

State of Alaska
FY2021 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.

Results

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

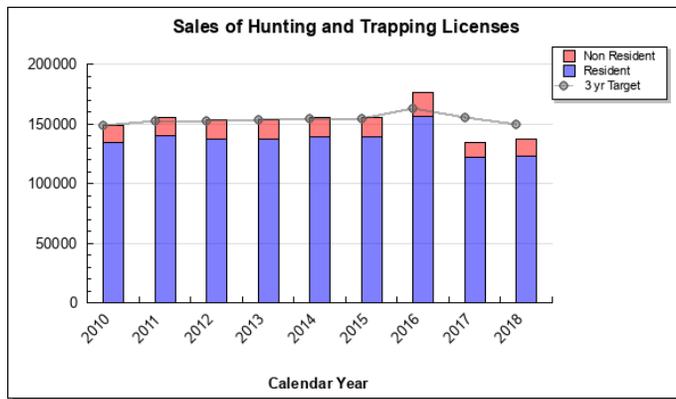
Core Services

- Maintain and enhance opportunities to hunt, trap, and view wildlife.

Measures by Core Service

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

1. Maintain and enhance opportunities to hunt, trap, and view wildlife.



Major RDU Accomplishments in 2019

Defending Against Federal Erosion of State Management Authority

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and Access Defense programs, and the Threatened, Endangered, and Diversity Program (TED) are cost effective approaches to federal management issues. The ANILCA Program asserts and defends the authority of the department for management of fish and wildlife on all lands in Alaska and maintains public access and use of federal public lands. The TED program works to conserve wildlife species before they become threatened or endangered, to recover species already imperiled, and to keep common species common. The program administers the State's response to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by providing resources, expertise, and coordination among agencies (e.g., Department of Law and Department of Natural Resources) with the goal of conserving wildlife and avoiding unwarranted regulations. Last year's major successes by these programs include:

- Worked with Department of Law on briefs supporting the plaintiff in *Sturgeon v Frost*. The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of Mr. Sturgeon, thereby ensuring that the state will continue to manage state-owned navigable waterways within federal lands in Alaska.
- Worked with Department of Law, North Slope Borough, and others to petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove ringed seals from the ESA list.
- Worked with departments of Natural Resources and Law to ensure the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had the information necessary to appropriately determine that listing yellow-cedar under the ESA was not warranted.

Food for Alaskans

It is estimated that Alaskans have harvested approximately 7,000 moose and over 21,000 caribou in each of the last few years. Residents account for about 90% of the moose harvest and 97% of caribou harvest in Alaska annually. This yields roughly 4 million pounds of moose and 3.5 million pounds of caribou for Alaskan tables.

Continued Heightened Disease Surveillance

The Wildlife Health and Disease Surveillance program continued its elevated disease surveillance for all pathogens including the bacteria *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* in Alaska's wildlife. This has enabled better understanding of the distribution of this pathogen, which was not previously known to occur in Alaska's wildlife. In the lower 48, the pathogen has been associated with large population declines in some bighorn sheep populations. The division involved hunters in active surveillance that resulted in nearly 700 additional hunter-harvested Dall's sheep, mountain goats, moose and caribou sampled via nasal swabs for screening.

Hunter Access Program

The division continued to develop and fund hunter access projects across the state. Projects are cooperative efforts with state, local, and private organization partners. Project ideas and grant applications may now be submitted online via a new portal (www.hunteraccess.adfg.alaska.gov). This provides members of the public, conservation organizations, and other user groups an opportunity to identify access needs and to submit applications for projects with matching funds. The program will improve opportunities for hunting, trapping, and other wildlife recreation by developing or improving public access across the State; maximize efficient use of federal funds through public and private partnerships for meeting program match requirements; and improve outreach with public and private hunting, trapping, and other wildlife recreation organizations.

