TRAPPING IN ALASKA AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY IMPORT BAN ON FURS TAKEN WITH LEGHOLD TRAPS

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ABSTRACT

Trapping has a centuries-long history in Alaska. Among the indigenous people of the arctic and subarctic, furbearers have been important sources of food and furs for clothing and trade. The search for furs and the expanding network of Russian and Euroamerican fur trading posts into the North American frontier in the 19th century was the predominant agent of "first contact" with the indigenous population over much of Alaska. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, trapping and trade in furs played a dominant role in shaping settlement and land use patterns in Alaska. Today, trapping and the sale of furs continues to play an important role in the mixed subsistence-cash economies of thousands of households in Alaska. Some Native trappers continue to hold strong traditional beliefs regarding furbearers. In some rural communities, especially in the fur-rich interior of Alaska, as many as 50 to 85 percent of households trap for income.

An organized "anti-trapping movement" has a history spanning more than 65 years in the United States. The leghold trap has been the focus of much of the controversy over trapping. Increasingly, those opposed to trapping and the use of leghold traps have aligned with well-funded and politically influential animal-rights groups concerned with a broad range of animal welfare issues. Such groups have been successful in promoting anti-trapping legislation in several U.S. states and in Europe. In 1991, the European Economic Community (EEC) passed legislation that will impose a fur import ban on 13 species of furbearers from countries that continue to allow those species to be harvested using leghold traps, or have not adopted internationally approved humane trapping standards by January 1, 1995. The 13 species affected by the import ban include eight species harvested in Alaska: beaver, coyote, land otter, lynx, marten, muskrat, weasel, and wolf.

International negotiations to develop acceptable humane trapping standards are currently taking place and may delay implementation of the ban by one year. Given the rapidly approaching deadline and the complexities of passing trapping legislation in each of the 50 U.S. states in order to comply with the EEC legislation, U.S. compliance seems unlikely. It now appears that trappers in Alaska and elsewhere in the U.S. will soon find Europe to be a closed market for the listed species of fur.

Existing markets for Alaskan furs were examined through discussions with fur buyers and other industry contacts to determine the potential impacts of the EEC legislation on Alaskan trappers. Portions of the market for Alaskan beaver and marten are currently in Europe. While it is logical to assume that prices paid for these furs may decline as a result of reduced markets, it is difficult to predict how much prices may be impacted, if at all. However, the following factors will combine to help cushion the impacts of the EEC legislation in Alaska: 1) mink, which is the only Alaska fur species with an almost exclusively European market, is not among the furbearer species covered by the current ban; 2) substantial in-state, North American, or Japanese markets exist for all other Alaskan species covered by the ban; and 3) furs from Alaska are often considered by the fur industry to be among the highest quality wild furs available and may enter alternative markets more easily than furs from elsewhere.

At present, the fur industry in general, and the wild fur industry in particular, is depressed. This downturn has been brought on by a number of factors including an over-supply of ranched furs, increasing anti-trapping/animal rights sentiment, and changes in lifestyle and fashion characterized by more casual dress. The EEC ban is a symptom of these problems and while it does not appear that the EEC ban itself will devastate Alaskan trappers, it should not be ignored. Increasingly, trappers in Alaska and elsewhere will likely face problems with the public perception of trapping, and legislative challenges such as the EEC ban. Alaskan trappers concerned with the future of trapping should be aware of and responsive to these challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview of the European Fur Ban Issue

In 1989, legislation was proposed within the European Economic Community (EEC) to ban the use of leghold traps in EEC member nations and ban the import of furs from nations that allowed the use of leghold traps. The legislation, backed by influential animal-rights groups in Europe, was debated over a period of several years and finally passed in November 1991. As proposed legislation, there was uncertainty in the United States, including Alaska, as to how serious a threat the European restrictions represented. With the legislation enacted, and a 1995 deadline imposed for the import ban to take effect, U.S. trappers are beginning to assess the costs and benefits of complying or not complying with the terms of the legislation.

In 1992, Europe remained a sizable importer of furs from North America, including Alaska, and trapping remained an important source of income for thousands of Alaskans. Details of the 1995 EEC ban and its potential impacts in Alaska are the focus of this report.

