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

# Wildlife Harvest Analysis
# Study Plan Section 10.20

# Initial Study Report
# Part A: Sections 1-6, 8-9

Prepared for

Alaska Energy Authority

SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO

*Clean, reliable energy for the next 100 years.*

Prepared by

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND DEFINITIONS

| Abbreviation | Definition |
|---|---|
| ADF&G | Alaska Department of Fish and Game |
| AEA | Alaska Energy Authority |
| FERC | Federal Energy Regulatory Commission |
| ILP | Integrated Licensing Process |
| RSP | Revised Study Plan |
| USFWS | DOI, Fish and Wildlife Service |

# 1. INTRODUCTION

On December 14, 2012, Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) its Revised Study Plan (RSP) for the Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project No. 14241 (Project), which included 58 individual study plans (AEA 2012). Section 10.20 of the RSP described the Wildlife Harvest Analysis Study. This office-based study focuses on characterizing past and current hunter effort and harvest levels in the region of the proposed Project by summarizing and analyzing data from the ADF&G harvest database for Alaska, which also includes some harvest data from subsistence users reported to USFWS. The study includes large mammals and furbearers, as well as small mammals and upland gamebirds. RSP 10.20 provided goals, objectives, and proposed methods for data collection regarding wildlife harvest.

On February 1, 2013, FERC staff issued its study determination (February 1 SPD) for 44 of the 58 studies, approving 31 studies as filed and 13 with modifications. RSP Section 10.20 was one of the 31 studies approved with no modifications.

Following the first study season, FERC's regulations for the Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) require AEA to "prepare and file with the Commission an initial study report describing its overall progress in implementing the study plan and schedule and the data collected, including an explanation of any variance from the study plan and schedule." (18 CFR 5.15(c)(1)) This Initial Study Report on Wildlife Harvest Analysis has been prepared in accordance with FERC's ILP regulations and details AEA's status in implementing the study, as set forth in the FERC-approved RSP (referred to herein as the "Study Plan").

# 2. STUDY OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study is to compile and analyze information on the distribution of big game, furbearers, and small game (including both small mammals and upland gamebirds, assuming data are available) and to understand patterns of hunting effort and harvest in the study area. These data will provide information on identification of past and current trends in hunter access modes, hunting locations, and harvest locations, and identify potential Project-induced changes that are likely to alter hunter access or harvest patterns. These findings will help predict the impacts of those changes on wildlife harvests. This study is a multi-year effort that began in 2012 (AEA 2012).

Specifically, this study has three primary objectives:

- Identify past and current harvest effort for large and small game including furbearers, harvest locations, access modes and routes.
- Compare current harvest locations of large and small game, including furbearers, with data on the seasonal distribution, abundance, and movements of harvested species, using the results of other, concurrent Project studies on big game and furbearers (Sections 10.5–10.11).

- Provide harvest data for use in the analyses to be conducted for the recreation and subsistence resource studies (Sections 12.5 and 14.5, respectively).

The information developed in this study will be used to help develop any necessary measures to address Project impacts on hunting opportunities, hunter distribution, and impacts to game species abundance.

## 3. STUDY AREA

As established by RSP Section 10.20.3, the study area includes GMU Subunits 13A, 13B, 13E, 14B, 16A, and portions of 20A (Figure 3-1).

## 4. METHODS AND VARIANCES IN 2013

This Study Plan was not implemented in 2013. The study will be fully completed in the next study season. Deferring the entire study to the next study season will meet the Study Plan objectives by consolidating into a single effort the same methods that the Study Plan contemplated to be completed in two separate iterations.

## 5. RESULTS

There are no results to report for this study.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The study team summarized and analyzed existing wildlife harvest data from ADF&G and USFWS in 2012 for the period 2003–2011 (Prichard et al. 2013). Instead of transferring 2012 harvest and subsistence data from ADF&G and USFWS in 2013, and then repeating the transfer process for 2013 harvest and subsistence in the next study season, AEA will consolidate this as a single transfer process during the next study season. This approach has the benefit of making more efficient an otherwise iterative process. This approach will meet study objectives by compiling the data received from those agencies during the entire study process into the Project-specific geodatabase for summary and analysis in the Updated Study Report.

## 7. COMPLETING THE STUDY

[Section 7 appears in the Part C section of this ISR.]

