



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Fish and Game

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February 5, 2025

The Honorable Nellie Unangiq Jimmie
House of Representatives
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 513
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Response to Questions on ADF&G's FY2026 Budget Overview

Dear Representative Jimmie:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supplemental information on the Department of Fish & Game's (ADF&G) FY2026 Budget Overview presentation to the House Fish & Game Finance Subcommittee on January 28, 2025. Please find the requests and corresponding responses below. All dollars are in the thousands.

1. Provide the number of aircraft and pilots and locations as well as maintenance costs.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) has ten aircraft: four in Fairbanks (two of which are used statewide), two in Nome, two in Kotzebue, one in McGrath, and one located regionally between Tok, Fairbanks, and McGrath. The DWC has eight staff that are licensed pilots, including Fish & Game Coordinators and Wildlife Biologists. Three of these staff are located in Fairbanks, one in Tok, one in McGrath, two in Kotzebue, and one in Nome. The maintenance work is contracted out, and the costs for aircraft maintenance the last five fiscal years are estimated at an average of \$210.5 with \$296.5 in FY2024, \$185.8 in FY2023, \$141.2 in FY2022, \$165.5 in FY2021, and \$263.3 in FY2020.

The Division of Commercial Fisheries (DCF) has five aircraft, all of which are located in Kodiak. The DCF has two designated aircraft pilot positions, both of which are based in Kodiak. The maintenance work is performed in-house by the DCF pilots. The costs for aircraft maintenance, including both operating expenditures and deferred maintenance, for the last five fiscal years are estimated at an average of \$56.8 with \$47.7 in FY2024, \$19.6 in FY2023, \$137.1 in FY2022, \$9.7 in FY2021, and \$69.8 in FY2020.

2. Provide data on the number of staff leaving and reasons.

The ADF&G faces unique recruitment and retention challenges for skilled and highly specialized staff across various roles, from analysts and programmers to biologists and biometricians to our IT and administrative staff. Employees that leave state service have the option to complete an

exit survey, and 117 employees completed a survey between June 2023 to January 2025. Below is a summary of the information, and Attachment 1 includes charts with an analysis of the data.

Most of the staff that completed the exit survey were part-time seasonal positions. Turnover in these positions is expected, and the feedback was generally positive. Other comments referenced moving out of state, social challenges in a rural area, transferring to another state agency, and retirement and health benefits as the reasons for leaving employment. Survey respondents in higher-level positions stated private sector and federal jobs have increased earnings potential and a better benefits package that was more in line with their future needs. Employees that left for non-profit jobs stated the benefits package was worse than the State, but the salary was substantially higher. Additionally, they indicated the work hours were less, which some exiting staff stated compensated for the lower benefits. Except for planned retirements, higher-level positions all stated an increase in pay was a factor and cited non-competitive salaries.

Despite these challenges, the ADF&G has maintained operational continuity due to its dedicated staff taking on extra responsibilities to support wildlife and fisheries management. In addition to continuous improvements to increase efficiency and a respectful work culture, the department has worked to address workload concerns by adding new positions and offering several positions as flex roles (e.g., Wildlife Biologist I/II) to improve flexibility and recruitment efforts. In the FY2025 budget, a total of approximately 20 positions were either added or reclassified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Lang' or similar, with a stylized, cursive script.

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

Attachment

Attachment 1: ADF&G Exit Survey Charts



