

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation**

**Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Annual Performance Report of
Survey-Inventory Activities
1 July 1995- 30 June 1996**

MOUNTAIN GOAT

Mary U Hicks, Editor



COSTELLO

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STATE OF ALASKA
Tony Knowles, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
Frank Rue, Commissioner

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
Wayne L. Regelin, Director

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Mary Hicks
Publications Specialist
ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation
P.O. Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802
(907) 465-4190

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Project Title: Southeast Mountain Goat Population Management

Project Location: Unit 1A (5,000 mi²)
Ketċhikan area including the mainland draining into Behm and Portland Canals

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Maintain goat population densities above 20 goats per hour during aerial surveys.
- Survey goats annually in established trend count areas throughout Unit 1A.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We completed aerial goat surveys from fixed-wing aircraft in 5 Trend Count Areas (TCAs) during fall 1995. We issued 201 registration permits for goat hunters in Units 1A or 1B south of the Bradfield Canal.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We observed 133 goats (66 goats per hour) in the Smeaton/Rudyerd Bay TCA, 24 (11 per hour) in the Yes Bay/Reflection Lake TCA, 53 (31 per hour) in the Chickamin River/Leduc Lake TCA, 22 (88 per hour) in the Rudyerd Bay/Walker Cove TCA, and 113 (45 per hour) in the Swan Lake/Mt. Reid TCA. With the exception of the Yes Bay/Reflection Lake TCA, numbers of goats observed in TCAs met our 20 goat/hour objective. Reasons for the low numbers of goats observed around Reflection Lake are unknown. Of the TCAs surveyed during 1995, one area had a higher count than when previously surveyed, 3 had slightly lower counts than when last surveyed, and 1 area had the same count.

Of the 201 registration permits issued to hunters, 112 were returned by hunters who reported they did not hunt, 59 hunted unsuccessfully, and 30 hunters each harvested a single goat (17 males, 13 females). All goats were harvested by resident hunters.

Project Location: Unit 1B (3,000 mi²)
Southeast mainland from Cape Fanshaw to Lemesurier Point

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain population levels to accommodate an annual harvest of 35 goats and a 35% hunter success rate.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Dahlgren Peak was surveyed from a Jet Ranger helicopter in June 1996. Twelve adult goats and 6 kids were counted. The area between Dahlgren Peak and Jamestown Peak was ground searched for goats traveling between the peaks; none was found.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 121 registration permits. A total of 55 hunters reported killing 22 goats in 147 days afield.

Project Location: Unit 1C (7,600 mi²)

The Southeast Alaska mainland and the islands of Lynn Canal and Stephens Passage lying between Cape Fanshaw and the latitude of Eldred Rock, including Sullivan Island and the drainages of Berners Bay

Project Objectives and Activities:

Maintain goat population densities resulting in the observation of at least 30 goats per hour during fall surveys in the Eagle-Antler drainages and the Chilkat Range north of the Endicott River, 50 goats per hour in the areas south of Taku Inlet, and 80 goats in the area between William Henry Mountain and Tear Drop Lake.

- Conduct population size and composition counts.
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.
- Monitor the occurrence of goats infected with contagious ecthyma to determine extent of any outbreak.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Telemetry flights were made in areas of potential mine development to track radiocollared animals marked as part of a monitoring study initiated in cooperation with local mining companies.

Harvest data collected from registration permit returns were analyzed on an ongoing basis to determine whether harvests remained within sustainable limits. Preliminary harvest guidelines based on population estimates, incorporating a point system that favors the harvest of billies, continued to be used for monitoring the hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Aerial surveys were flown in the Chilkat Range and at Lake Dorothy during the early summer of 1996. This fragmentary coverage is insufficient to allow an estimate of the goat population within the subunit, but surveys did indicate that goat numbers within the closed area south of the Endicott River have rebounded within the past decade.

