

# **State of Alaska FY2011 Governor's Operating Budget**

## **Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Conservation Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary**

## Wildlife Conservation Results Delivery Unit

### Contribution to Department's Mission

To conserve and enhance Alaska's wildlife and habitats and provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits.

### Core Services

- Biologists and wildlife managers survey and inventory wildlife populations for information on size, trends, productivity, and levels of mortality. Species of primary concentration include: moose, caribou, black bear, brown bear, deer, sheep, mountain goat, bison, muskox, elk, and wolf.
- Biologists also manage furbearers (wolverine, fox, marten, lynx, beaver), waterfowl (ducks, geese, cranes) and small game (ptarmigan, grouse, and hares).
- Biologists and wildlife managers administer hunts within the 26 regulatory Game Management Units by issuing permits, issuing emergency closure and opening orders, and monitoring harvest levels.
- Biologists postulate, conduct, collect data, and document the results of multi-year field studies on wildlife populations to examine productivity, nutrition, predation, and the impacts of disease. Wildlife research is direct to assist in the management and understanding of wildlife and their habitats.
- The public has access to biologists and wildlife managers through the Division's presence in 24 offices statewide. Biological and office staff assess public interests and local needs, direct hunting inquires to appropriate and ethical hunting opportunities, sell hunting and trapping licenses, issue harvest tags and permits, make public presentations, and respond to injured wildlife.
- Staff providing public and hunter services are based in the following communities: Ketchikan, Craig, Petersburg, Sitka, Juneau, Cordova, Kodiak, Glennallen, Palmer, Anchorage, Soldotna, Homer, King Salmon, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Tok, Delta Junction, Galena, McGrath, Ft. Yukon, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow.
- Hunter Education is required if born AFTER January 1, 1986 and intend to hunt in Game Management Units 7, 13-15, and 20. Hunter education certification is also required for specific locations. Courses are offered to increase firearm safety, knowledge of regulations, and decrease the wounding loss of game. Specialized hunter education courses are arranged for archery and muzzle-loading firearms. The program constantly recruits volunteers who serve as instructors in many parts of the state.
- The division's role is to provide the Board of Game with biological information, offer suggested regulatory changes based on available information and data, and provide testimony, analyses, and recommendations on proposed changes offered by individuals and organizations. During FY10, Board of Game meetings are planned for the Arctic and Western region for fall, 2008 (Game Management Units 18, 22, 23, 26A), and Interior for spring, 2010 (Game Management Units 12, 19-21, 24, 25, 26B, 26C).
- A central repository for big game and furbearer harvest information is managed by the division. This service administers and conducts the lottery for all Drawing Permit hunts and administers the Tier II Subsistence Permit hunt scoring and allocation system. Data processing support for division services also includes GIS-based data analysis and digital mapping within Game Management Units.
- Management of 32 state wildlife refuges, critical habitat areas, and wildlife sanctuaries for the protection of fish and wildlife, their habitats, and public use. Primary areas include: McNeil River Bear Sanctuary, Creamer's Field, Potters Marsh, Palmer Hay Flats, Walrus Island Sanctuary, and Mendenhall Wetlands.

### Results at a Glance

(Additional performance information is available on the web at <http://omb.alaska.gov/results>.)

#### **END RESULT A: Healthy and sustainable wildlife populations in Alaska that provide a diversity of opportunities for public use and enjoyment.**

- 42% of big game populations targets set by the Board of Game were met in FY2009, down from 2008 and below the 75% target.
- Conservation action plans are in place for 10/11 (91%) of "species of concern," including blackpoll warbler, Townsend's warbler, olive-sided flycatcher, Steller's eider, spectacled eider, northern goshawk, Arctic peregrine falcon, American peregrine falcon, Aleutian Canada goose and Kenai brown bear.
- Five species are listed on the state endangered species list, no change since 1993.

#### **Status of Strategies to Achieve End Result**

- In FY09, 19 key species projects were continued and 14 were initiated for a total of 33, exceeding the target.

