

**WARNING:**

The loads shown here are safe only in the guns for which they were developed. Neither the author nor InterMedia Outdoors Inc. assumes any liability for accidents or injury resulting from the use or misuse of this data.

# .50 B&M ALASKAN



Hornady  
300-gr.  
FTX

Swift  
325-gr.  
A-Frame

Cutting Edge  
395-gr. HP

Barnes  
400-gr.  
Buster

Sierra  
400-gr.  
JSP-5M

RCBS  
400-gr.  
Cast

Cutting Edge  
425-gr. CS

North Fork  
450-gr.  
Bonded

Hornady  
500-gr.  
FP-XTF

Available bullets for the .50 B&M Alaskan run from 300 to 500 grains.

## How to get the most from the lever-lover's "Big Fifty."

**D**URING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH GUNSMITH Harry McGowen, I was surprised to learn how popular an old cartridge called the .50 Alaskan is today. Soon after opening his St. Anne, Illinois, shop in 1959, he started making .50-caliber barrels and converting Winchester Model 71s to the cartridge. Then, when the Marlin New Model 1895s and Browning Model 71s came along, he began converting those as well. Despite today's interest in high-velocity cartridges with banjo-string trajectories, McGowen continues to build a couple of rifles each month chambered for this vintage number, the bullet of which moseys along at 1,900 to 2,000 fps.

The .50 Alaskan was the

second of two cartridges designed during the 1950s by gunsmith Harold Johnson of Cooper Landing, Alaska. Both are on the .348 Winchester case. First came the .450 Alaskan, pushing a 400-grain bullet along at 2,000 fps at a chamber pressure level easily handled by the Winchester Model 71. For a time it was popular among brown bear guides who needed a close-range stopper for keeping their clientele healthy. Lever-gun stopping power moved to an even higher level when Johnson necked the .450 Alaskan case on up to .50 caliber. Having no .510-inch bullets on hand, he nibbled away at the 750-grain bullet of the .50 BMG until 450 grains remained. When pushed to maximum speed by "the .50," as Johnson called his creation,

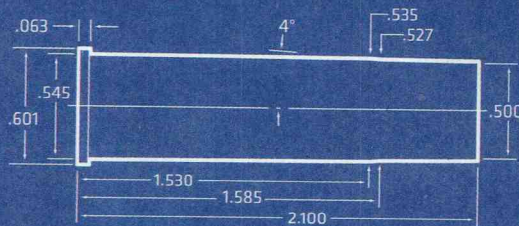
the bullet was good for stem-to-stern penetration on brown bear and moose from about any angle.

The .50 B&M Alaskan is a recent version of Harold Johnson's old cartridge. Created by William Bruton and Michael McCourry, it is the same as the original except it uses .500-inch bullets. The smaller diameter provides the option of using .500 S&W Magnum bullets for practice and for use on deer and such, then switching to tougher bullets

from Cutting Edge and North Fork for larger, tougher game. McCourry has also used the Hornady 500-grain softnose a good bit and considers it big medicine for about anything in North America. The .50 B&M case is easily formed by slightly necking down Starline .50 Alaskan brass. Reloading dies are available from RCBS and Hornady.

The load data shown herein was pressure-tested by Michael McCourry and chronographed by me in two

### .50 B&M ALASKAN





Converted by SSK Industries, the author's Marlin 1895 wears a Weaver V3 scope attached to an SSK/T'SOB base with Warne quick-detach rings. Its 22-inch barrel wears N.E.C.G. open sights.

rifles. One was McCourry's Browning Model 71 with an 18-inch barrel built by SSK Industries. The other was my own Marlin Model 1895 MLXR with a 22-inch barrel, also built by SSK Industries. It has a Weaver V3 scope held to an SSK/T'SOB base by Warne quick-detachable rings as well as N.E.C.G. Masterpiece iron sights, No. 61 fully adjustable at the rear and No. 661 Banded Ramp up front. In addition to a fixed 3/32-inch silver bead, the front sight has a larger 1/64-inch white hinged bead that can be flipped up in front of the smaller bead for use when light is bad or folded down when not needed. English rifle builders of the early 1900s called it a night sight, and its bead was often carved from the tusk of a warthog because it does not turn yellow with age as elephant ivory is prone to do.