We issued 146 registration permits to hunters in 1995. Of these, 75 permittees hunted and 32 were successful. Twenty-five billies and 7 nannies were killed. The number of nonresident guided hunters decreased to 19 this year, 17 of which were successful. The hunt harvest guideline for the portion of the unit encompassing the area from Taku Inlet to the south side of Endicott Arm was exceeded slightly. In Tracy and Endicott Arms, nonresident hunters took 89% of the harvest. Successful hunters averaged 3.5 days hunting, while unsuccessful hunters spent an average of 3.1 days hunting. Contagious ecthyma was not reported within the subunit.

Project Location: Subunit 1D (2,700 mi²)

That portion of the Southeast Alaska mainland lying north of the latitude of Eldred Rock, excluding Sullivan Island and the drainages of Berners Bay

Project Objectives and Activities:

- Increase the population to 100 animals in Hunt Area 804 (Skagway).
- Increase the estimated population from 600 to 1000 goats and maintain hunter success of 25% in Hunt Area 805 (Haines North).
- Increase the estimated population from 300 to 500 goats and maintain hunter success of 25% in Hunt area 806 (Haines South).
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Surveys were flown along the Taiya River and Inlet north to the Chilkoot Pass and Mt. Van Wagenen and south to Taiyasanka Harbor (50.5 goats/hour), along the east side of Lutak Inlet north to Klukwah Mt. (89.3 goats/hour), and from Mt. Ashmun to Mt. Tohitkah (116 goats/hour).

We analyzed harvest data collected from registration permits and monitored preliminary harvest quotas for discrete areas throughout the subunit based on population estimates.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: A total of 44 goats (including 12 kids) was observed in Hunt Area 804, indicating the population remains below 100 animals. Surveys of Hunt Area 805 during the summer of 1995 found 390 goats. This may indicate the population is increasing.

We issued 169 registration permits to hunters in 1995. Of these, 103 hunted and 22 were successful, maintaining a hunter success rate (17.6%) below the overall management objective of 25%. The objective for hunter success was not met in Hunt 805 with 15 of 66 (19.7%) hunters being successful but was met in Hunt 806 where only 9 of 28 (32.1%) hunters were successful. Hunters took 14 billies (8 in Hunt 805, 6 in Hunt 806), 8 nannies (5 in Hunt 805, 3 in Hunt 806), and 1 goat of undetermined sex (Hunt 806). Successful hunters in Unit 1D averaged 1.7 days hunting, while unsuccessful hunters spent an average of 2.9 days hunting.

Project Location: Unit 4 (5,800 mi²)

Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof and adjacent islands

Project Objectives And Activities: Maintain a population sufficient to provide an annual harvest of at least 35 goats and an annual hunter success rate of at least 25%.

Conduct population size and composition counts, monitor results from the registration permit hunt, and develop population objectives.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We issued 319 registration permits for the August 1-December 31 hunt on Baranof Island. After the permit return deadline, nonrespondents were contacted for information and cited for noncompliance. Hunt report results were tabulated. No aerial surveys were flown on Baranof Island.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Hunters harvested 49 goats in 1995. The success rate for 139 hunters was 35%. Thirty-four male and 15 female goats were killed. Successful hunters were afield for an average of 2.0 days. Eighty percent of the harvest occurred between August and the end of October. Three goats (6%) were taken in December.

Project Location: Unit 5 (5,800 mi²)
Cape Fairweather to Icy Bay, eastern Gulf of Alaska coast

Project Objectives And Activities:

- Increase the estimated population from 850 to 1250 goats and maintain a hunter success rate of 25%.
- Conduct population size and composition counts.
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.
- Develop population objectives.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: No surveys were conducted during the reporting period. Harvest was analyzed from hunter reports from the registration permit hunt. Fifty-seven permits were issued in 1995. Twenty-one permittees hunted, and 6 were successful. Four male goats and 2 female goats were reported killed in Unit 5A, for a success rate of 28.5%. Successful hunters averaged 3.2 days hunting, while unsuccessful hunters averaged 3.4 days afield.