# 8. LITERATURE CITED

ADF&G (Alaska Department of Fish and Game). 1971. Inventory and cataloging of Kenai Peninsula, Cook Inlet, and Prince William Sound drainages and fish stocks. *Sport Fish Investigations of Alaska*. Volume 12. Report No. G-I-C.

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# 9. FIGURES

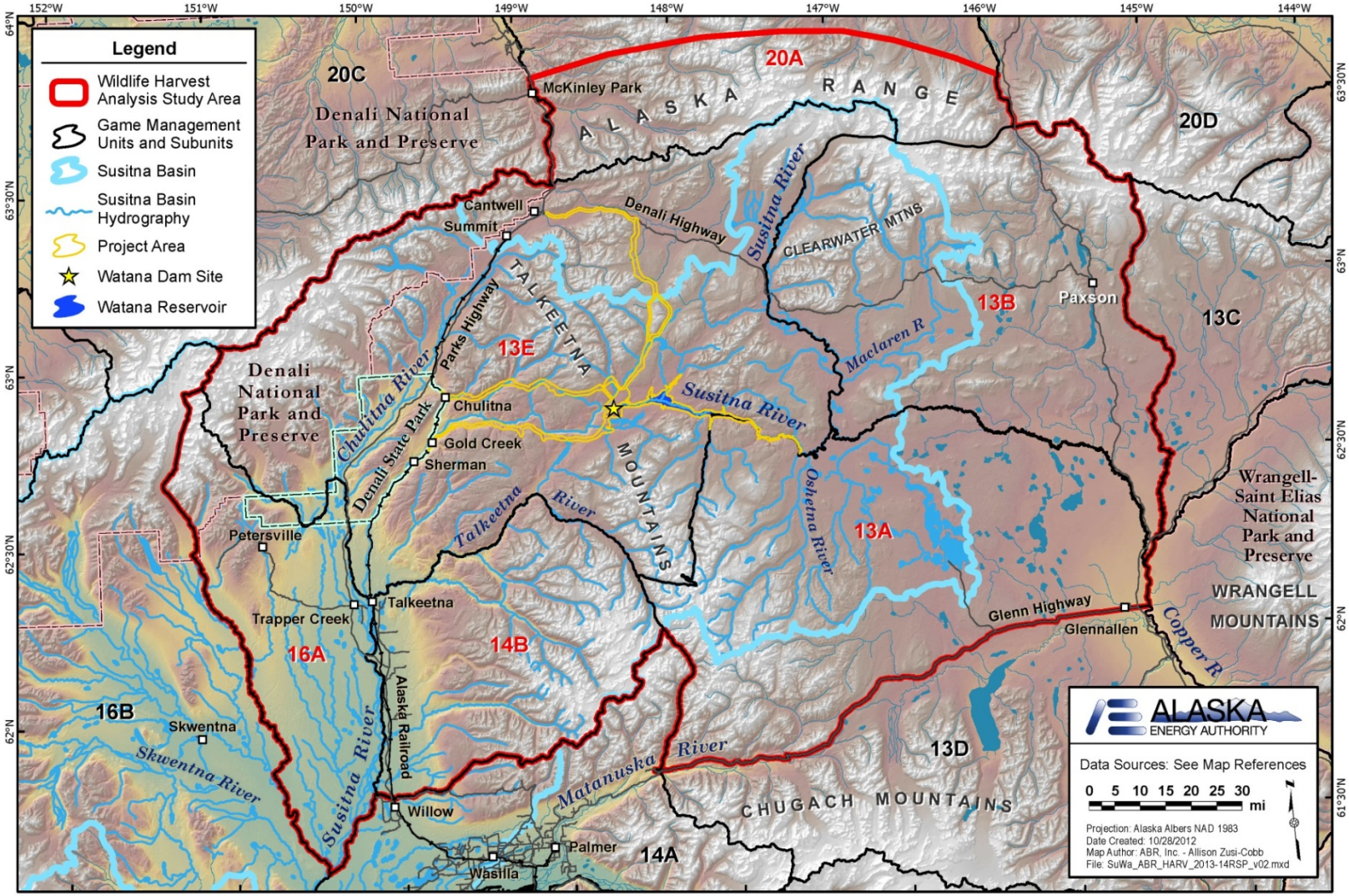


**Figure 3-1. Study area for the Wildlife Harvest Analysis.**