

State of Alaska
FY2014 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Conservation
Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary

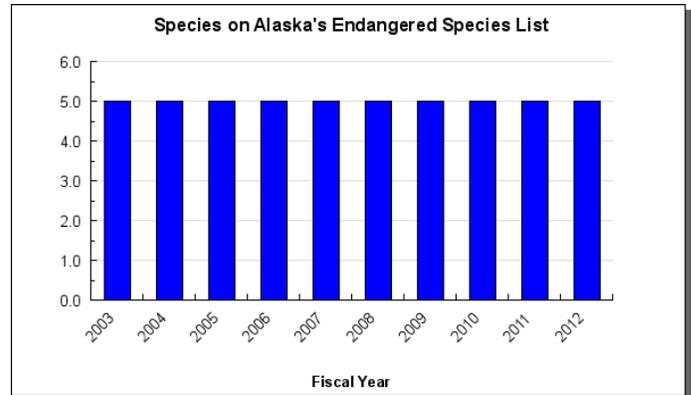
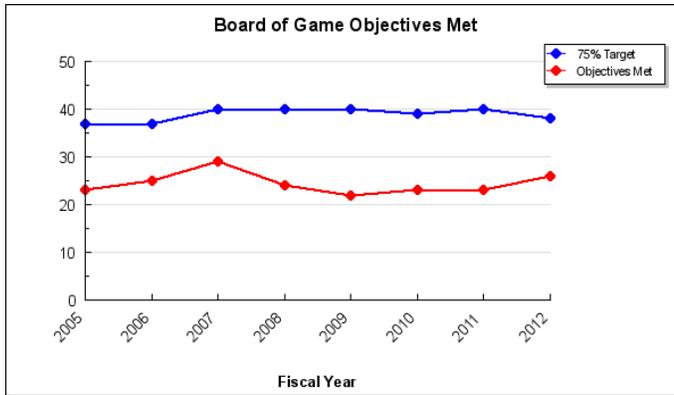
Wildlife Conservation Results Delivery Unit

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 <http://omb.alaska.gov/results.>)



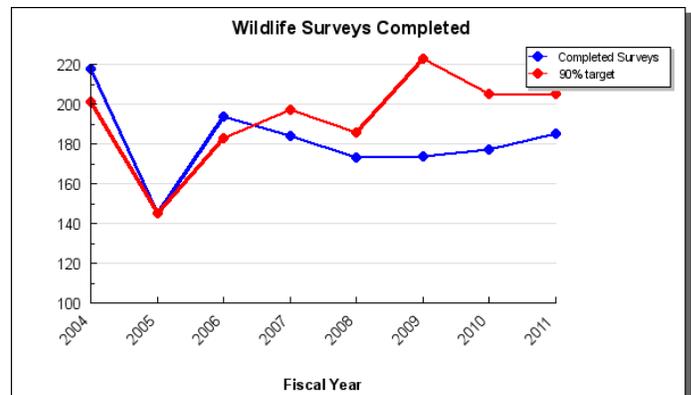
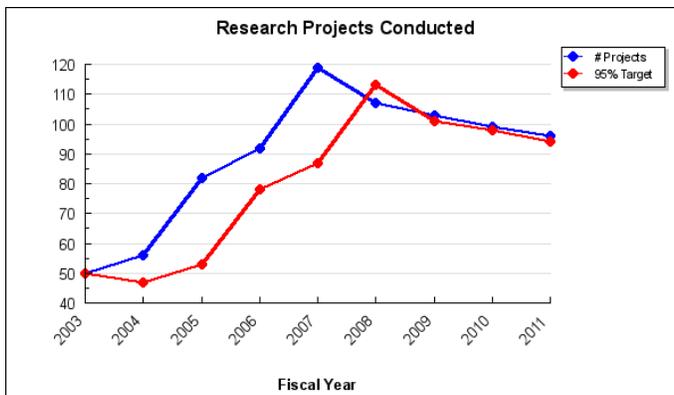
Core Services

