

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Annual Performance Report
Survey-Inventory Activities
1 July 1999 - 30 June 2000

MOUNTAIN GOAT

Mary V. Hicks, Editor



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STATE OF ALASKA

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DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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Project Title: Southeast Mountain Goat Population Management

Project Location: Unit 1A (5000 mi²)
Ketchikan area including the mainland draining into
Behm and Portland Canals

Project Objectives and Activities

- Maintain goat numbers to provide at least 20 goats per hour of survey time during fall 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 6 Trend Count Areas (TCAs) during fall 1999. We issued 174 registration permits to hunters for hunting goats in Units 1A or 1B south of Bradfield Canal.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We observed 35 goats (38 goats per hour) in the Wilson Arm/Boca-de-Quadra TCA, 155 (122 per hour) in the Marten Arm/Portland Canal, 58 (31 per hour) in the Yes Bay/Reflection Lake TCA, 21 (11 per hour) in the Chickamin River/2722 TCA, 27 (66 per hour) in the Deer Mountain/Mahony Mountain TCA, and 127 (85 per hour) in the Rudyerd/Smeaton TCA. The number of goats observed in all but 1 of the TCAs surveyed exceeded our 20 goats/hour objective. The Chickamin River TCA has been steadily declining and is currently at its lowest level since 1990.

Of 174 registration permits issued to hunters, 94 hunters did not hunt, 69 hunted unsuccessfully, 11 hunters harvested a single goat, and no hunters took 2 goats. Hunters harvested 7 male and 4 female goats. Resident hunters harvested 9 goats, and guided nonresidents harvested 2 goats. Poor weather played a major role in the low success observed during the 1999 season.

Project Location: Unit 1B (3000 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: We conducted an aerial survey in September along part of Unit 1B extending south from Le Conte Bay to Bradfield Canal. We observed 82 goats, including 17 kids (21%) at a rate of 29 goats per hour.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 139 registration permits in the RG004 registration hunt. A total of 60 hunters reported killing 22 goats in 162 days afield (37% success) in the RG004 hunt, and a total of 15 hunters reported killing 2 goats in 41 days afield (13% success) in that portion of Unit 1B managed under the RG001 hunt. The U.S. Forest Service issued no Federal registration goat permits for the area between LeConte Bay and the North Fork of Bradfield Canal during this report period. The 24 goats harvested in Unit 1B was below our

management objective, and the 32% success rate was slightly below our management objective for Unit 1B.

Project Location: Unit 1C (7600 mi²)

Southeast 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 in the Chilkat Range north of the Endicott River, and 50 goats per hour in the areas south of Taku Inlet.
- Conduct population size and composition counts.
- Monitor results from the registration permit hunt.
- Monitor impact of sightseeing helicopter flights on selected populations.
- Monitor course of contagious ecthyma (ORF) in northern Southeast populations.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We analyzed harvest data collected from registration permit reports on an ongoing basis to determine whether harvests remained within sustainable limits. Preliminary harvest guidelines based on population estimates were used for monitoring the hunt, with males assigned 1 point and females 2 points. This point system encourages hunters to harvest male goats.

An aerial survey was conducted on 19 August from the Taku River to the Salmon Creek Reservoir. We counted 66 goats (54 adults and 12 kids), a sighting rate of 33 goats per hour. Additional aerial surveys were not possible because of inclement weather.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 190 registration permits to goat hunters in 1999. Of these, 78 permittees hunted and 38 killed goats for a success rate of 49%. Both successful and unsuccessful hunters averaged 2.6 days afield. The harvest consisted of 28 males and 10 females. There were 21 nonresident guided hunters, equal to the number of 1998 nonresident hunters; 18 of the 21 hunters killed goats. All nonresidents hunted the Tracy Arm and Endicott Arm area. The harvest remained within guideline levels in the area from Taku Inlet to the south side of Endicott Arm. Unitwide, nonresidents harvested 47% of the goats, while in Tracy and Endicott Arms, nonresidents accounted for 55% of the harvest. Eighty-seven percent of the harvested goats came from the Tracy/Endicott drainages.

