

Wildlife Management, Research and Hunting Access

FY2025 Request: \$9,300,000

Reference No: AMD 60594

AP/AL: Appropriation
Category: Natural Resources
Location: Statewide
Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1 - 40)
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2024 - 06/30/2029

Project Type: Research / Studies / Planning
Recipient: NA
House District: Statewide (HD 1 - 40)
Contact: Ryan Scott
Contact Phone: (907)464-4191

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

This multi-year project designates significant short-term investments in the wildlife management infrastructure to utilize a dramatic increase in available federal Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration funding.

Funding:	<u>FY2025</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>Total</u>
1002 Fed Rcpts	\$7,000,000						\$7,000,000
1024 Fish/Game	\$2,000,000						\$2,000,000
1108 Stat Desig	\$300,000						\$300,000
Total:	\$9,300,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$9,300,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Prior Funding History / Additional Information:

- Sec14 Ch11 SLA2022 P123 L31 HB 281 \$16,000,000
- Sec14 Ch11 SLA2022 P124 L5 HB 281 \$8,000,000
- Sec1 Ch11 SLA2021 P104 L33 HB 69 \$10,000,000
- Sec1 Ch3 SLA2019 P4 L16 SB19 \$3,200,000
- Sec1 Ch19 SLA2018 P5 L26 SB142 \$20,000,000
- Sec8 Ch1 SLA2017 P91 L17 HB57 \$12,000,000
- Sec1 Ch38 SLA2015 P4 L30 SB 26 \$12,250,000
- Sec1 Ch18 SLA2014 P52 L25 SB 119 \$4,000,000
- Sec1 Ch5 SLA2011 P83 L7 SB 46 \$2,225,000
- Sec1 Ch5 SLA2011 P83 L20 SB 46 \$720,000
- Sec4 Ch30 SLA2007 P93 L8 SB 53 \$2,000,000
- Sec1 Ch82 SLA2006 P70 L29 SB 231 \$1,600,000

Past capital project reference numbers include FY2015 - 58645, FY2012 - 53833 & 41452, FY2008 - 43393, and FY2007 - 42114.

Project Description/Justification:

Additional Fish and Game (FG) fund authorization is needed to use the total allocation amount available from the federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) program. Most federal aid projects are funded 75 percent federal and 25 percent FG funds. However, some projects are not fully eligible for federal reimbursement and require additional FG funds. To fully leverage the increased WSFR federal apportionment, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) requests \$7,000,000 in federal receipt authority and \$2,000,000 in FG fund authority.

Due to strong gun and ammunition sales nationally, the federal excise taxes collected on those products have been at all-time highs in recent years. Those federal taxes for wildlife conservation are distributed to states, with Alaska receiving the maximum apportionment.

Hunter Access – \$2.3 million: Limited access to hunting grounds results in crowding in accessible areas and has been identified as a constraint to new participation in hunting. Focused use of trails, including legal easements through native corporation lands, can also result in degraded fish and wildlife habitat. This project will construct new or improve existing hunter access across Alaska including land purchases and public access easements as necessary. DFG will partner with the Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and other agencies and organizations to improve existing and establish new access on State and, where possible, federal, and private lands. Projects will be identified using existing state priorities. Current projects being analyzed for suitability include hunter access development and improvement projects include Delta Bison Range improvements, Chiniak public access, and Kruzof multiple use trails. Because Pittman-Robertson funds can be dedicated to trail and access improvements for hunting, these projects and others around the state have and will continue to provide an opportunity to use the currently available federal dollars to enhance public hunting access for Alaskans.

Research and Management – \$4 million: Increasingly, federal agencies are reducing their contribution to baseline wildlife surveys across the state, and instead, redirecting funds into landscape planning efforts. This is leaving significant gaps in current research efforts. This project would provide funding to allow the State to continue these surveys. Target species include moose, caribou, wolves, bears, sheep, small game, and waterfowl. A portion of this project will also fund continuation of a wildlife genetics program as new developments in the genetics field show promise in the area of population delineation and assessment.

The State needs to continue to develop new survey techniques for moose, sheep, and bears. Traditional moose surveys techniques have been hampered by incomplete snow cover during key survey time periods (November and December). Without new techniques, moose hunting will need to be managed more conservatively, and the State will have increasing difficulty preventing the loss of State management authority on federal lands, such as Unit 23. Similarly, bear populations have been difficult to assess despite increasing demand for bear hunting opportunities and pressure from outside entities, suggesting that the State is too aggressive with its management of bears and wolves. Additional management and research, including development of genetic capabilities in the Commercial Fish gene conservation lab, additional Delta Bison Range improvements, and potential wildlife translocation possibilities may benefit from this request.

Data Management Improvements and Equipment – \$1 million: This project will allow for improvements in DFG data management such as the WinfoNet. WinfoNet is a collection of applications, databases, and tools that DFG staff utilize for data storage and management. DFG

began using WinfoNet in 2000 and while new development and maintenance occurs regularly, many components need evaluation and upgrading. With new technology and the ability to conduct extensive management and research operations, staff are collecting an enormous amount of data. These data must be processed, stored, and analyzed for successful management of Alaska's wildlife resources.

A previous capital project provided funding for development of a Harvest Management System, demographic matching, and hunt eligibility systems. This project will continue the development of permitting systems and harvest reporting systems that are reliable, user friendly, and accessible to digital devices such as phones and tablets.

Field Equipment - \$2 million: This project would fund needed field equipment around the state and include snow machines, ATVs, small boats and outboard motors, radio telemetry collars, trailers, trucks, spectrometers, and other necessary field equipment. This equipment supports multiple projects and will last for years. Equipment purchased will be used across the state to support moose, caribou, musk ox, bear, sheep, deer, furbearer, and waterfowl research.