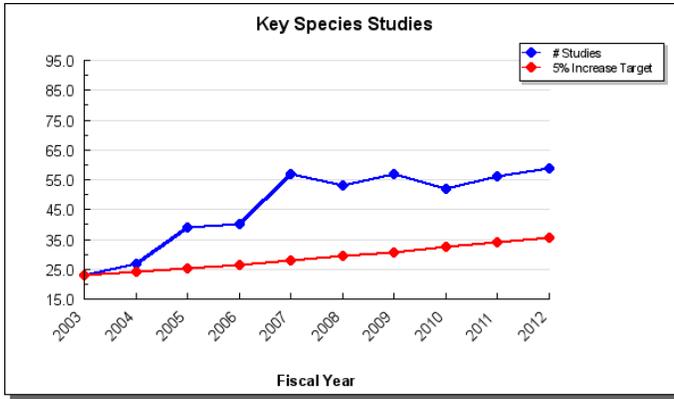
- Collect scientifically sound information on wildlife populations in Alaska.
- Provide biological information and recommendations to the Board of Game and state advisory committees as well as to the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) and federal regional councils.
- Maintain wildlife habitat on state lands capable of sustaining robust, well-distributed populations of wildlife.
- Increase low or declining ungulate populations identified under the intensive management law in areas impacted by predators to provide for increased human harvest.
- Maintain and enhance opportunities to hunt, trap, and view wildlife.
- Provide opportunities for Alaskans to gain knowledge of and appreciation for Alaska's wildlife, its management, and ways to safely and ethically interact with wildlife.

Measures by Core Service

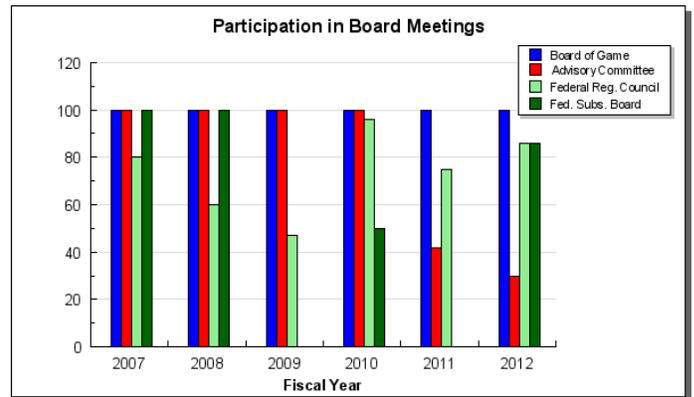
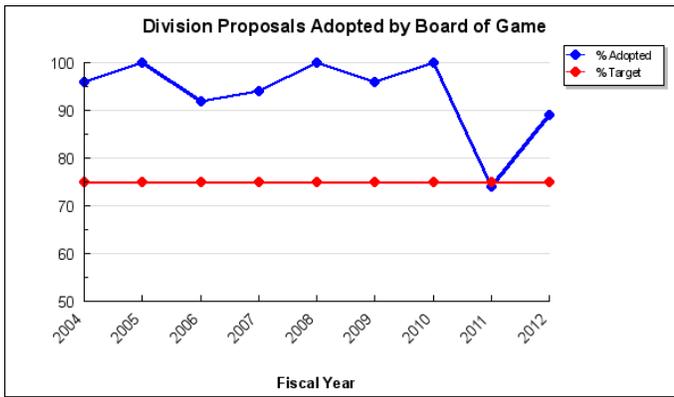
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1. Collect scientifically sound information on wildlife populations in Alaska.