Project Location: Unit 1D (2700 mi²)
Southeast mainland 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: Weather and scheduling did not permit any goat survey work in Unit 1D during this reporting period. We analyzed harvest data collected from registration permits. Preliminary harvest quotas were monitored for discrete areas throughout the subunit, based on goat population estimates.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We issued 170 registration hunt permits in 1999. Of these, 85 permittees hunted and 25 killed goats, for a hunter success rate of 29%. Successful hunters averaged 1.6 days hunting, while unsuccessful hunters spent 2.2 days afield. The harvest consisted of 10 males, 14 females, and 1 goat of undetermined sex. All but 2 of the hunters were Alaska residents. Neither of the nonresidents hunted.

Project Location: Unit 4 (5800 mi²)
Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof and adjacent islands

Project Objectives and Activities

- Maintain a population capable of providing an annual harvest of at least 35 goats and an annual reported hunter success rate of at least 25%.
- Conduct population size and composition surveys, monitor results from the registration permit hunt, and develop population objectives.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: Aerial surveys were not conducted during fall 1999 due to poor weather and the availability of suitable aircraft. Three hundred registration permits were issued for the August 1–December 31 Baranof Island hunt. Following the season, nonrespondents were contacted for information, and some were cited for noncompliance. Hunt reports were tabulated. Twenty-six harvested goat horn pairs were brought to the Sitka office for measurements and aging in an effort to better understand growth rates. That effort will continue.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Hunters harvested 36 goats in 1999, including 22 male and 14 females. The success rate for 119 permittees who went afield was 30%. Successful hunters were afield for an average of 2.1 days. Harvest occurred during all open months, with the highest number taken in November ($n = 11$, 31% of the annual harvest). Nonresident-guide hunts are becoming more popular; 16 hunters booked hunts in Unit 4 during the 1999 season. We met both project objectives during this report period, although we have not formalized population objectives.

Project Location: Unit 5 (5800 mi²)
Cape Fairweather to Icy Bay, eastern gulf 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 report period. We analyzed harvest from the return of hunter reports from the registration permit hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We monitored the hunt and subsequent harvest through registration permits. We issued 42 state registration permits to hunters in 1999; the U.S. Forest Service in Yakutat issued an additional 5 federal subsistence permits. Twenty-four of the state permittees hunted and 17 killed goats, for a success rate of 71%. The legal harvest comprised 10 males and 7 females, and the illegal harvest consisted of 3 goats of undetermined sex. Nonresidents took 5 of the 17 legally harvested goats. No one hunted under federal permits. Successful hunters averaged 1.8 days hunting, compared to the unsuccessful hunters' 3.0 days afield. Because successful hunters shot goats from cliffs along the water, their time spent hunting was considerably shortened, with no prolonged stalking or hiking.

The management objective for hunter success is 25%. This was easily surpassed, as was the previous 5-year mean harvest of 9 goats. The harvest increased by 4 over the previous report period when 16 goats were killed. Although Unit 5A can support this level of harvest if it is dispersed, there is reason for concern because 16 of the goats were taken in Nunatak Fiord, at least 5 of which were females. We will attempt to fly aerial surveys in this area before fall 2000, and harvest guidelines will be adjusted based on population information we collect during the surveys.

Segment Period Project Costs:

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	24.6	15.0	39.6
Actual	30.7	13.5	44.2
Difference	-6.1	2.0	-4.6

Explanation of costs: Management staff attended a goat workshop in Anchorage during the winter. Extensive aerial surveys were not conducted in many areas.

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: We surveyed 10 mountain goat count areas in a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service. A total of 970 goats were seen, including 123 (14%) kids. Maximum allowable harvest was set at 118 goat units for the 1999/00 season. Billies were counted as 1 goat unit, and nannies were counted as 2 goat units.

