



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Fish and Game

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March 3, 2025

The Honorable Nellie Unangiq Jimmie
Chair, House Finance Fish and Game Subcommittee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 513
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Jimmie:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supplemental information on the Department of Fish & Game's (ADF&G), Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) FY2026 Budget Overview presentation to the House Fish & Game Finance Subcommittee on February 20, 2025. Please find the requests and corresponding responses below. All dollars are in the thousands.

- 1. On the table on page 9 for FY2024/FY2025, there is a difference between federal apportionment and federal obligation. Does this mean the State is not meeting the match and reverting Pittman-Robertson funds?**

No, the DWC is fully matching Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds with Fish and Game funds and third-party match such as volunteers. The apportionment is how much the Federal government gives ADF&G each year, and the federal obligations are how much we have obligated of the apportionments in the form of the federal grants.

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024, \$0.07 was reverted on a grant that was obligated pre-COVID due to low safety margin in FY2020. However, sufficient safety margins exist in FFY2021-2025 to ensure no federal funds are reverted.

- 2. What are some examples of the grant programs that will draw down the surplus Fish and Game funds?**

Examples of grants, programs, and projects that will utilize PR funds and will draw from the Fish and Game funds as the State's required match are provided in Attachment 1.

- 3. What is in the FY2026 budget for the threatened and endangered species and marine mammals programs?**

The estimated FY2026 operating budget for the Threatened and Endangered Species program is \$2,381.4 and the amount estimated for the Marine Mammals program is \$1,893.7.

4. Can you provide and update on the Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing (not a budget question)?

Attachment 2 is an update on the petition to list Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon under the ESA.

5. What are the estimated expenditures for intensive management in FY2025 and what is in the budget for intensive management for FY2026?

The FY2025 budget for intensive management (IM) is \$3,606.7. Current FY2025 IM expenditures are \$1,283.0. The FY2026 budget will be approximately the same as the FY2025 budget with an anticipated four to five percent increase because of personnel costs.

It's important to note that AS 16.05.340(k) establishes an IM surcharge on all hunting licenses for the purpose of providing funding for the IM of the State's game populations under AS 16.05.255(e). The funds accruing to the State from this surcharge are deposited into the Sustainable Wildlife Account under AS 16.05.130(g) for IM programs that are intended to sustain and enhance big game prey populations. The revenue generated from the surcharge and some fish and game funds is the primary fund source for all predation control IM activities. Pittman-Robertson funds are the primary source of funding for IM surveys and research (monitoring the status of predator and prey populations). Pittman-Robertson funding cannot be used for the predation control aspect of intensive management.

6. How many planes does the division have, are they shared with other divisions, where are they located, how many hours are flown a year (if it is known), and can you provide some examples of how the division uses the planes? Survey work, intensive management, etc.?

The DWC has 11 airplanes. Nine are currently being flown regularly and frequently during core, day-to-day operations. One is being rebuilt and will re-enter day-to-day operations in Region 3 once the rebuild is complete. This aircraft will be used out of the Tok, Fairbanks, and McGrath offices. The eleventh airplane is currently in storage awaiting a rebuild. These 11 airplanes are not shared with other divisions.

Locations of aircraft:

- Three are in Fairbanks (Region 3: Interior and Eastern Arctic)
- One is in McGrath (Region 3: Interior and Eastern Arctic)
- One is in Palmer (Region 4: Central-Southwest Alaska)
- Two are in Nome (Region 5: Northwest Arctic-Western Alaska)
- Two are in Kotzebue (Region 5: Northwest Arctic-Western Alaska)
- One is currently being rebuilt in Fairbanks
- One is in Palmer in storage

The annual average number of hours of use for each of DWC's aircraft is 200 hours (except the one in storage awaiting a rebuild).

Examples of how the division uses the planes:

- Aerial survey of wildlife, including two aircraft outfitted with specialized digital camera systems for caribou and bison photocensus
- Radiotracking wildlife fitted with radio collars
- Transport of DWC personnel, gear, supplies, and equipment to remote field work sites
- Transport of DWC personnel to rural communities for meetings and outreach

Some of these aircraft are used for operational support of IM predation control activities such as tracking and transport of supplies. The aircraft are also used in IM surveys (data collection) and IM research.

Sincerely,



Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

Enclosure

cc: Lacey Sanders, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office

Chair Jimmie

Attachment 1: Response to Questions on the DWC's FY2026 Budget Overview

March 3, 2025

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Attachment 1: Examples of Pittman-Robertson Projects Using Fish and Game Fund Match

Unit (region)	Project Name
Access & Defense	Southwest MatSu Moose Range Wendt Rd Trailhead & Parking lot
Access & Defense	Southwest Saltery Cove Rd Trail Access
Access & Defense	Southwest Fairbanks NorthStar Borough Shooting Range Education and Safety Improvements
Access & Defense	Southwest Fish and Wildlife Service Hunter Information & Delivery System
Education	Southwest Wildlife Education
Region 1	Estimate Abundance of Sitka Black Tailed Deer
Region 1	Petersburg Mountain Goat Management Survey & Inventory
Region 2	Kenai Moose Management Survey & Inventory Intensive Management Game Management Units 15A/15C
Region 2	Elk Management Survey & Inventory
Region 2	Kodiak Brown Bear Management Survey & Inventory
Region 3	Photocensus Survey Research & Maintenance
Region 3	Moose Demography Game Management Unit 20
Region 3	Bison Plains Management Survey & Inventory
Region 3	Northeast AK Caribou Management Survey & Inventory
Region 3	Tok Sheep Management Survey & Inventory
Region 3	Aircraft Support
Region 3	Laboratory Operating Cost
Region 3	Geographic Information Systems Support
Region 4	Nelchina Caribou Range Assessment
Region 5	Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Region 5	Bethel Muskox Management Survey & Inventory
Region 5	Barrow Teshekpuk Caribou Management Survey & Inventory
Region 5	Staff Training
Special Areas	Southwest Special Areas McNeil River State Game Sanctuary
Veterinary	Wildlife Health/Disease Surveillance
Waterfowl	Statewide Migratory Game Bird Research



Update on the Petition to List Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon under the Endangered Species Act

February 25, 2025

On January 11, 2024, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) received a petition to list all Gulf of Alaska Chinook salmon as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and designate critical habitat. This is a massive area that includes Chinook that spawn in the rivers of Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and the Alaska Peninsula.

The petition was filed by the Wild Fish Conservancy -- a Washington-based environmental group and the same group that sued NMFS to shut down the Southeast Alaska commercial troll "hook and line" fishery.

On May 24, NMFS issued what's called a positive 90-Day finding. The positive finding indicates that NMFS believes the petition provides substantial information that an ESA listing for these Chinook stocks may be warranted. The positive finding started a formal status review under the ESA. The result of the status review will be a decision on whether to list any or all GOA Chinook stocks as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

Present Situation

Currently, NMFS is in the status review stage which is statutorily required to be completed within one year. NMFS did not meet the January 11, 2025, deadline, and the Wild Fish Conservancy has sent NMFS a notice of intent to sue. We are unclear when the status review will be published given that it is a federal document but anticipate sometime this spring.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Next Steps

The State is taking this very seriously and has been investing substantial resources. We provided over 200 pages of perspective and the best available science. As we have all the data and the management expertise, we were able to get two of our best scientists on the status review team. However, the state experts are non-voting members and cannot write a minority opinion. Once the status review is complete, ADF&G will conduct a thorough review and provide comments on behalf of the state. ADF&G will continue to update the legislature and the public as this process unfolds.