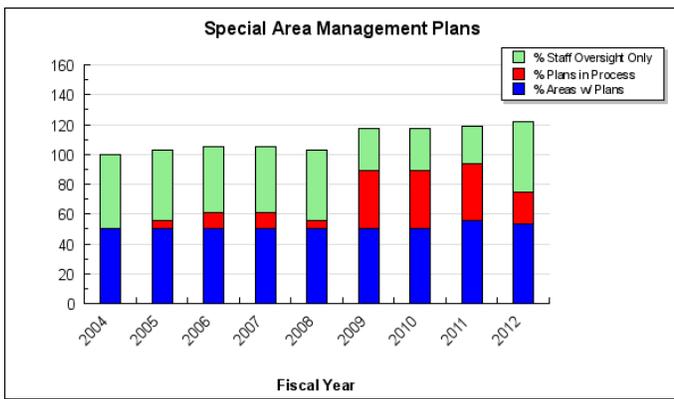




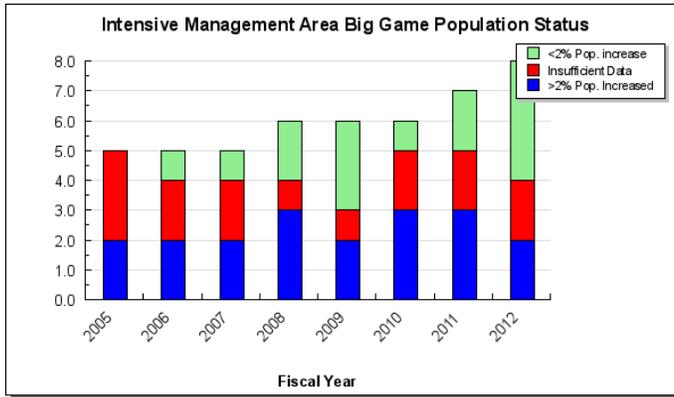
2. Provide biological information and recommendations to the Board of Game and state advisory committees as well as to the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) and federal regional councils.



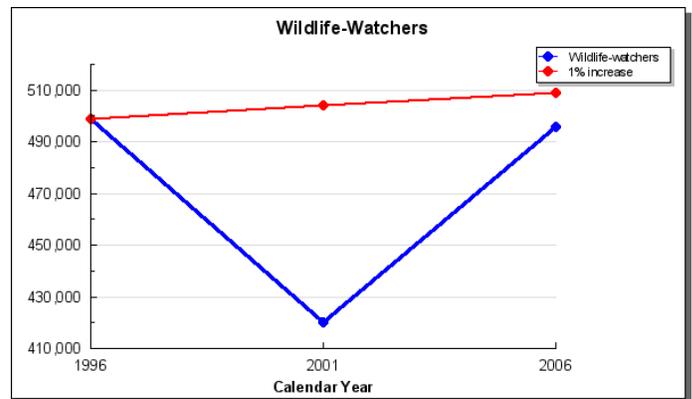
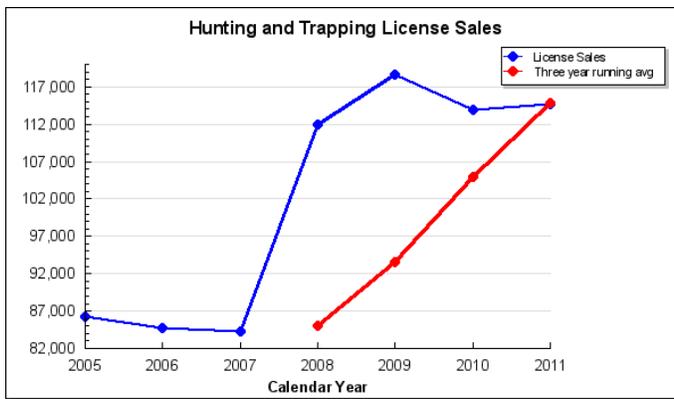
3. Maintain wildlife habitat on state lands capable of sustaining robust, well-distributed populations of wildlife.



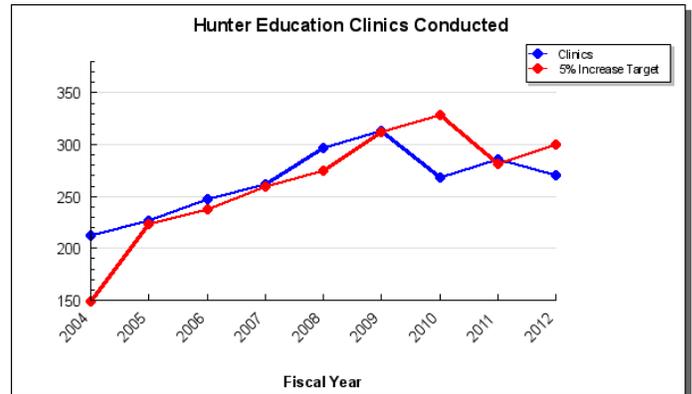
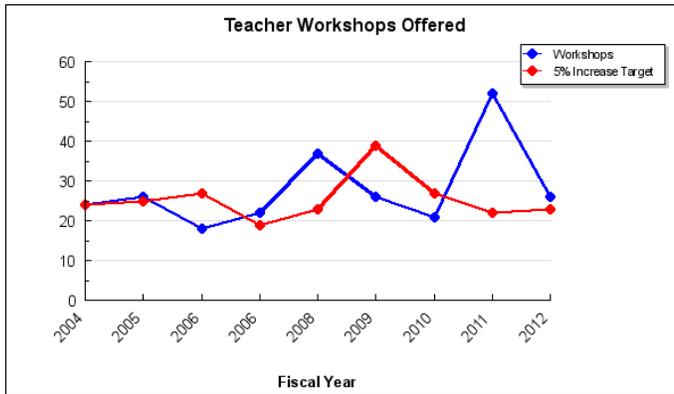
4. Increase low or declining ungulate populations identified under the intensive management law in areas impacted by predators to provide for increased human harvest.