We issued 222 registration permits to hunters for 13 different hunt areas. One hundred eight hunters harvested 60 goats (including 2 not recovered), totaling 73 goat units. Harvest composition was 46 males (77%) and 12 females (26%) and 2 unknown. Three hunt areas were closed by emergency order when the maximum allowable harvest was reached.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The population was well above our objective. We estimated 4110 goats in fall 1999. Numbers were increasing throughout most of Unit 6.

Male proportion of the harvest was also 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 (8400 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, monitoring the results of permit hunts, and closing hunt areas as needed when harvest quotas have been reached.

Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period: We surveyed 6 count areas and counted 491 mountain goats. Kids composed 16.9% of the population or 20 kids:100 adults.

Final harvest statistics were not available and preliminary results were reported. Hunters harvested 86 mountain goats on the Kenai Peninsula in 1999. Seventy goats (48 males, 22 females) were harvested from 27 open areas during the 10 August to 30 September drawing permit hunt. Twelve goats (6 males, 3 females, 2 unknown, and 1 unreported) were taken from 7 hunt areas during the 15 October to 30 November registration permit hunt. Three of these hunts were restricted to archery hunters. Additionally, Tier II hunters took 3 male goats

and 2 female goats during the 1 August to 30 September season. The department issued 437 drawing permits, 277 registration permits, and 46 Tier II permits.

During the 1997 Board of Game meeting, the Board approved of the department's plans to allow for archery-only hunts during the late fall registration season. Archery hunts would only take place in those areas where a harvestable surplus existed and a general all weapon season was not practical. This was the third year of these hunts, and they were well received. RG334, RG344 and RG357 were open only to bow hunters. Participation in these hunts was lower than in previous years with 26 permits issued and only 1 female goat harvested.

One emergency order was issued, closing 3 registration hunts as the harvest quotas were reached. Hunt areas RG331, RG333, and RG345 closed by Emergency Order No. 02-12-99 on October 28, 1999.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: We estimated the current population size by summing the most recent surveys from individual count areas and adjusting for sightability. Latest counts totaled 2662 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 3757 (assuming 90% observability +800 in KFNP) and 4802 goats (assuming 70% observability +1000 in KFNP) on the Kenai. It appears that the Kenai Peninsula mountain goat population continued to decline in 1999; however, management objectives are still being met.

Current guidelines allow for a harvest rate of 7% of the most recent mountain goat surveys. We allow for a harvest goal of 6-7% for stable or increasing populations and 5% or less for depressed or recovering populations. The overall harvest rate in 1999 was approximately 3.2% of observable goats. The lower than desired harvest was primarily due to poor weather during the registration season. The current permit system on the Kenai allows for an even distribution of goat harvests. No changes in mountain goat management are recommended for the Kenai Peninsula at this time.

Project Location: Unit 8 (8750 mi²)
Kodiak and adjacent islands

Project Objectives and Activities: Maintain a pre hunting population of at least 700 goats that will sustain an annual harvest of >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 much of the goat habitat of Kodiak Island; we counted 608 goats (491 adults, 117 kids), a kid:adult ratio of 24:100.

Hunters reported taking 70 goats (49 males, 21 females), the highest reported harvest ever recorded for Unit 8. We issued 168 drawing permits, 107 hunters went into the field, and

hunter success was 65%. The harvest ranged from 3 to 16 goats from each of the 8 permit hunts.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: The kid:adult ratio observed in 1998 (24:100) is somewhat higher than the average ratio noted during the previous 5 years (20:100). About 66% of the goat habitat on the island was surveyed. The goat population continued to be stable to increasing in 1998.

Management objectives are being achieved with current seasons and bag limits and drawing permit hunts. Increasing goat numbers in northeastern Kodiak prompted us to increase the number of permits in hunt DG478.