Purpose and Objectives of This Study

For Alaskan trappers residing in large urban communities, where membership in one or more state or national trapping organizations is common and trappers are in close contact with other informed trappers, news of the developing EEC ban on the use of leghold traps has been generally available by word of mouth or through newsletters, trappers' meetings, and monthly trapping publications. However, trappers in more isolated rural areas and remote communities have remained less informed and sometimes misinformed about the EEC ban. Even after passage of the EEC legislation in 1991, conversations with rural trappers indicated little awareness of the EEC ban on the use of leghold traps. Some had heard rumors that they would soon no longer be able to use

leghold traps, but were under the impression that these restrictions were being imposed by new state or federal regulations.

Given these kinds of misunderstandings, and the social and economic importance of trapping to many individuals, households, and communities in Alaska, the Division of Subsistence decided it would be beneficial to provide trappers with basic information regarding the EEC ban and Alaska's role in the world fur trade so they, themselves, could assess and anticipate the potential impacts. The project included the following specific research objectives:

1. to describe the terms of the EEC ban legislation;
2. to describe the current market for Alaskan furs and document Alaska's role in the world fur trade;
3. to gather comments from rural Alaskan trappers regarding the EEC ban and its potential impact on their trapping activities;
4. to describe some of the traditional Athabaskan ideology surrounding the ethical treatment of animals in general and furbearers in particular;
5. to describe the political process that must take place nationally for the U.S. to respond to the EEC ban; and
6. to make a summary of these research findings available to all Alaska trappers through a mass-mail distribution of a "fact sheet".

Many rural communities are significantly impacted by the dynamics of world fur markets. In rural Alaska, cash earning alternatives to trapping during the winter months are few and trapping is still relied upon by many households to produce significant portions of their annual income. While this report addresses a statewide issue, it draws heavily from previous subsistence research in rural communities, discussions with trappers in rural interior Alaska, and includes a section describing the importance of trapping in contemporary mixed subsistence-cash economies. To this extent, this report focuses on issues from the perspective of rural trappers.

Methodology

Information summarized in this report was collected from a review of pertinent literature, interviews with individuals involved in the fur industry, and informal discussions with rural interior Alaskan trappers. A review of the literature was useful in obtaining information on: 1) the history of trapping in Alaska, 2) the history of anti-trapping sentiment, 3) the present-day role of trapping in the mixed subsistence-cash economies of rural Alaskan communities, and 4) traditional Athabaskan beliefs surrounding furbearers and the humane treatment of animals. Discussions and interviews via telephone with leaders of state and national trappers' associations, fur buyers, fur dealers, and fur auction house operators, were used to gather information on 1) current markets for Alaskan fur and Alaska's role in the world fur trade, 2) terms and potential impacts of the EEC ban, and 3) the ongoing negotiations to develop international humane trapping standards. In addition to talking with furbearer biologists and knowledgeable individuals within the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fairbanks, McGrath, and Juneau, contacts included representatives from the following businesses, organizations, and agencies:

Alaska Raw Fur Co., Fairbanks, Alaska
Cutting Edge Furs, Bethel, Alaska
H.E. Goldberg Furs, Seattle, Washington
National Trappers Association, Copper Center, Alaska
National Trappers Association, New Martinsville, West Virginia
National Trappers Association, Argyle, New York
Seattle Fur Exchange, Seattle, Washington
Western Canadian Raw Fur Sales, LTD., Vancouver, B.C.
Yukon Department of Renewable Resources, Whitehorse, Y.T
Yukon Flats Fur Cooperative, Fort Yukon, Alaska
Yukon Trappers Association, Whitehorse, Y.T.

In August, 1992, researchers traveled a 200-mile stretch of the Yukon River between Galena and the Yukon River rapids below Rampart and spoke with residents of

communities and fish camps about a variety of subsistence issues including trapping and the EEC ban on furs taken with leghold traps. Similar discussions about trapping were also carried out with several Fort Yukon area trappers during several visits to that community in fall 1992. These discussions with rural trappers along the middle and upper Yukon River provided insight into trapper awareness of the EEC import ban issue, trapping practices, and the social and economic importance of trapping. Data from each of the sources was used to present the following information on the history and socioeconomic importance of trapping in Alaska and the terms and potential impacts of the EEC legislation.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FUR TRADE IN INTERIOR ALASKA

Pre-Contact and Early Contact Period Prior to 1850

Furbearer trapping has a centuries-long history in Alaska. The material culture of interior Alaska's indigenous population included a wide variety of deadfalls and snares for harvesting furbearing animals, skin scrapers and stretchers for processing furs, and a variety of clothing items made from or trimmed with fur (Osgood 1940). Some furbearers such as beaver (*Castor canadensis*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and muskrat (*Ondontra zibethicus*) were also important sources of food. Archeological findings at a 1,000 year-old Kutchin Athabaskan site near Old Crow, Yukon Territory, along the Porcupine River, revealed concentrations of muskrat bones second in number only to caribou bones (Morlan 1973). Other than muskrat, most other furbearers were primarily eaten during times of food shortages, although food taboos prohibited or restricted the use of some species such as wolf (*Canis lupus*) and weasel (*Mustela erminea*) (Nelson 1980).

