

**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: October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

PERFORMANCE YEAR: February 10, 2020 – June 30, 2022 (year 2 of a 2.5 year grant)

REPORT DUE DATE: December 29, 2021

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Alida Trainor

COOPERATORS:

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: Due the to Covid-19 pandemic, subsistence division staff completed data collection remotely. Phone surveys were used to reach heads of households in Kwethluk and Akiachak during the winter of 2020 and spring of 2021. In Kwethluk, surveyors were able to obtain a 63% sample (104) of all households with a 10% refusal rate. In Akiachak, 60% (107) of all households were surveyed, with a 5% refusal rate.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Two division of subsistence staff traveled to Bethel for the September 2021 moose season. Staff boated to Kwethluk and Akiachak each day for 10 days to interview moose hunters, elders, and those who typically hunt for caribou but are currently unable to do so because of the low population of the Mulchatna herd. During this field work staff interviewed 12 individuals in 9 recorded interviews. Additionally, staff participated in several moose hunts to document traditional hunting practices and to interview hunters as they hunted. This valuable participant observation methodology allowed researchers to explore the hunting dynamics that occur along the Kuskokwim

and its tributaries. For example, researchers gathered information pertaining to hunt effort, crowding, and the intensity that occurs along the waterways during evenings and weekends because local employment schedules. How hunters mitigate these conditions will be described in the final report.

II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON PROJECT TO DATE.

As described in Section I herein, project staff successfully initiated and completed remote survey data collection. Surveyors coordinated with the local tribal councils to update existing phone lists and worked to survey all households. A high sample and low refusal rate was achieved in both study communities. The collection of ethnographic interviews was postponed until in-person research activities could resume. PI staff felt that ethnographic methods work best in-person when trust with respondents can be established.

In September, two Division of Subsistence staff traveled to Bethel and boated to Kwethluk and Akiachak for 10-days. This allowed researchers to establish a presence in both communities during the beginning of moose hunting season. Additionally, staff were able to join on several moose hunting trips, some of which were overnights. When staff were not hunting, they traveled throughout Unit 18 on the waterways. Doing this allowed them to stop and talk to numerous Kuskokwim River residents who were moose hunting or traveling to hunting camp. Unfortunately, restrictions on MCH opportunity limited the ethnography staff were able to obtain related to that herd but spending time with moose hunters from Kwethluk and Akiachak provided the opportunity to learn more about the needs of the study communities in times of low caribou abundance.

After returning from the field, researchers began transcribing the ethnographic interviews in preparation for thematic analysis.

III. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT REPORTS AND/OR AMENDMENTS.

David Runfola, former Subsistence Resource Specialist III and PI on this project, left the Division of Subsistence in July 2021. Alida Trainor, Northern Region Program Manager in the Division of Subsistence has taken over as PI on this project. Ms. Trainor has worked as a lead subsistence resource specialist in Region III for the last 11 years and brings considerable knowledge of big game populations and the human dimensions of critical herds to this project.

IV. PUBLICATIONS

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

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

During the last reporting period, this project was extended until June 30, 2022 to accommodate a change in methodologies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that data collection is complete, no additional changes or recommendations for this project are necessary at this time.

Prepared by: Alida Trainor, Principal Investigator

Date: December 20, 2021