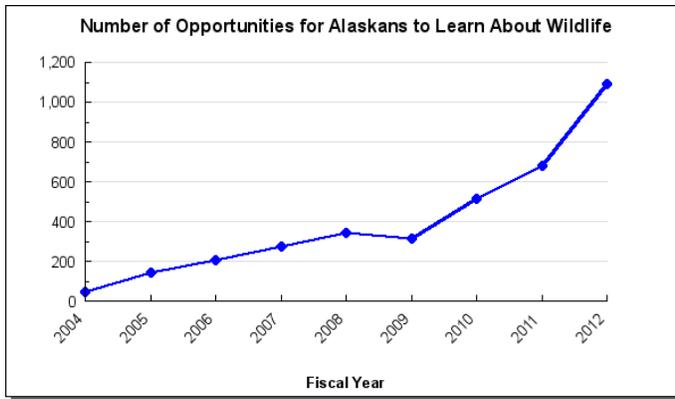


5. Maintain and enhance opportunities to hunt, trap, and view wildlife.



6. Provide opportunities for Alaskans to gain knowledge of and appreciation for Alaska's wildlife, its management, and ways to safely and ethically interact with wildlife.





Major RDU Accomplishments in 2012

Intensive Management: The division is currently implementing intensive management programs aimed at increasing caribou or moose numbers in Game Management Units (GMU) 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, and 20 and considering programs focused on increasing deer numbers in GMUs 1 and 3. The division has allocated funds to support studies and field research to document population parameters to support, sustain, and defend existing and new intensive management programs in the face of ongoing opposition and litigation. Intensive management programs for moose in subunits 20A, 20B, and 20D resulted in elevated harvests that produced 27% of the total reported state-wide moose harvest over the past three hunting seasons.

Adoption of an Intensive Management Protocol: A protocol to guide the division's intensive management activities was completed and presented to the Board of Game at the January 2012 meeting. This protocol is ensuring all intensive management programs are carried out in a scientifically-sound and defensible manner.

Kenai Moose Research: The Alaska Board of Game adopted an Intensive Management Plan for moose on the Kenai Peninsula. Based on the new Intensive Management protocol, the department is in the process of collecting baseline data required to measure program feasibility and, if implemented, program success. Significant progress was made this past year in these areas.

Unit 26B Muskoxen: The division received funds to address, through bear control, a declining muskoxen herd in Unit 26B. This past year, several bears exhibiting predatory behavior on muskoxen were lethally removed. While fall surveys have yet to be conducted, initial observations indicate improved calf survival.

Endangered Species: The division is currently supporting several legal challenges to unjustified Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing decisions, critical habitat designations, or regulatory actions. We also conducted a state funded independent science assessment of the recent Steller sea lion Biological Opinion, which the division concluded was based on flawed science and the State is legally challenging. This independent assessment confirmed the state assessment that flawed science was applied in the Biological Opinion. Research studies have also been initiated for several listed or candidate species including yellow-billed loons, Kittlitz's murrelet, Steller sea lions, beluga whales, polar bears, SE wolves, Pacific walrus, and ice seals. Data from these studies will be used to inform ESA decisions or, when necessary, legal challenges.

