

**Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project
(FERC No. 14241)**

**Small Mammal Species Composition and Habitat Use
Study Plan Section 10.12**

**Initial Study Report
Part C: Executive Summary and Section 7**

Prepared for
Alaska Energy Authority



Prepared by
ABR, Inc.—Environmental Research & Services
Fairbanks, Alaska

June 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	ii
7. Completing the Study	1
7.1. Proposed Methodologies and Modifications	1
7.1.1. Decision Points from Study Plan	1
7.1.2. Modifications to Study Plan.....	1
7.2. Schedule	1
7.3. Conclusion	2
7.4. Figures.....	2

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 7.1-1. Revised study area for small mammals, showing the Denali East Corridor Option added in 2014.....	3
--	---

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISR 10.12 — Small Mammal Species Composition and Habitat Use	
Purpose	The purpose of this office-based analysis is to review and synthesize available information on the occurrence and relative abundance of small mammals in the Project area by describing the species of small mammals known to occur in the Project area and their patterns of habitat use.
Status	This study was rescheduled for implementation during 2015.
Study Components	Information on small mammals in the Project area will be compiled and synthesized from the available literature, including the extensive small mammal survey data collected in the 1980s for the Alaska Power Authority (APA) Project. Information synthesis will be used to assess the use and relative importance of wildlife habitats (see RSP Section 10.19).
2013 Variances	The study was deferred until 2015 rather than being implemented primarily in 2013, as proposed in RSP Sections 10.12.6 and 10.12.10. This study will be informed by the data from the Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Mapping Study in the Upper and Middle Susitna Basin 11.5, as described in RSP Section 10.12.4. AEA will meet the study objectives completing the entire study in one study season.
Steps to Complete the Study	<p>To complete this study, AEA will implement the methods in the Study Plan (RSP Section 10.12.4), summarized as follows: (1) review, analysis and synthesis of existing data on the occurrence and relative abundance of small mammal species, (2) incorporation of additional information on abundance and habitat use by snowshoe hares and voles from the Terrestrial Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use Study (Study 10.10), and (3) application of this synthesis to the wildlife habitat types mapped by the Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Mapping Study in the Upper and Middle Susitna Basin (Study 11.5) and inclusion in the ranking of habitat values that will be the principal analytical product of the Evaluation of Wildlife Habitat Use (Study 10.19).</p> <p>No modifications to the Study Plan methods are needed to complete the study and meet the Study Plan objectives. However, the study area has been changed from that described in the RSP (Section 10.12.3). As described in the ISR Overview, AEA has added the Denali East Option (road and transmission line alternative corridor) to the study area.</p>
Highlighted Results and Achievements	No results specific to this study have been obtained as of this ISR.

7. COMPLETING THE STUDY

7.1. Proposed Methodologies and Modifications

To complete this study, AEA will implement the methods in the Study Plan except as described in Section 7.1.2. These activities include the following, as described in RSP Section 10.12.4:

- Review, compile, and synthesize data on the occurrence and relative abundance of small mammal species captured and analyzed in the APA Project studies in the 1980s, as well as in other, more recent studies conducted in southcentral Alaska;
- Additional information on abundance and habitat use by snowshoe hares and voles will be incorporated from the Terrestrial Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use Study (Study 10.10);
- Information from this synthesis will be applied to the wildlife habitat types mapped by the Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Mapping Study in the Upper and Middle Susitna Basin (Study 11.5) and will be included in the ranking of habitat values that will be the principal analytical product of the Evaluation of Wildlife Habitat Use (Study 10.19).

7.1.1. Decision Points from Study Plan

There were no decision points in the FERC-approved Study Plan to be evaluated for this study following the completion of the 2013 work.

7.1.2. Modifications to Study Plan

No modifications to the FERC-approved Study Plan are needed to complete the study and meet Study Plan objectives. However, the study area has been changed from that described in the RSP (Section 10.12.3). As described in the ISR Overview, AEA has added the Denali East Option road and transmission line alternative corridor to the study area. The modified study area showing the Denali East Option is depicted in Figure 7.1-1.

7.2. Schedule

In general, the schedule for completing the FERC-approved Study Plan depends on several factors, including Project funding levels authorized by the Alaska State Legislature, availability of required data inputs from one individual study to another, unexpected weather delays, the short duration of the summer field season in Alaska, and other events outside the reasonable control of AEA. For these reasons, the Study Plan implementation schedule is subject to change, although at this time AEA expects to complete the FERC-approved Study Plan through the filing of the Updated Study Report (USR) by February 1, 2016, in accordance with the ILP schedule issued by FERC on January 28, 2014.

With regard to this specific study, is not proposing any efforts in 2014. AEA plans to complete all methods for this study in 2015, which will be reported in the USR.

