# Comprehensive Data Delivery README FILE

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| **Study Section** | Study 10.11: Aquatic Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use |
| **Study Component** | (not applicable) |
| **Prepared By** | ABR, Inc.—Environmental Research & Services |
| **Data Collection and Processing By** | Alex Prichard & Joseph Welch, ABR, Inc.—Environmental Research & Services, Fairbanks |
| **Field Date Range** | October 1–2, October 9–10, 2013; March 7–8, April 10–11, May 2, September 26–27, October 8–9, December 6–8, 2014; April 29, May 17, 2015; March 17–18, 2016 |

**Introduction:** The overall goal of this data collection effort was to characterize the abundance, and habitat use by aquatic furbearers (beaver, muskrat, river otter, and mink) in areas with the potential to be affected by construction and operation of the proposed Susitna–Watana Hydroelectric Project (Project) in Alaska.

Aquatic Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use (Aquatic Furbearer Study) focused on (1) fall (2013 and 2014) and spring (2014 and 2015) aerial surveys of beaver colonies; (2) spring aerial surveys of muskrat pushups in lakes in the survey area conducted in April and May 2016; and (3) aerial surveys for river otter and mink tracks in the snow. Incidental observations of aquatic furbearers were also compiled from other studies conducted in the Project Area.

The study area for aquatic furbearers varied according to the species being surveyed. Beavers were surveyed in the riparian study area from the reservoir inundation zone downstream to the confluence of the Susitna and Chulitna rivers, as well as in other portions of the Project area. Muskrat surveys were restricted to water bodies and wetland areas in the Project area, including the reservoir inundation zone. In addition to covering all portions of the Project area, winter track and transect surveys for river otters and mink focused on the stream survey area, consisting of the mainstem Susitna River above the dam site and on tributary streams draining into the reservoir inundation zone, as well as on similar river and tributary stretches immediately downstream from the dam site. Stream surveys extended upstream along tributaries at least 3 miles and north/south-oriented transects covered non-riparian areas in this zone.

Fall beaver surveys were conducted on October 1–2 and October 9–10, 2013, and September 26–27 and October 8–9, 2014. Spring beaver surveys were conducted on May 2, 2014, and April 29 and May 17, 2015. Spring aerial surveys of muskrats were conducted on April 26 and May 13, 2016. River otter and mink track surveys were conducted on March 7–8, April 10–11, and December 6–8, 2014, and March 17–18, 2016.

This multi-year study was initiated in 2013 and completed in 2016. The Study Completion Report (SCR) for the study was produced in 2017.

**Data Summary:** Public data for the Aquatic Furbearer Study consist of GIS data layers. All data for the study have undergone a QC3 level of review.

*GIS Data*— The geodatabase contains files for aerial survey areas, aquatic furbearer incidental observation locations, beaver lodge locations and occupancy, muskrat pushup locations, river otter and mink track locations, and river otter hair snare locations.

**Data Organization:**

The GIS data are archived in the GIS subfolder /10-WILD/10.11-AQFUR/GIS, which contains one geodatabase (SuWa\_10\_11\_GIS\_20170630.gdb) containing the feature classes:

* AQFUR\_2012\_2016\_Incid\_Obs
* AQFUR\_2013\_2016\_SA\_Corridors
* AQFUR\_BEAV\_2013\_2015\_LodgeActivity
* AQFUR\_MRAT\_2013\_2016\_Pushups
* AQFUR\_RIOT\_2014\_2016\_AerialSurvStreams
* AQFUR\_RIOT\_2014\_2016\_AerialSurvTransects
* AQFUR\_RIOT\_2014\_2016\_Track\_Segments
* AQFUR\_RIOT\_2014\_2016\_Track\_SnareWpts
* AQFUR\_RIOT\_MINK\_2014\_2016\_SurveyArea

**Online Data Link:** <http://gis.suhydro.org/SuWa/10-WILD/10.11-AQFUR/>

**Online Report Link:** 10.11 Aquatic Furbearer Abundance and Habitat Use – Study Completion Report under 2017; Study Completion and Implementation Reports at <http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/type/documents>

[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. **Data Distributor Contact Information:**

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