Management of the Porcupine and Fortymile Caribou Herds: Canadian plans to severely restrict harvest of the Porcupine herd were averted a little over one year ago when division staff were able to complete a photocensus under difficult conditions to verify our previous conclusion that harvest restriction was not necessary at the time. Harvest of the Fortymile herd was increased as a result of having met the dual goals of incremental increases in harvest while at the same time increasing the number of animals in the herd.

Leadership in Waterfowl Management: During the past year the division has provided leadership in managing the state's waterfowl resources through leadership in the Pacific Flyway Council, the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council, and work with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Leadership and involvement with these groups is

important to insure that regional allocations and local uses of waterfowl benefit subsistence and other users within the state, while ensuring long term conservation of the resource. This leadership included chairing and hosting the Pacific Flyway Council meetings this past year, serving as a voting member of the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council (AMBCC), and working with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on national flyway issues through the Service Regulations Committee.

Seward Peninsula Moose: This is the first time in years Region 5 staff completed all their planned moose population surveys and censuses in all 4 GMUs last February - April. Normally, poor winter weather conditions force the cancellation of one or more censuses. The GeoSpatial Population Estimator (GSPE) censuses completed included the Andreafsky-Yukon drainage in Unit 18, the Unalakleet drainage in Unit 22A, and the lower Kobuk drainage in Unit 23. In addition, a comprehensive population survey was completed in the Colville drainage in Unit 26A. This information is being used to inform management recommendations to this year's Board of Game meeting.

Juneau Access Research: As part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process associated with possible road development from Berners Bay to the Katzehin River along Lynn Canal, Region I received funding through the Federal Highways Commission to undertake mountain goat, moose, brown bear, and wolverine research. During the past year, final reports were completed for these efforts describing new information about these four species. The research data collected for mountain goats along Lynn Canal is believed to be the largest and most comprehensive set ever assembled for the species. Similarly, data collected for brown bears, with genetic and spatial components, represents some breakthrough techniques and findings, both of which will enable the region and others to better undertake and manage this species. This work is being used to inform potential impacts and mitigation options for this road project. It will also be used to inform management recommendations for this year's Board of Game meeting.

Southeast Mountain Goat Management: Recent research has shown that mountain goats are more sensitive to mortality factors and possible overharvest than previously known. In Region I, vulnerabilities include high female harvests, helicopter skiing, helicopter flight seeing, hydroelectric construction, road construction, and impacts from severe winter weather. During the past year, staff in the region continued to study mountain goats in a number of areas across the region, including the Haines area, the mountains along the east side of Lynn Canal, Baranof Island, and the Cleveland Peninsula. Data is being gathered on home range size, seasonal movement patterns, habitat use, sightability of goats during surveys, survival and causes of mortality, and fecundity. These data are valuable for planning purposes associated with the myriad of issues that affect goat populations. Because of the myriad issues associated with goats across Regions I and II, Region I staff coordinated and hosted a mountain goat workshop in February 2012 in Juneau. Biologists from across the state were invited and participated, as did goat experts from Washington State, British Columbia, and Alberta, Canada. The volume of information available through Region I's research efforts and staff interest in and willingness to share the information resulted in very fruitful discussions and information sharing. As with other regional successes, the success of this effort was the direct result of close working relationships between managers and researchers.

Initiation of Operational Planning: The Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) recently adopted a Science Plan to guide its research activities. The second step of this process is initiation of operational and biometric planning towards better documentation, review and data storage for research and selected management projects within the division. The division is currently working on an Operational Planning Policy and dedicating additional staffing to implement this policy.

North Slope Geographic Information System (GIS) Pilot Project: A pilot project to map and display summary caribou information using a web-based GIS application was initiated this fiscal year. To date, baseline GIS maps of caribou summer grounds and migratory routes have been developed. These products are being used to inform caribou management decisions and to identify potential impacts and mitigation options associated with resource development projects.

Improving the Board of Game Process: Over the past year the division has continued to make changes to the Board process to provide more information and to provide it sooner so that public has more time to evaluate biological information associated with proposals the Board will be deliberating and better understand the division's position on the issues. Through these changes, the public and Advisory Committees are better able to comment to the Board and participate in that public process. These changes include having proposal books available to the public five to six months before the meetings and having department analysis and recommendation published on our website at least

eight weeks before each meeting. The division is also making other changes in the presentation of materials at the Board meetings to allow better public participation.