In August of 1989 the Unit 5 goat population was estimated at a minimum of 1000 animals. This is a crude estimate and should be refined over time as we gather survey information. The hunter success rate in 1995 was above the objective of 25%.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The mountain goat hunter success rate is above the management objective for the subunit. However, low hunter effort since 1983 has held harvest to well below what is allowable. The low harvest may contribute to a growing population and the high hunter success rate.

The changing nature of moose hunts on the Yakutat Forelands is perhaps the best explanation for reduced effort and take since 1985. Since that time, state and/or federal subsistence regulations have resulted in a shorter (and later) moose hunting season for nonlocal Alaskans and nonresidents. Hunters who might otherwise have pursued a mixed-bag hunt near Yakutat may be

hunting elsewhere. A high proportion of goat hunters are typically nonresidents, yet only 7 hunted in the Yakutat area during 1995.

Segment Period Project Costs:

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	36.9	16.6	53.5
Actual	36.9	16.6	53.5
Difference	0	0	0

Submitted by:

Bruce Dinneford
Management Coordinator

Project Title: Southcentral Alaska Mountain Goat Management

Project Location: Unit 6 (10,150 mi²)
Prince William Sound and north Gulf Coast

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a minimum population of 2400 goats and no less than 70% males in the harvest.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Biologists surveyed 13 mountain goat count areas in a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service. A total of 944 goats was tallied and 142 (15%) were kids. Maximum allowable harvest was set at 46 goat units for the 1995-96 season. Billies were counted as 1 goat unit, and nannies were counted as 2 goat units.

We issued 148 registration permits to hunters for 8 different hunt areas. Seventy-six hunters harvested 43 goats, totaling 50 goat units. Harvest composition was 36 males (84%) and 7 females (16%). Five hunt areas were closed by emergency order when the maximum allowable harvest was reached or exceeded.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The population was estimated at 2790 goats in fall 1995 and was increasing in Unit 6C, stable in Unit 6D(West) and decreasing in Units 6A, 6B and 6D(East). Wolf predation, timber harvests and hard winters may be important factors depressing the population. In responding to these factors, we managed harvests on the basis of small subpopulations to minimize the potential for overharvests. We also discouraged habitat degradation by logging or development and recommended wolf ecology studies.

Male proportion of the harvest was well above our objective. Ongoing educational efforts designed to encourage hunters to select males are needed for continued success. All goat hunters received an information leaflet that presented methods of differentiating sexes of goats at a distance and explained the benefits of selectively harvesting males.

Project Location: Units 7 and 15 (8,400 mi²)
Kenai Peninsula

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a pre hunting population of at least 4000 to 4500 goats on the Kenai Peninsula.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We surveyed 7 count areas and 534 mountain goats were counted. Kids composed 23.6% of the population or 31 kids:100 adults.

Hunters harvested 145 mountain goats on the Kenai Peninsula in 1995. Seventy-four goats (46 males, 27 females and 1 unspecified sex) were harvested from 24 open areas during the 10 August to 30 September drawing permit hunt. Sixty-four goats (39 males, 24 females, and 1 of unspecified sex) were taken from 10 hunt areas during the 15 October to 30 November registration permit hunt. Three emergency orders were issued closing registration hunts as harvest quotas were reached. Hunt areas RG333, RG346, RG347 and RG352 closed by emergency order October 24, 1995. Hunt areas RG358, RG363 and RG364 closed by emergency order November 2, 1995. Hunt area RG336 closed by emergency order November 7, 1995. Additionally, Tier II hunters took 7 goats (4 males, 3 females). The department issued 381 drawing permits, 427 registration permits, and 50 Tier II permits.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Population size was estimated by summing the most recent surveys from individual count areas. Latest counts totaled 3049 observed goats on the Kenai Peninsula excluding Kenai Fjords National Park (KFNP). There are an estimated 800 to 1000 goats within the Kenai Fjords National Park boundaries. Including KFNP, we estimated between 4188 (assuming 90% observability +800 in KFNP) and 5356 goats (assuming 70% observability +1000 in KFNP) on the Kenai. It appears the Kenai Peninsula mountain goat population experienced a slight decline in 1995.

