



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges
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Agency Report to:

Bristol Bay Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Public Meeting, Dillingham, Alaska
October 28-29, 2026

Fisheries Projects

Project: Big Creek Salmon Weir

From 2027 through 2031, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will operate a resistance-board weir on Big Creek, approximately 20 miles upstream from its confluence with the Naknek River. Salmon are important subsistence, commercial, and sport resources in Bristol Bay, and accurate escapement estimates are needed to conserve declining Chinook, chum, and coho stocks in the Naknek River. In June 2026, Alaska Peninsula–Becharof National Wildlife Refuge and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish biologists from the Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office began constructing the Big Creek salmon weir. Weir components were transported from Soldotna and Bethel to King Salmon, and we finalized the site selection and initiated camp construction. The weir will be installed in a V formation to direct upstream-migrating fish into a trap box and video passage chute and will operate annually from June 15 through October 15 for the next 5-years. Our objectives for the Big Creek weir are to enumerate escapement of Chinook, chum, pink, coho, and sockeye; describe run timing for all species; estimate the weekly age and sex composition of spawning salmon; and estimate the mean length of all salmon species by sex and age. The Refuge will conduct outreach to identify opportunities for community members to visit and participate in weir operations and to inform recreational and subsistence users about the weir's location and the use of a boat passage lane.

For more information on fisheries projects contact: William Smith, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-246-3339; e-mail: william_smith@fws.gov

Mammal Projects

Project: Moose Trend Area Counts

Refuge staff also conducted an aerial moose survey on 8 trend areas within, or proximate to, Alaska Peninsula-Becharof National Wildlife Refuges (Refuge) in Game Management Unit (GMU) 9C and 9E from November 11th - November 26th, 2025. Average moose density was 0.62 moose/mi². The estimated

ratios of bulls, yearling bulls, and calves per 100 cows were 63:100, 11:100, and 30:100 respectively. Refuge staff shared data with ADFG to include in GMU 9 trend area analysis.

For more information on mammal projects contact: Bryce Woodruff, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-246-1204; e-mail: bryce_woodruff@fws.gov

Project: Alaska Hare Surveys

Refuge staff continued efforts last winter to identify areas of Alaska hare (*Lepus othus*) presence. Alaska Peninsula and Becharof NWRs staff collected twenty-six new fecal pellet samples. We are currently awaiting analysis at the lab to positively identify individual Alaska hares. Surveys will continue this winter as conditions allow.

For more information on mammal projects contact: Bryce Woodruff, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-246-1204; e-mail: bryce_woodruff@fws.gov

Project: Moose Twinning Survey (GMUs 9C & 9E)

With assistance from Katmai National Park and Preserve, Alaska Peninsula-Becharof National Wildlife Refuges conducted moose twinning surveys in game management units (GMU) 9C and 9E from May 23rd to May 30th, 2026. We observed 291 adult and yearling moose, including 11 cows with one calf and 32 cows with twins, and 3 cows with triplets (Table 1). We calculated a twinning rate of 76% (90% CI $\pm$ 13%) for the 2026 survey, and a three-year average of 76%. Twinning rates are used as an index for the nutritional condition of cow moose and, therefore, also habitat quality. Our current twinning rate indicates that cow moose are healthy with abundant food sources.

Table 1. Observed moose by survey date during the spring 2026 moose twinning survey for GMU 9C and 9E, Alaska.

		Survey Dates						Total
		5/23/26	5/24/26	5/25/26	5/27/26	5/29/26	5/30/26	
Moose Observed								
	Bulls	24	19	12	17	10	19	101
	Yearling cows	11	11	3	9	1	1	36
	Cows with no calves	28	25	10	13	12	20	108
	Cows with one calf	2	3	0	3	2	1	11
	Cows with two calves	8	4	2	10	3	5	32
	Cows with three calves	1	1	0	0	1	0	3

For more information on mammal projects contact: Bryce Woodruff, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-246-1204; e-mail: bryce_woodruff@fws.gov

Avian Projects

Project: Willow Ptarmigan Density Estimate

In collaboration with Katmai National Park and staffing support from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuges completed two Willow Ptarmigan Density line transect surveys in the Naknek area in May 2026. We detected 9 male ptarmigan on the Ralf's Road transect and 7 male ptarmigan on the Eight Mile transect (Figure 1). Incidental Willow Ptarmigan detections continued to be relatively high across the Alaska Peninsula on other landbird surveys.

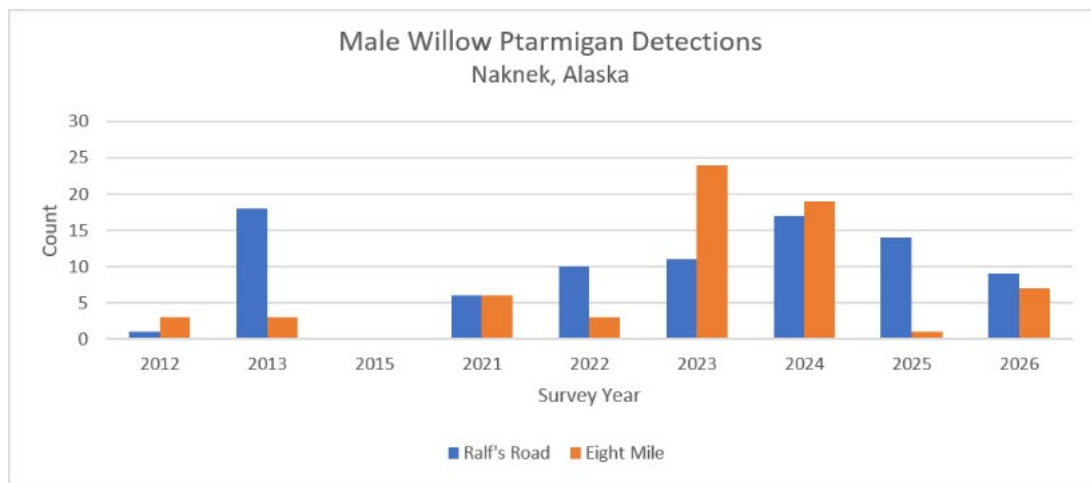


Figure 1. Male Willow Ptarmigan detections on the Ralf's Road (blue) and Eight Mile (orange) 4-km line transects, Naknek, Alaska.

For more information on avian projects contact: Jaime Welfelt, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula and Becharof NWRs, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-782-5000; email: jaime_welfelt@fws.gov