Wildlife Collisions Work Group: This effort was started over a year ago and consists of three staff from ADOT&PF and three from Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). The work of this group is focused on identifying and describing specific strategies to plan and design mitigation measures and techniques that can be implemented very early in the planning and design phase of highway corridor infrastructure projects. The intention of these measures is to address wildlife population and conflict issues (especially potential wildlife collision corridors) at the onset of a project.

Environmental Literacy: Research shows that when children are connected to nature, they do better in school, have fewer behavioral and health problems, and are more engaged in learning. These facts are not the current reality for many Alaskan students. In an effort to improve education and connection to nature, a dedicated group of diverse educators and natural resource professionals, including DWC education staff, drafted an Environmental Literacy Plan for Alaska (AKELP). An implemented Plan will guide PreK-12 public schools in integrating environmental, place-based education, including active outdoor learning, as part of the school curricula with support from community partners. AKELP is a product of a strong collaboration among the ADF&G, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other state/federal agencies, private non-profit organizations. Alaska's Environmental Literacy Plan is designed to connect youth with the natural world and the communities in which they live.

Nome Guidebook: The Wildlife Viewing program completed "Alaska's Nome Area Wildlife Viewing Guide: Exploring the Nome Roadways." The 150-page spiral bound guide includes wildlife profiles, habitat descriptions, a milepost section highlighting possible viewing opportunities along the road system, information about seasonal wildlife activities, stunning photographs, and more. The guidebook is available online and at natural history book retailers throughout Alaska.

Public Information Centers: Public service is a huge part of all of our programs and excellent public service is a high priority. To better accomplish that goal, the division recently completed a significant remodel of the Anchorage Information Center. It was designed to provide a welcoming and efficient experience for our clients and included physical changes to the facility, coupled with revised responsibilities for our existing personnel and addition of a student intern. We have seen an obvious improvement in our ability to help the public as well as an increase in the level of satisfaction expressed by the people who use our services.

Key RDU Challenges

Game Management and Hunting Opportunities

As Alaska's population increases, we are experiencing increasing demands on wildlife (particularly moose and caribou) populations for hunting. Towards a goal of increasing hunting opportunities, the division developed an Intensive Management Protocol to implement Alaska's Intensive Management Law (AS 16.05.255). The division will continue to work with the Alaska Board of Game to develop biologically sound and cost effective programs to enhance numbers and distribution of important ungulate herds under the Intensive Management Protocol via management of predator populations and improvement of habitat quality for identified ungulate populations failing to meet established regulatory management objectives. Without these programs, hunting opportunities will likely be reduced, with commensurate reduction in the amount of meat harvested for human use. We are currently implementing intensive management programs in Game Management Units (GMU) 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 24 and considering programs in GMUs 1 and 3. The division has allocated funds to support studies and field research to document population parameters to support, sustain, and defend existing and new intensive management programs in the face of ongoing opposition and litigation. A key research challenge in the next year will be to transition from film based aerial survey methods to digital based aerial survey methods as film based equipment becomes obsolete and unavailable.

While moose and caribou management remains a focus, the division also manages a wide range of other wildlife species important to hunters and other users. For many of these species (e.g., sheep, goats, bears, and game birds) we are not collecting the necessary information to ensure maximum productivity and sustained yield. We are exploring ways to increase our knowledge of these species towards increasing use opportunities.

The division also provides hunter training with a focus on hunter recruitment. While hunter training is an important element of hunter recruitment, the division is also working with the Alaska Board of Game to turn these trained people into successful lifetime hunters. One focal area is the development of additional youth hunting opportunities that have reasonable expectations of success and participation. Through such efforts we can help ensure our hunter heritage is passed on to the next generation.

Ensure the State's Right to Manage

The division has traditionally filled the role as the principle manager of wildlife in our state. In recent years we have seen this role eroded by a variety of threats including precautionary listing of species under the ESA, restrictions to state wildlife management activities on federal lands, pre-emption of state regulations on federal lands, and establishment of new federally lead planning initiatives such as Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) that cover state lands – to name a few. The division has allocated resources to protect our traditional role as the principle wildlife manager and is challenging unjustified incursions into our traditional authorities and roles.