.30-30 Win. .38-55 Win. .444 Marlin .45-70 Govt. .50 B&M Alaskan .50 Alaskan

A comparison of lever-action loads.

Lighter bullets in the .500 B&M Alaskan are fine for smaller game, but for the



Lead bullets can be quite accurate and inexpensive when used in the .50 B&M Alaskan.

really big stuff I would want a sectional density of .300 or close to it, which calls for bullets in the 450- to 500-grain range. Given proper construction, a bullet of that weight would handle any game animal on the planet out to 150 yards or

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## CHRONO/ACCURACY RESULTS

BULLET	BULLET WEIGHT (GR.)	POWDER	CHARGE (GR.)	VELOCITY (FPS)	ENERGY (FT.-LBS.)	AVG. GRP (IN.)
<b>SSK MARLIN M1895 (22-IN. BBL.)</b>						
HORNADY FTX*	300	IMR 4198	67.0	2,428	3,922	1.08
SWIFT A-FRAME	325	RL-7	66.0	2,251	3,653	0.73
CUTTING EDGE HP	395	RL-7	64.0	2,122	3,945	0.81
BARNES BUSTER	400	IMR 4198	59.0	2,057	3,754	1.44
SIERRA JSP-SM	400	H4198	63.0	2,113	3,961	1.49
CUTTING EDGE CS	425	RL-7	62.0	2,080	4,078	1.62
NORTH FORK BONDED	450	RL-10X	63.0	2,022	4,081	1.40
HORNADY FP-XTF	500	RL-10X	62.0	1,947	4,204	1.37
HORNADY FP-XTF	500	H4198	56.0	1,855	3,816	0.56
HORNADY FP-XTF	500	RL-7	58.0	1,876	3,903	1.15
CAST RCBS 500/400 SWC	400	IMR 4198	50.0	1,986	3,325	1.21
CAST LEE C501/440 RF	440	RL-10X	54.0	1,822	3,240	1.37
<b>SSK BROWNING M71 (18-IN. BBBL.)</b>						
HORNADY FTX*	300	IMR 4198	67.0	2,359	3,703	2.14
SWIFT A-FRAME	325	RL-10X	62.0	2,062	3,064	1.68
CUTTING EDGE HP	395	RL-7	64.0	2,015	3,557	1.20
BARNES BUSTER	400	IMR 4198	59.0	2,041	3,696	2.40
SIERRA JSP	400	H4198	63.0	2,086	3,861	1.32
HORNADY FP-XTF	500	RL-7	58.0	1,834	3,730	1.55

\*Shorten the case to 1.97 inches for this bullet for a cartridge length not to exceed 2.55 inches for the Marlin rifle. Notes: Powder charges are maximum and should be reduced by 10 percent for starting loads. Starline cases and Federal 210M primers were used. Accuracy shown represents an average of three three-shot groups fired at 50 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are an average of nine rounds measured 12 feet from the muzzle.



Reloading dies for the .50 B&M Alaskan are available from RCBS and Hornady. The case is formed by slightly necking down Starline .50 Alaskan brass. Bullet diameter is .500 inch, same as for the .50 S&W Magnum, so bullets made for that cartridge can be used.

so, but beyond that it plummets to earth like a bowling ball. Which is OK since the cartridge will always be seen at its best when quickly applying the brakes to large and potentially dangerous game at iron-sight distances. **G&A**

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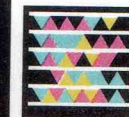
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\*Eligibility dependent on severity of Zombie Apocalypse.

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