Among many interior Athabaskan groups, furbearers such as wolf, wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), lynx, mink (*Mustela vison*), and otter (*Lutra canadensis*) were regarded

among the most spiritually powerful animals (Nelson, Mautner, and Bane 1978). Success in harvesting these animals was dependent upon adherence to certain rules. For example, Koyukon Athabaskan traditions held that women were not allowed to eat lynx or otter meat, nor were they allowed to trap, shoot, or skin wolves or wolverine for fear of offending the animal's spirit and bringing bad luck. A harvested wolverine was to be offered a scrap of fat or food and its carcass burned along with these gifts of food. Among some of the more traditional Athabaskan trappers, beliefs and practices like these still are followed (Nelson, Mautner, and Bane 1978; Nelson 1983). Such taboos, traditions, and beliefs surrounding the care and handling of furbearer meat and furs provide further testimony to the utilization of furbearers in the prehistoric period.

In addition to their use as food and clothing, furs from interior Alaska were frequently a commodity of trade between northern Athabaskans and neighboring Eskimo groups to the north and west. Koyukon Athabaskans, for example, traded wolf, wolverine, red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), beaver, otter, marten (*Martes americana*), mink, and muskrat furs to neighboring Kobuk Eskimo groups in exchange for marine mammal products such as seal oil and baleen. As Eskimos began to obtain Russian goods via Siberia in the protohistoric period, tobacco, steel knives, and other items were added to the trade goods that could be obtained by the Athabaskans for their furs (Clark 1974).

The first half of the 19th century saw the gradual intrusion of Euroamericans into interior Alaska and the establishment of fur trading posts as Russian explorers and traders penetrated from the west and Europeans arrived from the east. By the 1830s, Hudson's Bay Company had merged with several rival companies to monopolize the fur trade along the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories and continued its push westward, establishing posts in the upper Stikine and Liard River valleys of British Columbia (Janes 1974; Tanner 1966). Russian posts along the west coast of Alaska and the lower Yukon River were also established in the 1830s including one as far upriver as Nulato in 1838. Russian attempts to expand their sphere of influence further into Alaska's interior were

apparently limited to excursions by explorers such as Lt. Zagoskin who traveled some 200 miles inland from Nulato in 1843 (Zagoskin 1967). By 1846, Hudson's Bay Company agents had reached the upper Yukon River by means of the Porcupine River and the following year the Fort Yukon post was established within Russian territory near the confluence of the Porcupine and Yukon rivers (Fig. 1).

The search for furs and the expanding network of Russian and Euroamerican fur trading posts into the North American frontier in the 19th century was ultimately responsible for the first direct contacts between Euroamericans and the indigenous population throughout much of interior Alaska (VanStone 1974). Through Yukon River posts, such as those established at Nulato and Fort Yukon, the fur wealth of Alaska's interior began to be exploited. Interior Athabaskans began to adapt their seasonal round of subsistence activities to place greater emphasis on the harvest of furs and the valued goods that furs could be traded for (Hosley 1981; VanStone 1974).

The Fur Trade Era, ca. 1851-1885

Athabaskan Indians excelled in the harvest of furbearers, a feature that was a distinguishing characteristic of their culture, and a skill that became an even more valuable asset with the introduction of the commercial fur trade. With the establishment of fur trading posts in interior Alaska, Russian and European trade goods were increasingly available to interior Natives during the last half of the 19th century. This brought about several important changes in the subsistence economy and residence patterns during this period. Traditional trade relationships were altered as interior Athabaskans no longer needed to trade through neighboring groups as "middlemen" for imported goods. Traditional settlement patterns were altered as groups shifted to incorporate preferred trapping habitats into their land use areas. Proximity to trading centers also became a consideration. In addition, areas that were regarded as common use areas of band members for hunting, fishing, and gathering activities during the