No trend areas were surveyed in 1995 due to poor survey conditions. The Blying Sound trend area was surveyed during 1994. There was a slight increase in the number of counted animals; however, a decline in percent kids and kids:100 adults. The decline in production may indicate deteriorating range conditions and/or poor winter weather conditions. Trend area surveys will be a priority in 1996.

Current guidelines allow for a harvest rate of up to 7% of the most recent mountain goat surveys. The overall harvest rate in 1995 was approximately 4.8% of total observable goats. The current permit system on the Kenai allows for an even distribution of goat harvests. No changes in mountain goat management are recommended.

Project Location: Unit 8 (8,750 mi²)
Kodiak and adjacent islands

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a pre hunting population of at least 700 goats with a harvest comprised of at least 50% males.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Summer surveys were flown in 5 of the 8 permit hunt areas, composing about 35% of the goat habitat of Kodiak Island; 497 goats were counted (432 adults, 65 kids). This was a kid:adult ratio of 15:100

A March 1995 helicopter survey of the new hunting area in the Chiniak Bay and eastern Ugak Bay drainages indicated high overwinter survival of kids. We counted 18 kids, closely comparable to the 13 kids counted in the previous summer survey.

Hunters reported taking 49 goats (30 males, 19 females). We issued 135 drawing permits, and 79 hunters went into the field; hunter success was 62%. Residents of Unit 8 harvested 61% of the goats; other Alaskans harvested 35% and nonresidents 4%. The harvest ranged from 3 to 12 goats from each of the 8 permit hunts.

All 8 permittees reported hunting in the newly created drawing permit hunt adjacent to the Kodiak road system. Five hunters killed goats in that hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Despite a decline from 108 to 65 kids counted between 1994 and 1995, the total count increased slightly from 451 to 482 goats. For the 5 count areas surveyed in 1994, hunters harvested 7% of goats counted. The goat population was stable to increasing in 1994. The total goat population was estimated at 800 animals in 1994 in a more comprehensive survey.

A new hunt adjacent to the road system was highly popular with local hunters, and no conflicts between hunters and other members of the public were reported.

We are achieving management objectives with current seasons, bag limits, and drawing permit hunts. No changes are recommended.

Project Location: Unit 11 (12,800 mi²)
Wrangell Mountains

Project Objectives and Activities: To allow the population to fluctuate as dictated by available habitat, climatic conditions, and predation. Allow limited human harvests, with annual harvests averaging no more than 10% of the estimated population in harvest areas.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: The last mountain goat survey of the MacColl Ridge trend count area was on June 5, 1995 when 45 mountain goats were observed. This year's count was 10% lower than the 1994 count ($n = 50$). Although the number of adults counted ($n = 31$) declined this year, kid production was the highest ever observed, reaching 31% of the observed population. The highest count from the MacColl trend count area was in 1985 when 63 goats were observed. The most recent population estimates for mountain goats in Unit 11 include approximately 400 animals north of the Chitina River and 300 to the south in the Chugach Range.

We issued registration permits to 60 hunters in 1995; 13 mountain goats were taken. Hunter success rate for the 30 permittees who hunted was 43%. Harvest composition included 12 billies (92%) and 1 nanny (8%). Nonresidents took 10 goats (77%), nonlocal Alaska residents 3 (23%), while local residents took none. Twelve (92%) successful hunters used aircraft, and 1 (8%) used a highway vehicle. Successful permittees averaged 1.9 days hunting compared with 4.8 days for unsuccessful hunters. Harvest chronology data indicates most of the harvest took place early in September, presumably by hunters on a combination sheep/mountain goat hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Mountain goat numbers in Unit 11 seem relatively stable. Mountain goats are considered numerous only in limited areas where habitat conditions are favorable. The historic unitwide population estimate was 700 mountain goats and current survey data suggest little change. Goat densities in Unit 11 are much lower than in areas with more favorable habitat (i.e., the Kenai Peninsula or Unit 6).