- During FY09, the Division of Wildlife Conservation completed 78% of planned wildlife surveys (174 of 223) in which weather or aircraft availability was not a factor, which is below the target of 90%.
- The total number of FY09 active research projects conducted was slightly less than those conducted the prior year, but slightly above the 95% target.
- In FY09, the Division of Wildlife Conservation essentially met its targets for attendance at meetings that affect state management. Staff actively participated in all state Board of Game and advisory committee meetings addressing wildlife issues. We also attended and presented information/offered recommendations at federal regional advisory council meetings when the agenda was relevant to wildlife, although that was at only 47% of the 19 meetings statewide.
- During the fall 2008 through spring 2009 Board of Game meetings, a combined total of 56 division proposals were submitted; one proposal was deferred to a future meeting and two proposals failed. 53 of the 55 proposals actually deliberated were adopted or amended and adopted by the Board of Game for a 96% adoption rate. Thus, for FY2009 the target was achieved.
- In FY 09, the department initiated plan development for five Critical Habitat Areas (CHA) in Bristol Bay; Egegik, Pilot Point, Cinder River, Port Heiden, and Port Moller CHAs. In addition, the department moved closer to completing the Izembek State Game Refuge management plan. 16 of 32 Special Areas still have no management plan.
- In FY09, Intensive Management was implemented through predator control programs in six areas in Alaska for moose and/or caribou. Two of the six areas had a 2% population increase.
- In the most recent year available (2008), 144,897 hunting and trapping licenses were sold, a 7% increase from 2007, above the three-year running average (138,716).
- The number of wildlife-watchers increased 8.4% from 2001 to 2006, still slightly below the level in 1996, but meeting our target.
- The Division of Wildlife Conservation's total number of presentations, including wildlife-related forums, lectures, brochures, newspaper articles, radio/TV programs, web pages, and other publications given or produced increased from 342 in FY08 to 450 in FY09.
- In FY09, 25 Alaska Wildlife Curriculum and Project Wild (AWC/PW) workshops were offered, down from FY08 as a result of one position being vacant part of the year.
- The percentage of hunter education clinics offered by the division increased over the previous year by 5.6%, 13.4%, and 5.4% respectively in FY07, FY08 and FY09, exceeding the 5% annual increase goal.

### Major Activities to Advance Strategies

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct population and trend count surveys on wildlife populations.</li> <li>• Conduct Game Management Unit area and/or species-specific research.</li> <li>• Conduct harvest surveys on wildlife populations.</li> <li>• Review proposals from the public pertaining to wildlife in regards to the regulatory process.</li> <li>• Collect, analyze, and provide information regarding wildlife to regulatory bodies.</li> <li>• Develop and present recommendations to the Board of Game.</li> <li>• Participate in regulatory sessions with the Board of Game.</li> <li>• Devise management strategies and plans regarding wildlife habitat.</li> <li>• Conduct field assessments regarding wildlife habitat.</li> <li>• Assign staff to heavily used areas to protect resources and/or public safety.</li> <li>• Participate in interdisciplinary permit review teams regarding wildlife habitat.</li> <li>• Offer biological expertise regarding wildlife habitat.</li> <li>• Conduct prescribed burns to enhance wildlife habitat.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out habitat scarification/crushing.</li> <li>• Build and install nesting structures.</li> <li>• Conduct recruitment and survival surveys on ungulate populations.</li> <li>• Work with the Administration and Legislature to adopt an improved compensation package for biologists comparable to that for federal biologists.</li> <li>• Develop and enhance marketing strategies for the sale of hunting licenses.</li> <li>• Conduct hunter / trapper / viewer clinics for the general public.</li> <li>• Enhance web-based information systems and other publications regarding wildlife resources and opportunities.</li> <li>• Use the media to promote opportunities for wildlife related activities.</li> <li>• Sponsor lecture series and other educational forums for the public.</li> <li>• Development of brochures, news articles and other publications.</li> <li>• Conduct teacher trainings on the use of outdoor and wildlife curricula.</li> <li>• Sponsor outdoor skill clinics.</li> </ul> |
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### Key RDU Challenges

Predation by wolves and bears has a major impact on selected wildlife populations in Alaska. The division will continue to work with the Board of Game to develop biologically sound and cost effective programs to regulate predator populations where necessary to enhance numbers and distribution of important ungulate herds.

Under A.S. 16.05.255, the Board of Game is charged with carrying out intensive management programs for identified big game populations failing to meet regulatory management objectives. In five areas, predator management is being used as a tool to boost the harvestable surpluses of moose and caribou populations and provide increased hunting opportunities for Alaskans. These programs are targeted at subunits within Game Management Units (GMU) 12, 13, 16, 19, and 20. In GMU 9, the division has engaged in wolf reduction efforts to arrest and turn around a precipitous decline in the Southern Alaska Peninsula (SAP) caribou herd. The division has allocated funds to support studies and field research to document population parameters in order to support, sustain, and defend new intensive management programs in the face of ongoing opposition and litigation. Without these programs, hunting opportunities will be severely reduced, with commensurate reduction in the amount of meat harvested for human use. In the case of the SAP caribou herd, no action by the division will very likely result in the elimination of the herd.