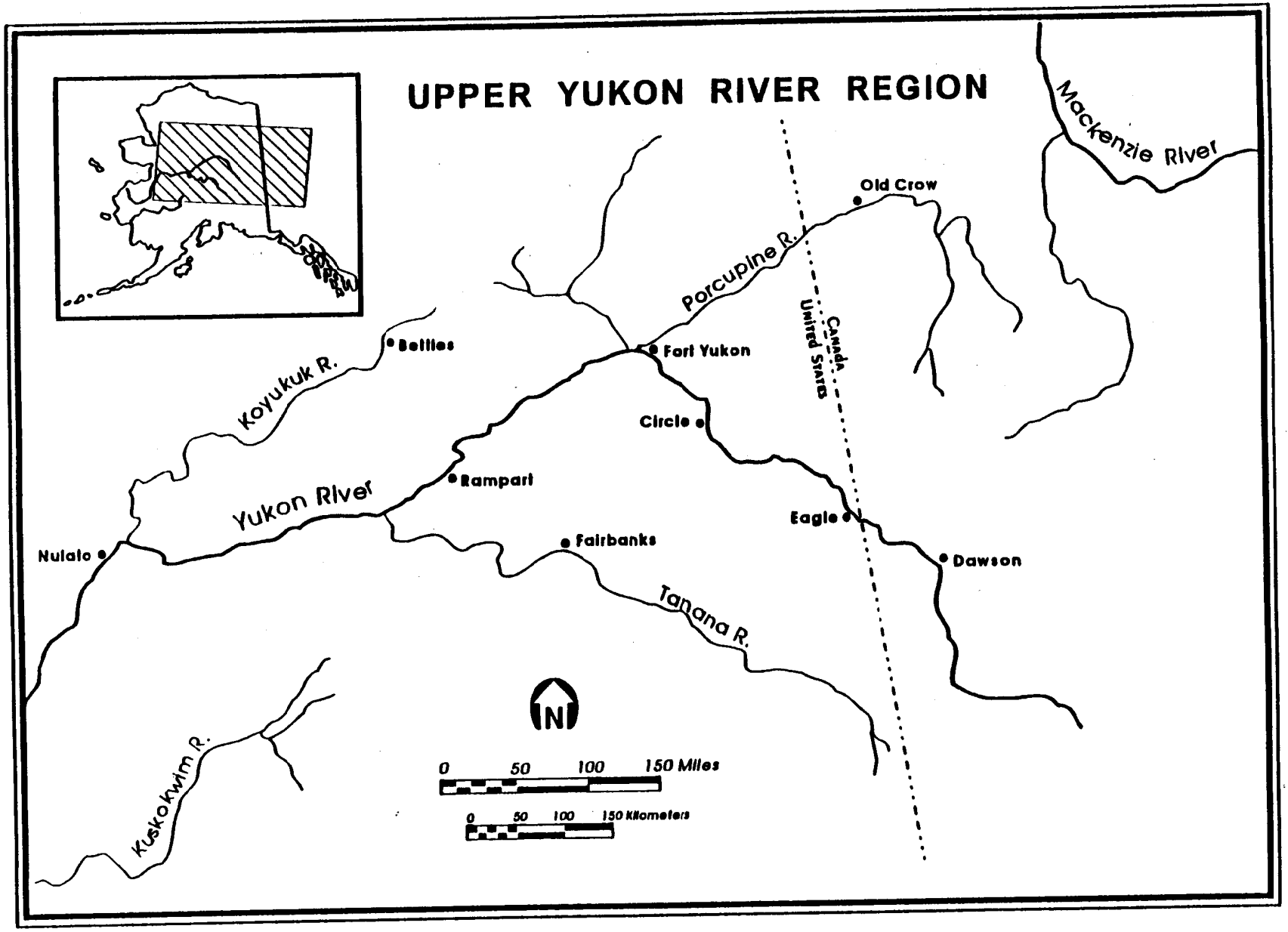

Fig. 1. The upper Yukon River region showing geographic features discussed in the historical overview of trapping in Alaska's interior.

summer and fall, began to be claimed as exclusive use areas of individual trappers during winter. This incorporated the notion of individual ownership into traditional land tenure systems, bringing about a new emphasis on territoriality (Nelson 1980).

Concepts in dog traction and sled design borrowed both from neighboring Eskimo groups and Euroamericans were modified to more efficiently exploit winter trapping areas (Osgood 1970; Andersen 1992). Increases in the use of dogs required greater participation in salmon fishing to produce dog food, further altering traditional settlement patterns and subsistence cycles (VanStone 1974). Finally, with the introduction of imported tools, manufactured cooking implements, and food staples, there was an ever increasing dependence on western goods leading to a loss of self-reliance and independence (Webb 1985). Combined, these factors brought about gradual, but significant, changes to many aspects of the social and material culture of interior Athabaskans. Epidemic disease following contact with Euroamericans decimated the indigenous population, creating social and cultural disruptions.