The 1995 harvest ($n = 13$) was only 1 goat lower than the previous year's take of 14. The hunter success rate declined slightly in 1995 from 48% the year before to 43%. The percent males in the harvest has been high for the last 3 years, ranging from 81% males in 1993 to 92% in 1995. Reasons for the increased take of billies are unknown. Presumably nonresidents with guides are more selective for larger goats. Harvests were more dispersed the last 2 years than in previous years. Hunter pressure on Barnard and Hawkins glaciers has been lower the last 2 years, following a period of high harvests. Overharvests of accessible habitat could become a problem, and we monitor harvest locations yearly. All of the 1995 goat harvest occurred north of the Chitina River and is estimated to be approximately 3% of that population, well within the current harvest objective.

The mountain goat population in Unit 11 seems capable of withstanding recent harvest levels without a decline in numbers, providing that hunters do not concentrate all their effort in one or two locations every year. Also, high male harvests reduce effects of human harvests on a goat population. Therefore, no immediate changes in season dates, bag limits, or registration hunt requirements are recommended. Harvest rates from MacColl Ridge and Hawkins and Barnard glaciers will be monitored yearly to assure hunters do not overharvest.

Project Location: Unit 13 (23,400 mi²)
Nelchina Basin

Project Objectives and Activities: To maintain viable populations controlled largely by available habitat, climatic conditions, and predation: Harvest up to 5% of the Unit 13D population when survey data indicate a minimum of 100 goats are present in the subunit and when local, accessible populations are not overharvested.

Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Mountain goat surveys were flown in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area in Unit 13D during 1995. We observed 65 mountain goats with 23% kids in the population. In 1993, 79 mountain goats were observed in this area with 21% kids.

Two drawing permit hunts are conducted for mountain goats in Unit 13. The boundary between hunt areas is the Klutina River with Hunt 718 west of the river and Hunt 719 east. Drawing permits were issued to 35 hunters who took 7 mountain goats (4 males and 3 females) in 1995. Twelve permittees hunted and the hunter success rate was 58%. Five (72%) successful hunters used aircraft, and 1 (14%) each used a highway vehicle and a 4-wheeler as methods of transportation. Successful hunters averaged 3.6 days afield while unsuccessful permittees hunted 6.4 days. One goat was taken in August and 6 were harvested in early September. Resident Alaskans took 4 goats; nonresidents harvested 3 goats.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The number of mountain goats observed in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area declined by 17% between 1993 and 1995. Most of the decline was in the number of adults observed. Kid numbers remained high with 17 observed in 1993 and 15 in 1995. The 1995 kid count was the second highest in this area; the highest was in 1993. It is unlikely goat populations fluctuate as much as survey results suggest. Mountain goats are among the most difficult big game animals to survey. Differences in survey results often reflect count conditions, not changes in goat numbers. The mountain goat population in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area is stable with good numbers.

Current harvest rates are low and well-dispersed, having little adverse effects on overall mountain goat numbers in Unit 13. The number of permits issued for both hunts has been limited to prevent overharvesting goats near popular airstrips. Such overharvests have not occurred. Also, airstrips are not located near mountain goat hunting areas east of the Klutina River and harvests from this area have been low. Permittees hunting mountain goats in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area must walk into the area, additionally limiting hunting effort. Because of the difficult access and low harvest from this area, the number of permits issued for this area was increased from 16 to 25 in 1991. No changes in season length or bag limits are recommended.

Project Location: Unit 14 (6,600 mi²)
Upper Cook Inlet

Project Objectives and Activities:

Units 14A and 14B – maintain a pre hunting population of at least 60 goats.

