

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

Brief description of the revision request: Extend project end date to 06/30/2022. Carry over FY20 funds into FY21

Justification for the revision request: The P.I. and staff obtained approval from tribal councils to conduct surveys and ethnographic research in the study communities of Kwethluk and Akiachak In March, the P.I. contacted tribal councils in to discuss project fieldwork planning which was to occur in April 2020. Due to travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, consultations were limited to telephone and email correspondence. Both community tribal councils expressed concern regarding continuation of fieldwork planning that would require any contact between division field staff and members of their communities. Both tribal councils informed the P.I. and staff that ADF&G would not be permitted to enter the community to complete fieldwork and asked that we postpone the research to a later date.

This revision request would allow project staff to postpone any further project field activities at least until January 2021. If current pandemic conditions improve to allow for travel to research communities, the P.I. would obtain the community support needed to reassure the public that participation in the study will not pose a risk to survey respondents, or that risks will otherwise be minimized to the greatest extent possible. The revision would permit staff to postpone the first season of field data collection from spring 2020 to spring 2021. Upon approval of this request, all subsequent project tasks will also be postponed 12 months. All budget items for FY20 expenditures will be carried forward into FY21 and through the revised project end date of June 30, 2022 in FY23.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

No publications, photographs, websites, or other documentation have resulted from this project during the reporting period.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

The project will proceed with original fieldwork plan to begin in January 2021. Project activities may be altered due to State of Alaska and study community health mandates because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The P.I. and key project staff are developing alternative data collection methods to allow for remote survey administration. These alternative survey forms will include options for completion by telephone or online. The project will need to be extended until June 30, 2022 to accommodate a 12-month postponement of project field activities.

Prepared by: P.I.

Date: December 23, 2020