

Wildlife Management, Research and Hunting Access

FY2016 Request: \$11,750,000

Reference No: 60594

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Research / Studies / Planning

Category: Natural Resources

Location: Statewide

House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)

Contact: Doug Vincent-Lang

Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2015 - 06/30/2020

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Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

The department proposes a multi-year appropriation approach to designate significant short-term investments in the wildlife management infrastructure to use a dramatic increase in available federal Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration funding. The multi-year appropriation will enable the department to plan for targeted wildlife management, mapping, and hunter access improvements.

Funding:	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	Total
Fed Rcpts	\$11,250,000						\$11,250,000
G/F Match	\$500,000						\$500,000
Total:	\$11,750,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$11,750,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input 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:

- 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

The department will create grant agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Wildlife Restoration program. The following program guidelines authorize this project initiative: restore and manage wildlife for the benefit of the public; build structures or acquire equipment, goods, and services to provide public access for hunting or other wildlife-oriented recreation; obtain data to guide and direct the regulation of hunting.

Project Description/Justification:

The department has been apportioned a significant increase in federal funding from the Pittman-Robertson (PR) program. There are two subprograms within PR, Wildlife Restoration and Hunter Education. The Wildlife Restoration subprogram is primarily used to restore and manage wildlife for the benefit of the public. It cannot be used for hunter education or for shooting ranges; the Hunter Education subprogram is available for those programs. Alaska receives funding through a formula based on land mass and the number of hunting license holders. Due to the geographic size alone, Alaska receives the maximum of five percent of the yearly gross receipts for Wildlife

Restoration. The Wildlife Restoration subprogram, 20 to 25 times larger than Hunter Education, derives its receipts from federal excise taxes on the manufacture of handguns, long guns, ammunition, and archery equipment. For long guns and ammunition, 100 percent of the national gross receipts are set aside for this program and 50 percent from handguns and archery equipment. Sales nationwide on these items increased dramatically over the past twelve to fifteen months and consistently over the past seven years. Over seven years the program has increased nationwide by over 230 percent. A 25 percent match is required from non-federal sources to access funds and the division must obligate and expend additional funding as it becomes available.

This appropriation does not request the full required match. The general fund match included will be used to initially launch federal grant agreements. Pursuit of other sources of non-federal funding will be required to meet federal grant management guidelines (75 federal / 25 match).

Hunter Access

Limited access to hunting grounds results in crowding in accessible areas and has been identified as a constraint to new participation in hunting. An emphasis on access will construct new or improve existing hunter access across Alaska. The department of Fish and Game will partner with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to improve existing and establish new access on state and where possible, federal and private lands. Project priorities will be identified using an existing state work group informed by a department white paper. The Department of Fish and Game may also evaluate hunter access opportunities on State Game Refuges such as Palmer Hay Flats and Goose Bay.

Sheep Management Plan

Sheep provide world class guided and non-guided hunting opportunities across Alaska. In recent years, sheep management has grown increasingly controversial and users and the Board of Game have identified a need to develop a statewide approach to management of this species. This appropriation will be used to support a Board of Game named user group to develop a statewide sheep management plan to address these issues and needs. Field studies into sheep populations are also needed in select areas of the state as populations have declined for unknown reasons.

Wildlife Surveys, Research and Genetics

The department has noted that increasingly, federal agencies are completely dropping or reducing their contribution to baseline wildlife surveys across our state, instead redirecting their funds into landscape planning efforts. This is leaving significant gaps in division research efforts. This appropriation would enable the state to fund these surveys and replace lost federal resources no longer spent in partnership. Target species include moose, caribou, wolves, bears, elk, deer, and waterfowl. The appropriation will launch a startup for a wildlife genetics program. New developments in the genetics field show promise in the area of population delineation and assessment.

Data Systems for Wildlife Management

The Division of Wildlife Conservation relies on the data management system WINFONET. This system contains the primary data and processes in support of wildlife management in the division. A systematic effort is needed to evaluate the system for upgrade, replacement, or enhancement.

Digital Mapping

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to work on a statewide digital elevation map through the Alaska Geospatial Council. The Division of Wildlife Conservation anticipates a benefit from the maps for use in wildlife management. Participation by the Division will insure that they are tailored for wildlife purposes.

Land Acquisition

The acquisition of land is possible through the Wildlife Restoration program. If parcels become available that will enhance hunter access or the preservation of wildlife habitats, purchasing of parcels could be pursued.