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

Project Objectives and Activities: To allow the population to fluctuate as dictated by available habitat, climate conditions, and predation. Allow limited hunting, 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 MacColl Ridge trend count area was surveyed for mountain goats on 4 June 1999 and 74 goats were observed. The 1998 count was also 74 goats, and both counts are the highest ever obtained on MacColl Ridge. The percent kids observed in the population declined from 20% in 1998 to 14% in 1999 and is the lowest since 1993, when only 8% observed were kids. 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.

Registration permits were issued to 54 individuals in 1999, and 12 goats were harvested. Success rate for the 33 permittees who hunted was 36%. The harvest included 9 billies (75%) and 3 nannies. Nonresidents took 4 goats (33%), nonlocal Alaska residents took 8 (67%), while local residents did not report taking any goats. All 12 (100%) successful hunters used aircraft for transportation. Successful permittees averaged 2.7 days hunting, compared to 4.9 days for unsuccessful hunters. Harvest chronology data show that 83% ($n = 10$) of the harvest took place during the first 3 weeks of September, presumably by hunters on a combination sheep/mountain goat hunt.

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Mountain goat numbers were stable this year on MacColl Ridge and are the highest ever observed on trend counts. However, kid production and survival declined by 33% in 1999 and was the lowest observed in over 3 years. Reasons for the decline in kid production or survival are unknown. In Unit 11 mountain goats are considered numerous only in limited areas where habitat is favorable. The historic unitwide population estimate was 700 mountain goats. Recent survey data indicate a stable to slightly increasing population. Goat densities in Unit 11 are much lower than in areas with more favorable habitat (i.e., the Kenai Peninsula or Unit 6).

Mountain goat harvest statistics have been variable since registration hunts were initiated in 1980. The average harvest between 1980–97 was 16 (range = 6–30) goats per year. Billies have predominated in the harvest over this period, accounting for 67% (range = 23–92%) of the kill. Hunting effort data indicate an average of 34 (range = 20–52) individuals report hunting each year and success rates have varied between 30 and 65%. The unitwide harvest is estimated to be approximately 3% of the population, but localized harvests in accessible areas may approach 10% in some years.

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 specific locations every year. Therefore, no immediate changes in season dates, bag limits, or registration hunt requirements are recommended. Harvest rates and goat populations for MacColl Ridge and Hawkins, Barnard, and Miles glaciers should be monitored yearly to assure that 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, climate 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 not flown in Unit 13D during 1999. The latest surveys were flown in 1993 and 1995 when respective observations of 79 goats (21% kids) and 65 goats (23% kids) were recorded in the Tonsina Controlled Use Area.

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 10 mountain goats (10 males) in 1999. Sixteen permittees hunted and the hunter success rate was 59%. Six (60%) successful hunters used aircraft. Both successful and unsuccessful hunters averaged 15 days afield. Two goats were harvested during August, and 8 goats were taken during the September portion of the hunt. Resident Alaskans took 9 goats; nonresidents harvested 1 goat.

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 indicate. Mountain goats are among the most difficult big game animals to survey, and differences in survey results often reflect count conditions, not changes in goat numbers.

Current harvest rates are low and harvest is distributed widely, 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, further limiting hunting effort. No changes in season length or bag limits are recommended.

Project Location: Unit 14 (6600 mi²)
Upper Cook Inlet

Project Objectives and Activities

Units 14A and 14B

The goat management objective for Units 14A and 14B (Talkeetna Mountains) is to allow the population to reach an observable minimum of 50 goats before allowing harvest, at which time annual harvest should not exceed 5% of observable goats, comprising at least 60% males.

The goat management objective for Unit 14A (Chugach Mountains) is to maintain a minimum observable population of 60 goats that will sustain an annual harvest of 7% of observable goats and at least 70% males.