The division's ability to maintain healthy populations of wildlife is directly related to the ability of Alaska's land and water resources to support these populations. Loss or serious alteration of important wildlife habitats can have direct and long-term economic impacts on the state by reducing the sustainable yield of these renewable resources. Because of increasing human populations and the need for an expanded and more diversified economy, the division must work closely with development interests and other agencies to effectively mitigate the effects of development through active management programs that ensure adequate protection of wildlife values and continued opportunities for public use of these resources. The process depends on the division's ability to provide the latest information, techniques, and research findings to all parties involved, in a timely and efficient manner.

#### Protect State Interests in the Designation and Management of Endangered Species

The listing of species as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) can have adverse economic impacts on Alaska. Division programs have been designed to provide for population recovery of listed species as well as preventing the need for additional listings. The division will continue to collect information on several species in an effort to ensure that species are not unnecessarily listed under the federal act. The department will take a lead to respond to future listing issues.

#### Marine Mammal Research

Division has researched marine mammals over several decades. Current emphasis on Stellar sea lions, harbor seals, and ice seals totals approximately \$2.5 million annually and is funded through grant agreements from the federal Department of Commerce/NOAA. Sea lions and four species of ice seals are candidates for listing under the ESA. The research work was formally shown in the NOAA budget as earmarks from former Senator Ted Stevens. The earmark system has been revised and funding levels from Congress to NOAA have been reduced during FFY 08 & 09. Funding has been secured from NOAA to maintain research work into state FY11, but future funding levels from NOAA are expected to decrease. Beginning in FY11, Commercial Fisheries division is purchasing research services on Stellar sea lions from the division.

#### Wood Bison Reintroductions

Wood bison are native to Alaska but were extirpated about 150 years ago. Efforts to reestablish wood bison in Alaska have been slow and tedious, with numerous challenges to overcome. In June 2008, with the financial support of several conservation organizations, 52 captive wood bison were delivered from Elk Island National Park in Alberta, Canada, to the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (WCSS) in Portage, Alaska. These bison supplant the 32 wood bison held at the WCSS since 2003. The 2008 bison must be held for two years of disease testing before they can be released into the wild along with those previously held in captivity. Holding the bison is expensive, as is the ultimate releases, and follow-up monitoring. The division is working to clear the necessary steps for release of Bison in the coming two years.

#### Funding Diversity and Matching Funds for Federal Funding Sources

Revenues into the Fish and Game Fund are derived from the sale of hunting and trapping licenses to residents and non-residents, special permits, tag fees, sanctuary access permits, shooting range fees, waterfowl stamps and limited edition prints, and educational publications and videos. Revenue generated from these sources has decreased from FY01 through FY09. Revenue received during FY09 was 16.7% less than the amount received in FY01. Revenue for license sales between FY09 and FY08 was down 10.9%, primary due to lower sales to non-residents. Nationwide, hunting license sales are on the decline.

The division's primary source of funding is the federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration program (PR). Revenue for PR is derived from excise taxes as follows: 11% on arms and ammunition; 10% on pistols, handguns, and revolvers; 11% on bows and archery equipment; and 12.4% on arrow components. During 2008 and 2009, receipts into this fund have increased substantially.

Participation by states in the PR program requires that states enact a law to dedicate hunting license revenue to serve as the required 25% match for the federal funds. If the current trend of decreased revenue into the Fish & Game fund continues and the PR fund continues to increase, the State of Alaska will have a problem meeting the minimum match requirements for this program.

#### Increased Urban Human-Wildlife Conflicts

As Alaska's cities have grown and expanded into previously un-altered wildlife habitat, conflicts between humans and wildlife have increased. Most notable are human conflicts with bears and moose. As division staff are called upon to deal with these conflicts, efforts related to the division's core function of surveying, monitoring, and managing the state's wildlife populations become compromised. This results in reduced population data which, in turn, results in more conservative hunting seasons and bag limits.

#### Dual Management

The federal assertion of management authorities for subsistence hunting on federal lands continues to have major impacts on the management of wildlife in Alaska. The division continues to work to address resource management and allocation conflicts between state and federal managers.

### **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2011**

The division will deliver enhanced field research activities toward harvest management and population assessment objectives in FY11 when compared to FY10. For several years, field research work by the division increased by means of capital appropriations for game and intensive management. Spending authority increases to the operating budget will incorporate those activities into the base budget and continue them into FY11.

The division will be positioned to respond and complete predator management field operations. The targeted wildlife populations are confirmed by the Board of Game. This work involves division employees and helicopters and necessitates a sizeable budget for one-time field operations.

