

TERRESTRIAL MAMMAL RESOURCES

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6. Terrestrial Mammals: Approximately 38 species of terrestrial mammals occur in the lower Cook Inlet and Shelikof regions with about 20 of these species present on the Kodiak Archipelago. Ten of the species on the mainland utilize the coastal marine environment to a certain degree: river otter (Lutra canadensis), brown bear (Ursus arctos), black bear (Ursus americanus), red fox (Vulpes fulva), arctic fox (Alopex lagopus), wolf (Canis lupus), coyote (Canis latrans), mink (Mustella vison), wolverine (Gulo luscus), and moose (Alces alces). On the Kodiak Archipelago river otter, brown bear, black-tailed deer (Odocoileus heinionus sitkensis), and red and arctic fox utilize the coastal marine environment to a significant degree.

River otter frequently occur in nearshore waters all along the coast of the proposed lease area where they forage on small fish, clams, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. They utilize the beaches and intertidal areas as well.

Brown bear are found throughout most of the Kodiak Archipelago and on all of the mainland adjacent to the proposed lease area except the region south of Kachemak Bay. A minimum estimate of 500-600 bears inhabit the western region of Cook Inlet (J. Faro, as cited by Calkins, 1979) and 1,000-1,500 bears inhabit the western part of Kodiak Island (R. Smith, as cited by Calkins, 1979). The brown bear utilizes the coastal areas from about April to November. During the spring, bears rely heavily on coastal beaches, meadows, and shorelines while foraging on newly emergent plants, carrion, and other food sources (see Spring Concentration Areas, graphic 3). During the summer and early fall, brown bears congregate along coastal streams to feed on salmon and other spawning fish (see Bear Intensive Stream Utilization, graphic 3). The salmon runs are especially important to the Kodiak brown bears.

Black bear occur throughout the mainland adjacent to the proposed lease area and make similar use of the coastal areas as do the brown bear. Spring use areas important to the black bears are located from Tuxedni Bay northward and at the head of Kachemak Bay (USDI, 1976).

Red fox inhabit the entire Cook Inlet mainland and most of the Kodiak Archipelago while the arctic fox, an introduced species, inhabit the Kenai Peninsula and most of the Kodiak islands. Both species of fox are opportunistic predators and frequently hunt along the shoreline and beaches for amphipods, clams, crabs, stranded fish and carrion. Arctic fox also prey intensively on marine birds and their eggs. Wolves and coyotes also use the beaches to a certain extent especially while searching for carrion.

Other furbearers such as mink and wolverine utilize the coastal beaches and shoreline for hunting. Mink, which range along the coast and islands of the Gulf of Alaska, generally confine their foraging to the beaches and intertidal areas where they prey on various invertebrates (Harbo and Howse, 1958, as cited in USDI, 1976). Mink that occur along the lower Cook Inlet coast probably forage frequently along the shoreline, especially during winter months.

Sitka black-tailed deer are found on Kodiak, Afognak, and Raspberry Islands. The beaches and coastal areas are the primary winter range of this species (see Deer High Density Winter Range, graphic 3). Deer concentrate on the outer capes along the coast during the winter where they forage on kelp (Calkins, 1979). During severe winters, the beaches may provide most of the available food of deer (R. Smith, as cited by Calkins, 1979). In addition, elk (Cervus canadensis) occur on Afognak Island and may use the coastal areas and beaches for winter foraging. Reindeer and mountain goat occur in the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, but normally do not frequent the shoreline and beach areas.

On the mainland, moose inhabit the entire Cook Inlet area, except that portion south of Kachemak Bay, and commonly range along the Alaskan Peninsula as far south as Port Moller on the west side of Shelikof Strait (USFWS, 1980a). Some important moose concentration areas are located along the coast of the proposed lease area (see Moose Concentration Areas, graphic 3).

Additional mainland species, such as barren ground caribou (Rangifer arcticus), and mountain goats (Oreamnas americanus), may forage along the coastal shoreline and beaches during severe winters.