Unit 14C

The goat management objective for Unit 14C is to maintain a population of at least 500 goats that will sustain an annual harvest of 25 goats, comprising at least 60% 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: No surveys were conducted in the Chugach Mountains portion of Unit 14A during 1999 or 2000. No goat surveys were conducted in the Talkeetna Mountains portions of Unit 14B or 14A during this period. However, we observed 17 goats during sheep/goat aerial surveys in portions of the Talkeetna Mountains in late July 1999 and 13 goats (11 adults and 2 kids) were observed during sheep surveys in 2000. In addition, during a spring 2000 bear census in the northern Talkeetna Mountains, we observed 6 goats in the Portage Creek drainage in Unit 13E.

In Unit 14C, biologists counted 54 goats (45 adults, 9 kids) in the East Fork Eklutna River and 37 goats (34 adults, 3 kids) in Eagle River in conjunction with sheep surveys in late July 2000. Eighty goats (68 adults, 12 kids) were counted in the Bird Creek drainage and 85 goats (72 adults, 13 kids) were counted in the Glacier Creek drainage during goat surveys in early August 2000. In addition, aerial surveys flown during February and April 2000 have provided information about goat winter habitat within the Twentymile River and Glacier Creek drainages in the south east portion of Unit 14C. At the time of this report, summer goat surveys had not been conducted in the Lake George and Twentymile River drainages, areas inhabited by most of the goats in the unit.

In the Chugach Mountains portion of Unit 14A, 71 registration permits were issued, 34 hunters went afield, and hunters harvested 8 male and 2 female goats (29% hunter success). Goat hunting was not permitted in the Talkeetna Mountains, Unit 14B and 14A. Two registration permit hunt areas were available for goats in Unit 14C, the Twentymile River and Lake George areas. In the Twentymile River area, 71 permits were issued, 34 hunters went afield, and hunters harvested 7 male goats (21% hunter success). Two hunters registered for the late season archery-only hunt in the Twentymile River drainage; 1 hunted unsuccessfully, and the other hunter did not return a report. In the Lake George area, 40 permits were issued, 21 hunters went afield, and hunters harvested 3 male and 2 female goats (24% hunter success). Two hunters registered for the late season archery-only hunt in the Lake George drainage but did not hunt. A total of 13 permits were issued in 2 drawing permit hunts in Unit 14C. Five permits were issued for the East Fork Eklutna River drainage, 5 hunters went afield, and 2 harvested female goats. The department issued 8 permits for the Glacier/Winner Creek drainages, and 7 hunters went afield, harvesting 2 goats (1 male, 1 female).

Progress Meeting Project Objectives: Survey and harvest results indicated management objectives were met. Poor late fall weather in Unit 14C accounts for low goat harvest in the Lake George registration permit area. Limited observations in 1999 and 2000 found goat numbers comparable to those in 1995, when we conducted the last unitwide counts. Observed numbers of goats appear to be well above the minimum population objectives in Unit 14C.

Hunters harvested 10 goats in Unit 14A (Chugach Mountains), and 80% of the goats were males. Hunters harvested 16 goats in Unit 14C, and 69% of the goats were males.

The goat population in the Talkeetna Mountains continues to remain low and appears to have declined in recent years. It is unlikely that harvest of goats will be allowed in the Talkeetna Mountains in the near future.