Unit 14C – maintain a pre hunting population of at least 400 goats. Activities include surveying goats in established trend count areas, identifying important goat habitat, and monitoring the results of permit hunts.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: On an aerial survey of Unit 14A (east of Metal Creek) in early August 1995, we counted 123 goats (24% kids). During an

aerial survey of a portion of Unit 14B (north side of Sheep River and a part of the north side of Iron Creek) in late September, we counted 8 adults and no kids. On a reconnaissance flight mid-September in the upper Kashwitna and North Fork Kashwitna, we tallied 14 adults and 2 kids.

In Unit 14C, biologists counted 545 goats (16% kids) during aerial surveys in mid-August 1995. Because no Dall sheep survey was flown in 1995, this count did not include goats observed in conjunction with sheep surveys in most of Chugach State Park. Count areas 4B, 5A, and 5B were completely surveyed. In count area 4A, the west fork of the Hunter Creek drainage was not surveyed. In addition to the usual 4 count areas, biologists counted goats in the following drainages where drawing permit hunts are in effect or under consideration: East Fork Eklutna (49 adults, 9 kids), Glacier/Winner (57 adults; 15 kids), Penguin (25 adults, 4 kids).

In Unit 14A 51 registration permits were issued, 20 hunters went afield, and 3 male and 2 female goats were harvested (25% hunter success). Goat hunting was not permitted in Unit 14B. In Unit 14C 2 registration permit hunt areas were available for goats: the Twentymile River and Lake George areas. In the Twentymile River area, 90 permits were issued, 53 hunters participated, and 1 female and 6 male goats were harvested (13% hunter success). During a late season, archery-only registration permit hunt, 3 permits were issued and 2 hunters participated with no success. In the Lake George area, 99 permits were issued, 59 hunters went afield, and 10 male and 7 female goats were harvested (29% hunter success). No hunters registered for the late season, archery-only hunt in the Lake George drainage. During 2 new drawing permit hunts in Unit 14C, 3 hunters harvested 1 male in the East Fork Eklutna River drainage, and 5 hunters harvested 2 males in the Glacier/Winner Creek drainages.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Survey and harvest results indicated management objectives were met. In 1995 biologists counted 123 goats in Unit 14A and 545 goats in Unit 14C. An additional 41 adult goats and 10 kids were counted during sheep surveys in 1996 in portions of Unit 14C not surveyed in 1995. Observed numbers of goats remain well above the minimum population objectives, and the goat population in the western Chugach Mountains continues to increase. Harvest was low because high rainfall in late summer and during the hunting season caused flooding which made some traditional access routes difficult or dangerous.

Segment Period Project Costs:

