

**State of Alaska**  
**FY2022 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 2020

#### 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), and Marine Mammal Program (MM) 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 and MM programs works to conserve wildlife species before they become threatened or endangered, to recover species already imperiled, and to keep common species common. The programs administer the State's response to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) 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. The division will continue its efforts to provide information, challenge unwarranted actions, and conduct needed research. Last year's major successes by these programs include the following:

- Worked to reign in overly broad designations of critical habitat under the ESA, including responding to the National Marine Fisheries Service that expansive designations of critical habitat for humpback whale, and ringed and bearded seals would fail to benefit the conservation of the species and while placing regulatory burdens and economic costs on Alaskans.
- Worked with Department of Law to uphold a necessary and appropriately issued Letter of Authorization for non-lethal incidental take of Cook Inlet Beluga whales issued to Hilcorp Alaska by intervening on the side of the National Marine Fisheries Service in a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity that challenges the authorization.

- Worked with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the US-Russia Polar Bear Bilateral Agreement to establish sustainable Chukchi Sea Polar Bear Harvest quotas necessary to allow continued opportunities for subsistence.
- Worked as technical advisors to the Alaska Oil and Gas Association in their application for an Incidental Take Regulation for polar bears under the MMPA necessary for the continuation of North Slope oil and gas operations on State of Alaska and federal leases.

### **Pandemic Response**

The division quickly adapted to be able to continue to provide a high level of public service as well as to conduct research and management activities despite COVID-19 challenges. Adaptations included shifting many educational events to online only, offering some registration hunt permits online that were previously available only in-person, and allowing bear baiters to register bait stations online instead of in person. Since many rural communities adopted COVID-19 travel restrictions that prohibited visitors from entering their town without permission; the division advised hunters to take a picture of themselves at the airport, send it in, and staff would issue permits to the hunters. Staff even hand-delivered certain registration permits to hunters traveling through several rural airports so they could get their permits without leaving airport property. In addition, at the direction of the Board of Game, hunters with spring 2020 bear permits were allowed to transfer those permits to future hunting seasons if they desired. Managers and researchers adopted COVID-19 protocols to enable field activities to continue including being particularly sensitive to heightened concern about virus spread into rural Alaska communities.

### **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.

### **Hunter Access Program**

The division continued to develop and fund hunter access projects across the state, this year implementing a more robust process to solicit projects throughout the state. Projects are cooperative efforts with state, local, and private organization partners. Project ideas and grant applications were submitted online via a new portal ([www.hunteraccess.adfg.alaska.gov](http://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 improves opportunities for hunting, trapping, and other wildlife recreation by developing or improving public access across the State; maximizes efficient use of federal funds through public and private partnerships for meeting program match requirements; and improves outreach with public and private hunting, trapping, and other wildlife recreation organizations.

### **Key RDU Challenges**

#### **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 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. The difficulty will only increase this next year as a result of the global pandemic. Sales of licenses and tags to non-residents is a significant source of revenue into the Fish and Game Fund and with fewer hunters traveling to Alaska during these times, revenues are down sharply. The hope is this is a temporary decline but are expecting revenue shortfalls in the next fiscal year.

#### **Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act Challenges**

Various federal actions related to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) will continue to threaten the state's authority to manage and are impacting the state's ability to develop its resources. The division will continue its efforts to provide information, challenge unwarranted actions, and conduct needed research. Current major challenges include the following:

- Polar bears on the North Slope are protected under the ESA and MMPA. Large information gaps and poor assumptions are affecting permitting by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This is threatening to disrupt oil and gas operations despite those activities not posing a threat to the sustainability of polar bear populations when managed appropriately.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service will be making multiple ESA decisions on petitions from third parties to list species from bumblebees and lemmings to seabirds, Iliamna Lake seals, and wolves. While populations of the petitioned species appear robust and healthy in Alaska, a positive listing decision for any of these species would add considerable regulatory burdens and costs and degrade the state's management authority.

**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).

**Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2022**

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 FY2021 funds will be available for appropriation in FY2022. 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*

	FY2020 Actuals				FY2021 Management Plan				FY2022 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
<b>Formula Expenditures</b> None.												
<b>Non-Formula Expenditures</b>												
Wildlife Conservation	1,659.4	13,844.3	30,085.3	45,589.0	1,708.0	14,937.6	32,799.0	49,444.6	1,713.6	16,491.6	42,407.3	60,612.5
Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	1,009.3	0.0	1,009.3	0.0	1,007.3	0.0	1,007.3	0.0	475.6	635.0	1,110.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,659.4</b>	<b>14,853.6</b>	<b>30,085.3</b>	<b>46,598.3</b>	<b>1,708.0</b>	<b>15,944.9</b>	<b>32,799.0</b>	<b>50,451.9</b>	<b>1,713.6</b>	<b>16,967.2</b>	<b>43,042.3</b>	<b>61,723.1</b>

**Wildlife Conservation**  
**Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component**  
**From FY2021 Management Plan to FY2022 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated</u> <u>Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2021 Management Plan</b>	<b>1,708.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>15,944.9</b>	<b>32,799.0</b>	<b>50,451.9</b>
<b>Adjustments which continue current level of service:</b>					
-Wildlife Conservation	5.6	0.0	54.0	108.3	167.9
-Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	0.0	-531.7	535.0	3.3
<b>Proposed budget increases:</b>					
-Wildlife Conservation	0.0	0.0	1,500.0	9,500.0	11,000.0
-Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
<b>FY2022 Governor</b>	<b>1,713.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>16,967.2</b>	<b>43,042.3</b>	<b>61,723.1</b>