Endangered Species

The listing of species as threatened or endangered under the federal ESA and associated designations of critical habitat, when unjustified, can have significant and unnecessary adverse economic impacts on Alaska. The division will continue to collect information on species targeted for listing to ensure that species or habitats are not unnecessarily listed or designated under the federal act. The division also supports legal challenges to unjustified listings or habitat designations. The division also focuses on recovery of listed species with the goal of delisting these species.

Ensuring Responsible Resource Development

The division's ability to maintain sustained yields of wildlife is directly related to the ability of Alaska's land and water resources to support these populations. Alaska has an excellent track record of responsible resource development. To ensure this track record continues it will be important to bring scientifically credible information to inform resource development activities. Towards this end, the division works closely with development interests and other agencies to effectively identify and mitigate possible effects of development. We are currently developing a GIS information database that can inform proposed resource development activities.

Science Based Management

The backbone of our management program is our research program. Understanding this, the division has recently adopted a new research policy and is working towards the implementation of an operational planning policy. It is hoped that this effort will improve the integrity and credibility of our research and management programs.

Dual Management

The federal assertion of management authorities for subsistence hunting on federal lands continues to have major impacts on the management of wildlife in Alaska. The division continues to work to address resource management and allocation conflicts between state and federal managers.

Increased Urban Human-Wildlife Conflicts

As Alaska's cities have grown and expanded into previously unaltered wildlife habitat, conflicts between humans and wildlife have increased. Most notable are human conflicts with bears and moose, particularly in Alaska's large urban areas. During the summer of 2012, four bear mauling events were documented in Anchorage. We are increasing our focus on public safety as an element of our wildlife management objectives.

Funding Diversity and Matching Funds for Federal Funding Sources

The division's primary source of federal funding is the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration (PR) program. Revenue for PR is derived from excise taxes on arms and ammunition; pistols, handguns, and revolvers; bows and archery equipment; and arrow components. Revenues to this fund have increased over the past several years based largely on increased sales of guns and ammunition nationwide. Our primary funding to match these federal funds is revenues from the Fish and Game Fund, which are derived from the sale of hunting and trapping licenses to residents and non-residents, special permits, and tag fees. If the current trend of stable revenue into the Fish and Game Fund continues and the PR fund begins to grow, the division will have a problem meeting the minimum match requirements for this federal match program.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2014

Spending authority increases of \$2 million federal and \$500.0 general funds will allow the division to enhance field research activities toward harvest management and population assessment objectives in FY2014. A stronger emphasis on science based management and internal review of research objectives will be highlighted and science staffing for biometric review and accountability will be enhanced.

Contact Information
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**Wildlife Conservation
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2012 Actuals				FY2013 Management Plan				FY2014 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
Formula Expenditures None.												
Non-Formula Expenditures												
Wildlife Conservation	6,808.7	7,433.8	14,943.7	29,186.2	7,094.0	8,739.6	16,066.3	31,899.9	7,503.0	8,832.0	18,066.3	34,401.3
WC Special Projects	915.5	1,479.6	6,530.1	8,925.2	1,189.7	2,245.8	8,605.7	12,041.2	944.7	2,245.8	8,605.7	11,796.2
Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	295.7	436.7	0.0	732.4	303.9	483.3	0.0	787.2	0.0	787.2	0.0	787.2
Totals	8,019.9	9,350.1	21,473.8	38,843.8	8,587.6	11,468.7	24,672.0	44,728.3	8,447.7	11,865.0	26,672.0	46,984.7

Wildlife Conservation
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2013 Management Plan to FY2014 Governor

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>Unrestricted Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2013 Management Plan	8,191.3	396.3	11,468.7	24,672.0	44,728.3
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:					
-Wildlife Conservation	-508.6	-92.4	92.4	0.0	-508.6
-WC Special Projects	-245.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-245.0
-Hunter Ed Public Shooting Ranges	0.0	-303.9	303.9	0.0	0.0
Proposed budget increases:					
-Wildlife Conservation	1,010.0	0.0	0.0	2,000.0	3,010.0
FY2014 Governor	8,447.7	0.0	11,865.0	26,672.0	46,984.7