Key RDU Challenges**New Techniques for Conducting Moose Surveys**

Moose population monitoring (including measures of abundance, composition, and trend) in Alaska has routinely involved aerial surveys flown in the fall and early winter, prior to antler drop, when sexes can be distinguished. These surveys rely on complete snow cover to optimize moose visibility. Over the past decade, delayed onset of snowfall has crippled biologists' ability to monitor moose populations using existing protocols, especially in coastal regions. Division biologists have begun to work on improving current techniques and developing new techniques to estimate moose abundance. This includes assessment of the feasibility of using unmanned aircraft to conduct surveys.

Increasing Threat from Diseases and Parasites

Among other causes, changes in climate are bringing diseases and parasites, previously known largely in lower latitudes, closer to Alaska. The division must increase its surveillance and monitoring capabilities to handle these increasing threats to wildlife.

Larger Burden on Limited State Funds for Increasing Expenses

Under the federal indirect cost allocation plan, indirect expenses, for items such as building rent, telecommunications, computer services, risk management, etc., must now be paid for using division license dollars, and it has become increasingly difficult to cover increasing expenses with limited state funds. In addition to using Fish and Game funds for activities previously paid for using federal indirect dollars, the division needs to use these funds for expenses that cannot be funded by federal Pittman-Robertson dollars—such as enforcement of game and fish laws and regulations; establishment, publication, and dissemination of regulations; stocking of game animals; wildlife damage management activities; and printing/distribution/issuance of licenses and permits.

Intensive Management Program

By statute, the Board of Game is required to identify moose, caribou, and deer populations that are critical food sources to Alaskans and ensure that those populations remain large enough to allow for adequate and sustained harvest. The division's intensive management program is conducted under policies adopted by the board to ensure effectiveness and scientific basis (AS 16.05.255(f)). If a population dips below what the board has determined to be necessary to meet the needs of Alaskans, it will direct the department to begin intensive management of that population. The division first investigates the causes of the decreased population numbers, including forage quality and availability, weather, predation and other factors. Steps are then taken to increase the numbers which can include hunting and bag limit restrictions, habitat improvement efforts, and predation control. In 2017, license buyers began paying an additional license surcharge, accounted for separately, that was established by the legislature to

fund intensive management efforts. This surcharge is due to sunset in December of 2022. If the surcharge is not renewed, the division will struggle to perform research and management actions necessary to fulfill its statutory obligations under AS 16.05.255(f).

Defending Against Federal Erosion of State Management Authority

Various federal actions related to the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act are challenging state authority to manage and are impacting the state's ability to develop its resources. These include polar bear incidental take authorization, designations of vast expanses of critical habitat for humpback whales, killer whales, and ice seals, and petitions to list a wide range of species. The division will continue its efforts to provide information, challenge unwarranted actions, and conduct needed research.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2021

The division is monitoring its federal Pittman-Robertson obligations closely to be sure that no dollars are reverted. A sufficient safety margin was established that will ensure that unspent FY2020 funds will be available for appropriation in FY2021. Funds will not be reverted into federal coffers.

Contact Information
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**Wildlife Conservation
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2019 Actuals				FY2020 Management Plan				FY2021 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	2,962.7	13,777.3	30,966.5	47,706.5	1,711.6	14,886.4	32,695.1	49,293.1	1,707.2	14,940.3	32,783.6	49,431.1
Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	911.4	0.0	911.4	0.0	1,002.7	0.0	1,002.7	0.0	1,006.7	0.0	1,006.7
Totals	2,962.7	14,688.7	30,966.5	48,617.9	1,711.6	15,889.1	32,695.1	50,295.8	1,707.2	15,947.0	32,783.6	50,437.8

Wildlife Conservation
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2020 Management Plan to FY2021 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>
FY2020 Management Plan	1,711.6	0.0	15,889.1	32,695.1	50,295.8
Adjustments which continue current level of service:					
-Wildlife Conservation	-4.4	0.0	53.9	88.5	138.0
-Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	4.0
FY2021 Governor	1,707.2	0.0	15,947.0	32,783.6	50,437.8