The state will become more involved with aspects of the federal ESA process. The department will coordinate responses from multiple agencies when listing actions are initiated.

### **Major RDU Accomplishments in 2009**

#### Wildlife Survey and Inventory

Conducted wildlife survey and inventory management projects for 11 big game species (black and brown bears, bison, caribou, Dall sheep, deer, elk, moose, mountain goat, muskox, and wolf) as well as furbearers and migratory birds across 26 game management units and sub-units. Conducted coordination and support projects, including biometrics and geographic information systems (GIS) support, for research and management projects, a habitat enhancement project, and wildlife and fire management planning projects.

Continued five intensive management programs in an effort to increase ungulate species for human consumption by controlling predators in six game management units: 12, 13, 16B, 19A, 19D, and 20E.

#### Wildlife Research

Wildlife research projects through Pittman-Roberson Wildlife Restoration funding conducted during FY10 include 31 related to the following big game species; moose, deer, caribou, bear, sheep, wildlife habitat, furbearers, wolf, and muskox. Research on Steller sea lions, harbor seals, ice seals (four species), bowhead whales, and walrus is ongoing.

#### Hunter Education

Hunter education clinics and classes completed in approximately 40 communities around the state, certifying 3,398 total students. There were 167 basic hunter education, 118 bowhunter, and 28 muzzleloader classes. Trained 57 volunteer instructors from the following communities: Cordova, Eagle River, Elmendorf AFB, Seward, Galena, Sterling, Kasilof, Klawock, North Pole, Palmer, Port Alsworth, Seward, Wasilla, Willow, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage.

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**Wildlife Conservation  
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

|                                      | FY2009 Actuals |                 |                |                 | FY2010 Management Plan |                 |                 |                 | FY2011 Governor |                 |                 |                 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                      | General Funds  | Federal Funds   | Other Funds    | Total Funds     | General Funds          | Federal Funds   | Other Funds     | Total Funds     | General Funds   | Federal Funds   | Other Funds     | Total Funds     |
| <b>Formula Expenditures</b><br>None. |                |                 |                |                 |                        |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Non-Formula Expenditures</b>      |                |                 |                |                 |                        |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Wildlife Conservation                | 4,632.1        | 10,897.7        | 7,380.1        | 22,909.9        | 4,825.2                | 11,572.3        | 8,675.9         | 25,073.4        | 5,301.2         | 15,072.3        | 8,675.9         | 29,049.4        |
| WC Restoration Program               | 665.8          | 1,794.8         | 0.0            | 2,460.6         | 0.0                    | 0.0             | 0.0             | 0.0             | 0.0             | 0.0             | 0.0             | 0.0             |
| WC Special Projects                  | 1,378.7        | 2,597.7         | 1,392.2        | 5,368.6         | 912.9                  | 8,053.4         | 2,093.0         | 11,059.3        | 912.9           | 8,478.4         | 2,269.0         | 11,660.3        |
| Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges     | 0.0            | 0.0             | 601.1          | 601.1           | 0.0                    | 0.0             | 614.1           | 614.1           | 0.0             | 0.0             | 614.1           | 614.1           |
| <b>Totals</b>                        | <b>6,676.6</b> | <b>15,290.2</b> | <b>9,373.4</b> | <b>31,340.2</b> | <b>5,738.1</b>         | <b>19,625.7</b> | <b>11,383.0</b> | <b>36,746.8</b> | <b>6,214.1</b>  | <b>23,550.7</b> | <b>11,559.0</b> | <b>41,323.8</b> |

**Wildlife Conservation**  
**Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component**  
**From FY2010 Management Plan to FY2011 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

|  | <u>General Funds</u> | <u>Federal Funds</u> | <u>Other Funds</u> | <u>Total Funds</u> |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>FY2010 Management Plan</b>                                    | <b>5,738.1</b>       | <b>19,625.7</b>      | <b>11,383.0</b>    | <b>36,746.8</b>    |
| <b>Adjustments which will continue current level of service:</b> |                      |                      |                    |                    |
| -Wildlife Conservation   | -10.6                | 0.0                  | 0.0                | -10.6              |
| -WC Special Projects   | 0.0                  | 425.0                | -324.0             | 101.0              |
| <b>Proposed budget increases:</b>                                |                      |                      |                    |                    |
| -Wildlife Conservation   | 486.6                | 3,500.0              | 0.0                | 3,986.6            |
| -WC Special Projects   | 0.0                  | 0.0                  | 500.0              | 500.0              |
| <b>FY2011 Governor</b>   | <b>6,214.1</b>       | <b>23,550.7</b>      | <b>11,559.0</b>    | <b>41,323.8</b>    |