

State of Alaska FY2012 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 manage furbearers (wolverine, fox, marten, lynx, and beaver), waterfowl (ducks, geese, and 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 inquiries 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 fur bearer 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.

- 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.
- 44% of big game populations targets set by the Board of Game were met in FY10, an increase from FY09 although the trend remains below the 75% target.

Status of Strategies to Achieve End Result

- In FY10, 50 key species projects were continued and two were initiated for a total of 52, exceeding the target.
- The total number of FY10 active research projects conducted was slightly less than those conducted in FY09, but slightly above the 95% target.
- The target of 90% of planned wildlife surveys in which weather or aircraft availability was not a factor was not met for FY10. 78% of surveys were completed in FY10, 70% in FY09, and 84% in FY08.
- During the fall 2009 through spring 2010 Board of Game meetings, a combined total of 51 division proposals were submitted. All 51 proposals actually deliberated were adopted by the Board of Game for a 100% adoption rate. Thus, for FY2010 the target was achieved.
- In FY10, the Division of Wildlife Conservation met its 100% target for attendance at Board of Game meetings, Advisory Committee meetings, and Federal Regional Council meetings. DWC staff attended only 50% of the Federal Subsistence Board meetings.
- 17 of 32 Special Areas have completed management plans. No new plans were completed in FY10; however, the Department initiated plan development for five remaining Critical Habitat Areas in Bristol Bay; Egegik, Pilot Point, Cinder River, Port Heiden, and Port Moller as well as Dude Creek near Gustavus. The Department is also near completion of the Izembek State Game Refuge management plan.
- In FY10, Intensive Management was implemented through predator control programs in six areas in Alaska for moose and/or caribou. In FY10 three of the six areas had a greater than 2% population increase which is higher than FY09.
- The target to increase sales of hunting and trapping licenses was met. In the most recent year available (2009), 155,521 hunting and trapping licenses were sold, a 7% increase from 2008 and above the three-year running average (145,296). 144,897 and 135,470 licenses were sold in 2008 and 2007 respectively.
- The most current year (2006) reported an 18% increase in number of wildlife-watchers for Alaska from 2001. The number of wildlife-watchers decreased less than 1% from 1996 to 2006 and continues to be below the target.
- The percentage of hunter education clinics offered by DWC decreased 16% from FY09 at 268 which is below the target of 329 for FY10.
- The target to annually increase the number of opportunities for Alaskans to learn about wildlife and wildlife management was met in FY10. Documented activities were 342 for FY08, 316 for FY09, and 516 for FY10.
- 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. FY10 data is pending and will be available mid-September.

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

Key RDU Challenges

Game Management and Hunting Opportunities

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 reverse 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 Steller 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 originally developed by the late Senator Ted Stevens. The earmark system has been revised and funding levels from Congress to NOAA were reduced to the State of Alaska during FFY 08-10. Funding was secured from NOAA to maintain research work into state FY11, but future funding levels from NOAA are expected to decrease.

Wood Bison Reintroductions

Wood bison are native to Alaska but were extirpated about 150 years ago. Efforts to re-establish 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 current target date for the first release of wood bison is spring 2012, after the ESA regulations are completed. This assumes the regulations are deemed to provide sufficient protection to other resource development activities. The Fish and Wildlife Service is expected to make the final revisions to the Environmental Assessment that will be made available for public review and comment in conjunction with the proposed ESA sections 10(j) and 4(d) rules.

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.

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 in FY10 has shown a decrease when compared to FY01. Revenue received during FY10 was 20% less than the amount received in FY01. Revenue for license sales between FY10 and FY08 was down 17.9%, primary due to fewer sales of licenses and tags to non-residents. Sales to non-residents comprise 70-75% of yearly revenue into the fund. Nationwide, hunting license sales are on the decline.

The division's primary source of federal funding is the 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. Since 2008, receipts into this national fund have increased substantially due to a surge in sales of guns and ammunition nationwide. The increase is projected to stabilize for state FY12. The increase permitted the division to expand wildlife survey and research work beginning in FY11.

Participation by states in the PR program requires that states enact laws 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.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2012

The division expects to maintain field research activities toward harvest management and population assessment objectives in FY12 when compared to FY11.

Major RDU Accomplishments in 2010

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.

Five intensive management programs continued during FY10 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 FY11 include 31 related to the following big game species; moose, deer, caribou, bear, sheep, wildlife habitat, furbearers, wolf, and muskox. In addition, the division is engaged in 71 additional research projects; including Steller sea lions, harbor seals, ice seals (four species), bowhead whales, and walrus. These projects are funded primarily through funding from the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) and are ongoing.

Hunter Education

Hunter education clinics and classes were completed in 40 communities statewide, certifying 2,907 total students. There were 159 basic hunter education, 81 bowhunter, and 28 muzzleloader classes. DWC trained 62 volunteer instructors from 22 different communities around Alaska.

Contact Information

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**Wildlife Conservation
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2010 Actuals				FY2011 Management Plan				FY2012 Governor			
	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
Formula Expenditures None.												
Non-Formula Expenditures												
Wildlife Conservation	4,920.6	7,602.2	11,670.6	24,193.4	5,560.3	8,569.8	15,167.2	29,297.3	6,207.9	8,612.1	15,515.1	30,335.1
WC Special Projects	902.4	1,192.3	7,018.9	9,113.6	946.5	2,276.5	8,332.0	11,555.0	998.5	2,333.1	8,592.2	11,923.8
Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	612.4	0.0	612.4	284.8	425.7	0.0	710.5	295.8	436.7	0.0	732.5
Totals	5,823.0	9,406.9	18,689.5	33,919.4	6,791.6	11,272.0	23,499.2	41,562.8	7,502.2	11,381.9	24,107.3	42,991.4

Wildlife Conservation
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2011 Management Plan to FY2012 Governor

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>Unrestricted Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2011 Management Plan	6,421.9	369.7	11,272.0	23,499.2	41,562.8
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:					
-Wildlife Conservation	443.0	4.6	42.3	347.9	837.8
-WC Special Projects	52.0	0.0	56.6	260.2	368.8
-Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	11.0	11.0	0.0	22.0
Proposed budget increases:					
-Wildlife Conservation	200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	200.0
FY2012 Governor	7,116.9	385.3	11,381.9	24,107.3	42,991.4