

Wildlife Management, Research and Hunting Access**FY2021 Request: \$15,000,000****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:** Eddie Grasser**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2020 - 06/30/2025**Contact Phone:** (907)267-2339**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

This project designates significant short-term investments into the wildlife management infrastructure to be able to utilize the increase of available federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funding. The project enables the department to plan for targeted wildlife management, research, equipment, and hunter access improvements.

Funding:	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	Total
1002 Fed Rcpts	\$11,250,000						\$11,250,000
1024 Fish/Game	\$1,250,000						\$1,250,000
1108 Stat Desig	\$2,500,000						\$2,500,000
Total:	\$15,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$15,000,000

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-Going
25% = 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	
Totals:	0	0

Prior Funding History / Additional Information:

Sec1 Ch3 SLA2019 P4 L16 SB19 \$3,200,000
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 Sec1 Ch82 SLA2006 P70 L29 SB 231 \$1,600,000

Past capital project reference numbers include FY2015 - 58645, FY2012 - 53833 & 41452, FY2008 - 43393, and FY2007 - 42114.

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 several years.

A 25 percent match is required from non-federal sources. Fish & Game Fund will be used as match, and the department will accept applications from other non-federal sources to meet the federal grant management guidelines of 25 percent match to receive 75 percent federal funding.

To fully obligate the increased federal dollars, this project will use the funds to help prevent reversion of the federal dollars apportioned to the State. This project will also continue to fulfill commitments made to the constituent groups who successfully lobbied for increased hunting license and tag fees.

Hunter Access – \$10 million (\$7.5M Federal, \$2.5M Statutorily Designated Program Receipts): Limited access to hunting grounds results in crowding in accessible areas and has been identified as a constraint to new participation in hunting. Focused use of trails, including legal easements through native corporation lands, can also result in degraded fish and wildlife habitat. This project will construct new or improve existing hunter access across Alaska including land purchases and/or public access easements as necessary. The department will partner with State and local agencies and organizations to improve existing and establish new access on public lands.

Projects will be identified through the process outlined at the department's Hunter Access Grant Program website (www.hunteraccess.adfg.alaska.gov).

Because Pittman-Robertson funds can be dedicated to trail and access improvements for hunting, these projects and others around the state have and will continue to provide an opportunity to use the currently available federal dollars to enhance public hunting access for Alaskans.

Research and Management – \$5 million (\$3.75M Federal, \$1.25M Fish and Game Fund): Effective management of wildlife populations is needed to maximize opportunities for the harvest of big game that puts food on the tables of Alaskans and provides a livelihood for wildlife-dependent businesses. Any difficulties in accurately determining the number of big game animals on the landscape forces conservative management to ensure harvest is sustainable. Despite confidence in the sustainability of our management approach, for example, the lack of accurate population data has led outside entities to suggest the State is too aggressive with its management of bears and wolves. Fortunately, technological and other advances can be used to develop new survey techniques that will provide better information to inform management that better maximizes harvest opportunities and demonstrates its sustainability.

This project will provide funds that will be used to address immediate conservation and management needs and/or to take advantage of unforeseen or time-sensitive opportunities that would benefit Alaskans and their wildlife resources. Examples include wildlife health surveillance due to discovery of a potential disease risk; opportunities for habitat manipulations when proper conditions (wetter or drier landscape; lingering or accelerated snowmelt, etc.) occur; discovery of change in number and/or distribution of wildlife populations that warrant additional survey efforts; and discovery of decrease in fitness and condition of wildlife, particularly caribou, deer, and moose, that would warrant immediate investigations of nutritional health to ward off mortality events that would lead to a decrease in harvest opportunity. Also, the offer of collaborations can become available at random times and this project would provide funds to allow the department to take advantage of extra-agency resources to engage in investigations and management activities (for example, prescribed fire to generate moose forage; genetic investigations that will help inform harvestable surplus of populations; and in-kind resource matches that allow for radio collar purchases or to increase aerial survey effort) that might otherwise not have the amount of funding needed to accomplish. Ultimately, the ability to address immediate and opportunistic conservation and management leads to an increased ability to maximize sustained harvest of game populations for Alaskans.

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Project Description/Justification:

Due to strong gun and ammunition sales nationally, the federal excise taxes collected on those products have been at all-time highs in recent years. Those federal taxes for wildlife conservation are

distributed to states and Alaska receives the maximum apportionment. To fully obligate those increased federal dollars, this project will use those funds and will prevent their reversion. It will also continue to fulfill commitments made to the constituent groups who successfully lobbied for increased hunting license and tag fees.

Hunter Access – \$10 million (\$7.5M Federal \$2.5M Statutorily Designated Program Receipts): Limited access to hunting grounds results in crowding in accessible areas and has been identified as a constraint to new participation in hunting. Focused use of trails, including legal easements through native corporation lands, can also result in degraded fish and wildlife habitat. This project will construct new or improve existing hunter access across Alaska including land purchases and/or public access easements as necessary. We will partner with the state and local agencies and organizations to improve existing and establish new access on public lands.

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Effective management of wildlife populations is needed to maximize opportunities for the harvest of big game that puts food on the tables of Alaskans and provides a livelihood for wildlife-dependent businesses. Any difficulties in accurately determining the number of big game animals on the landscape forces conservative management to ensure harvest is sustainable. Despite confidence in the sustainability of our management approach, for example, the lack of accurate population data has led outside entities to suggest and attack the State as too aggressive with its management of bears and wolves. Fortunately, technological and other advances can be used to develop new survey techniques that will provide better information to inform management that better maximizes harvest opportunities and demonstrates its sustainability.

This project would provide funds that will be used to address immediate conservation and management needs and/or to take advantage of unforeseen or time-sensitive opportunities that would benefit Alaskans and their wildlife resources. Examples include wildlife health surveillance due to discovery of a potential disease risk; opportunities for habitat manipulations when proper conditions (wetter or drier landscape; lingering or accelerated snowmelt, etc.) occur; discovery of change in number and/or distribution of wildlife populations that warrant additional survey efforts; and discovery of decrease in fitness and condition of wildlife, particularly caribou, deer, and moose, that would warrant immediate investigations of nutritional health to ward off mortality events that would lead to decrease in harvest opportunity. Also, the offer of collaborations can become available at random times and this project would provide funds to allow us to take advantage of extra-agency resources to engage in investigations and management activities (e.g., prescribed fire to generate moose forage; genetic investigations that will help inform harvestable surplus of populations; in-kind resource matches that allow us to purchase radio collars or to increase aerial survey effort) that we might otherwise not have the amount of funding needed to accomplish. Ultimately, the ability to address

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