7.3. Conclusion

Implementation of the Small Mammal Species Composition and Habitat Use Study is planned for 2015, with an expanded study area that includes the Denali East Option road and transmission line alternative corridor. This study is interrelated with the Terrestrial Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use Study (Study 10.10), Aquatic Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use Study (Study 10.11), Surveys of Eagles and Other Raptors (Study 10.14), Evaluation of Wildlife Habitat Use Study (Study 10.19), and Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Mapping Study in the Upper and Middle Susitna Basin (Study 11.5). AEA expects the approved Study Plan objectives for all these studies will be fully achieved with this study, as AEA proposes no changes to the FERC-approved methods for this study. The results of this study will be reported in the USR.

7.4. Figures

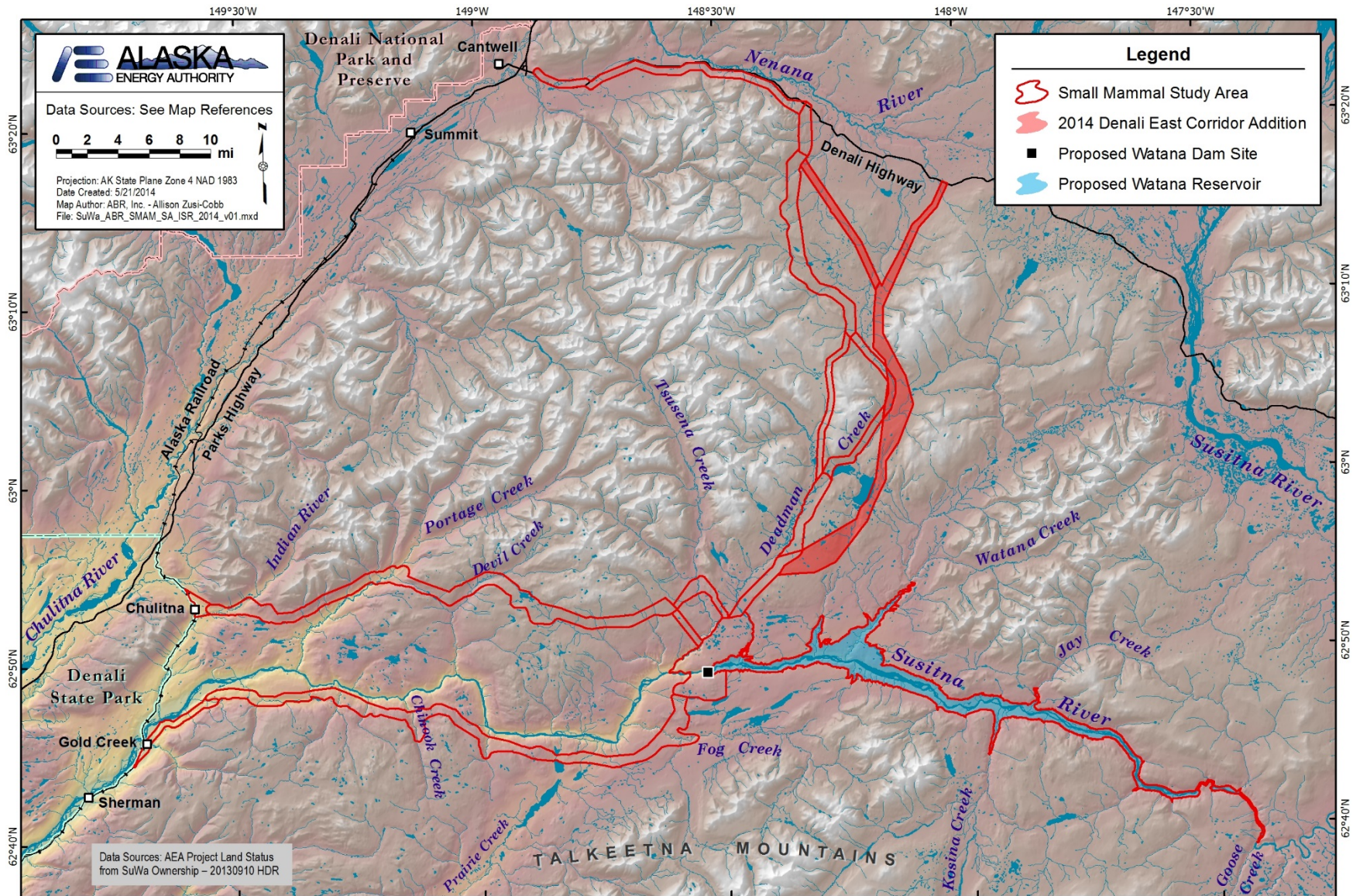


Figure 7.1-1. Revised study area for small mammals, showing the Denali East Corridor Option added in 2014.