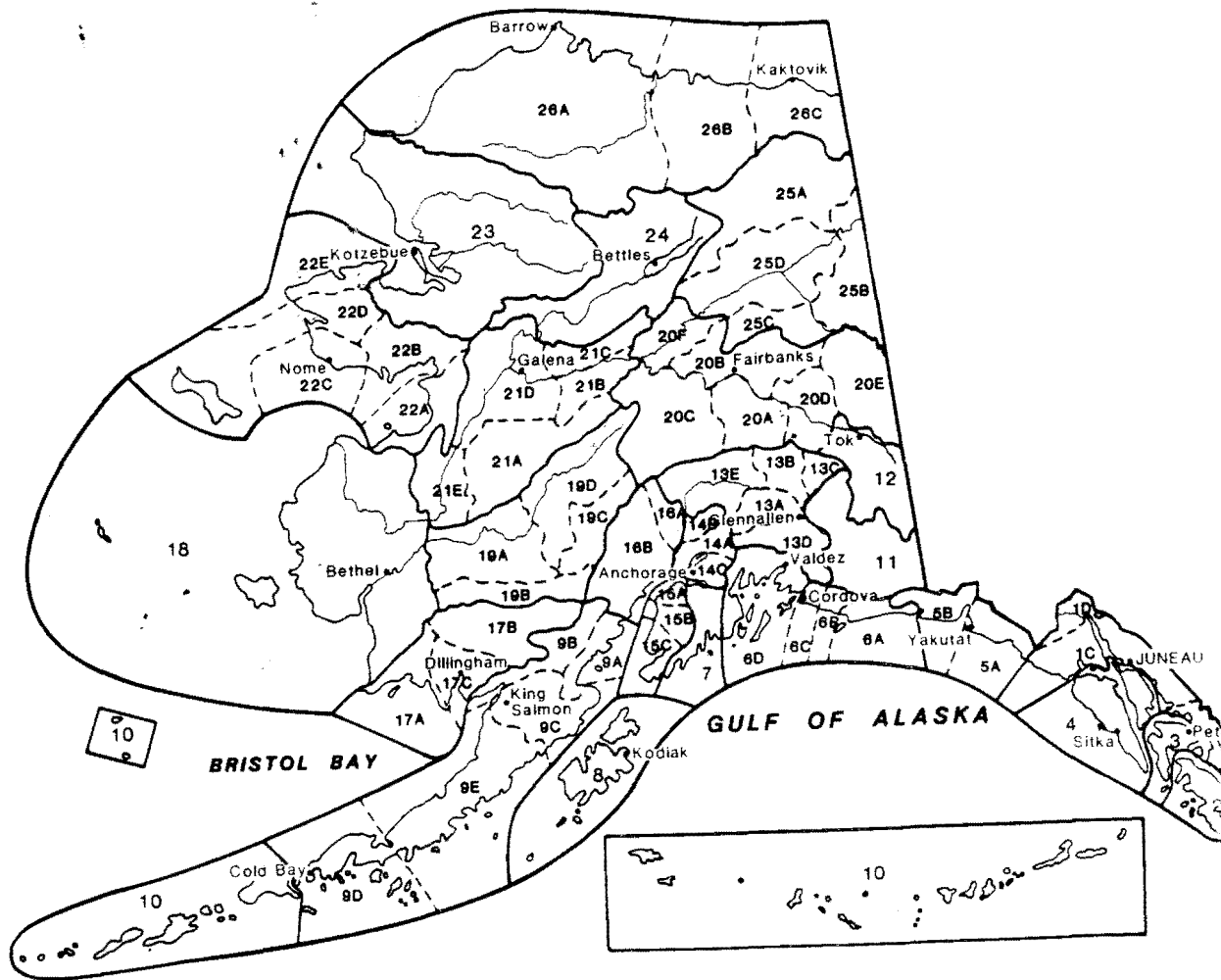
Segment Period Costs

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	34.7	13.0	47.7
Actual	34.7	13.4	48.1
Difference	0.0	-0.4	-0.4

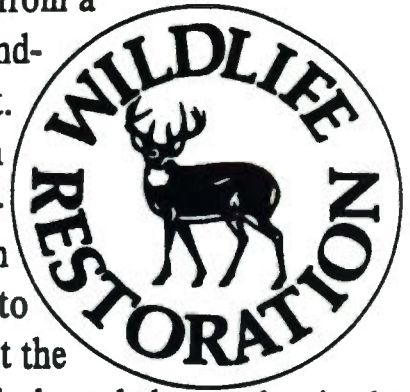
Submitted by

Michael G. McDonald
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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.



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