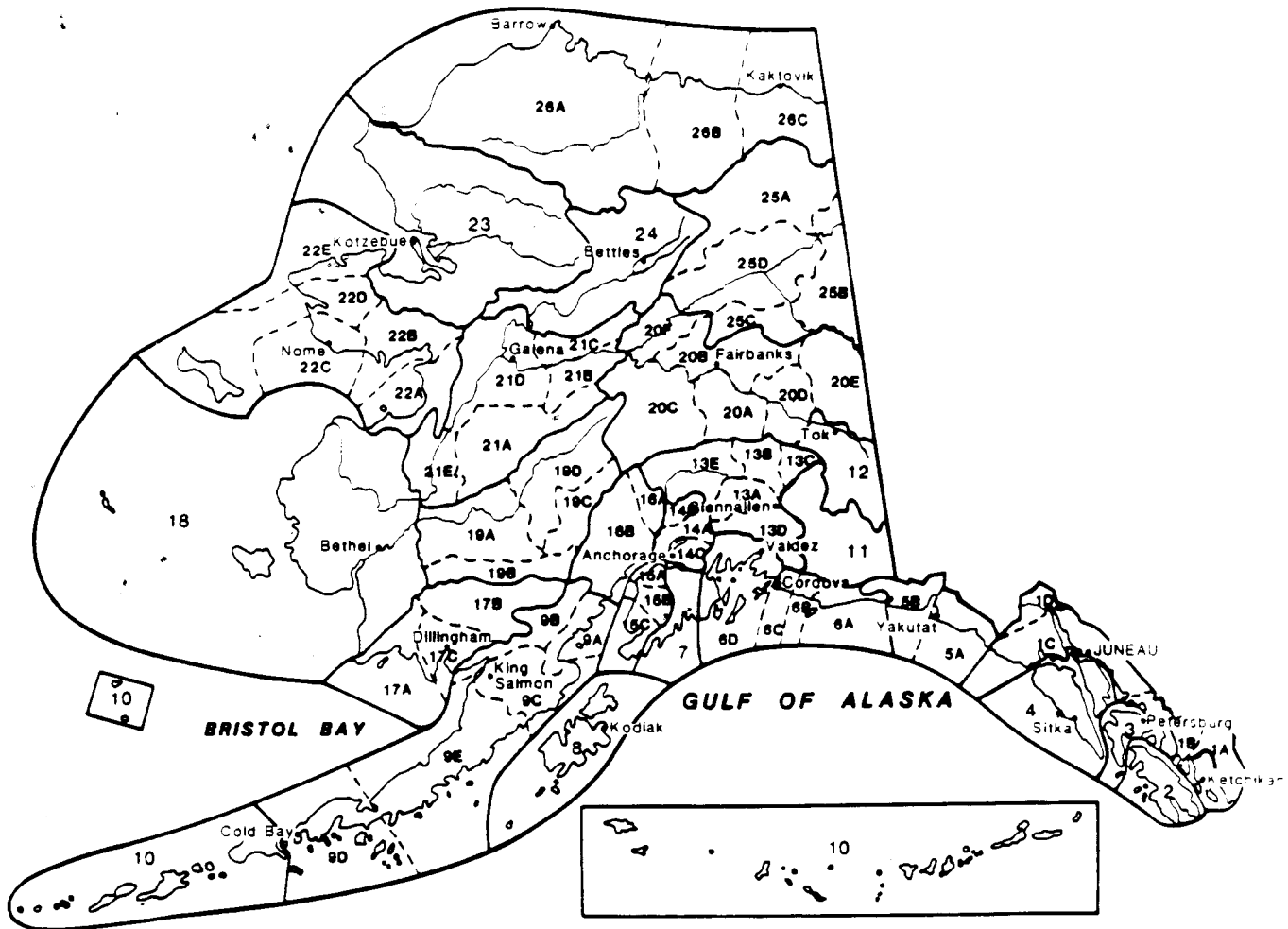
	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	39.0	15.0	54.0
Actual	44.1	13.2	53.0
Difference	0	2.1 ^a	2.1

^a Because of unfavorable weather conditions some surveys were not flown.

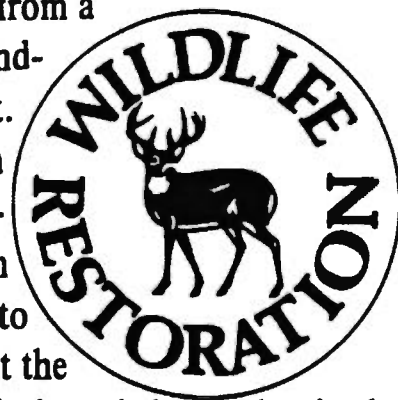
Submitted by:

Michael G. McDonald
Assistant Management Coordinator

Alaska's Game Management Units



The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program consists of funds from a 10% to 11% manufacturer's excise tax collected from the sales of handguns, sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and archery equipment. The Federal Aid program allots funds back to states through a formula based on each state's geographic area and number of paid hunting license holders. Alaska receives a maximum 5% of revenues collected each year. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game uses federal aid funds to help restore, conserve, and manage wild birds and mammals to benefit the public. These funds are also used to educate hunters to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for responsible hunting. Seventy-five percent of the funds for this report are from Federal Aid.



PAT COSTELLO