Rumors of gold in the upper Yukon River region helped hasten the purchase of Alaska by the U.S. from Russia which was unprepared to oversee a gold rush there. Following the U.S. purchase of Alaska in 1867, the Yukon River fur trade was dominated by agents and posts of the Alaska Commercial Company. In 1869, the first steamboat navigated the Yukon River to Fort Yukon, opening the way for others (Webb 1985). Still, the Euroamerican presence was small in numbers and scattered throughout the interior. In 1874, only 32 non-Native men populated the vast Yukon, Koyukuk, and Kuskokwim River areas, and the Tanana River remained virtually unexplored by Euroamericans (Webb 1985). In the late 1870s and early 1880s, new Yukon River posts had been established at locations such as Belle Isle (Eagle) and Rampart in Alaska, and Fort Reliance, downstream from present-day Dawson in the Yukon Territory. Active gold prospecting had begun by a handful of miners setting the stage for the discovery of gold in the Circle district in Alaska in 1885 and the stampede that followed.

The Period 1886 to 1948

For the indigenous population of the Yukon River drainage, the last 15 years of the 19th century was a period of accelerated change as thousands of Euroamerican miners poured into the region. The scattered Yukon River fur trading posts were largely abandoned as the centers of trade shifted to the newly established mining communities of Circle, Dawson, Nome, and Fairbanks. While fur trapping became the winter occupation of many miners, the standard of trade had decidedly shifted from furs to gold, leaving many Athabaskan trappers removed from the newly established market economy (Webb 1985).

Aside from the new population centers that acted as magnets for the surrounding Native population, an expanding network of roadhouses and trading posts was established along the stampede routes into the Klondike mining district of the Yukon Territory near Dawson and radiating out from major population centers to service remote prospectors. This new network for travel and commerce added to the disruption of traditional Native trade patterns and made previously rare trade items more available to northern Athabaskans. For example, while firearms had become increasingly available to interior Athabaskan groups after 1840, the scarcity and cost of ammunition made them impractical for general use for many Native hunters. Findings of material items such as blunt arrows fitted with spent rifle cartridges provide evidence that traditional harvest methods persisted throughout this transition period and into the early 20th century (Hosley 1981; Osgood 1971). Prospectors who pushed into remote corners of the interior made increasing contacts with the indigenous population. With the establishment of posts such as Bettles along the Koyukuk River in 1899, and New Rampart along the Porcupine River at the Alaska-Yukon border in 1904, ammunition became more readily available, prompting the greater use of guns and a phasing out of certain hunting methods like the bow and arrow and hunting spear (Morlan 1973). The same was true for steel traps. Despite their introduction early in the fur trade period of the mid 1800s, traps

were frequently dismantled by Native trappers who preferred the valuable steel for other uses (VanStone 1974). Traditional trapping methods using snares and deadfalls persisted in many areas of the interior until steel traps became more commonplace in the first decade of the 20th century.

Another significant change that came about at the turn of the century involved participation in trapping by non-Native trappers. Between 1868 and 1898, trapping of furbearers for trade in Alaska was restricted by law to Alaska Natives. In 1899, the U.S. Congress amended the Customs Acts allowing non-Natives to trap (Webb 1985). This, legal change coupled with the large influx of Euroamerican miners, changed the trapping industry from a Native, family-based enterprise in the 19th century, to one involving substantially more competition from young, predominantly single, non-Native males.

As the frenzy of the gold rush declined, trapping once again gained prominence in the local, subsistence-cash economy. The common practice of trading posts extending credit to trappers for store-bought goods in exchange for the next season's fur harvest encouraged debt and dependence upon specific trading posts. Fur prices were subject to periodic rises and falls, but trapping remained one of the few sources of income during winter months. Fur prices were high until about 1914 followed by generally low prices during World War I and then rose again between 1918 and 1929 (Tanner 1966).

The late teens and 1920s might be thought of as a time of relative prosperity along the Yukon River. The introduction of the fishwheel about 1910 revolutionized salmon fishing. Families were able to harvest enough fish for all their winter needs, including fish to feed dog teams used for trapping, plus a surplus which could be sold as dog food to trading posts and contract mail carriers using dog teams. While women cut and dried fish, there was summer employment for men as woodcutters to fuel the Yukon River steamboats. The abundance of dried fish allowed the maintenance of larger dog teams and the lengthening of traplines. Trapping was the principal winter occupation and furs commanded high prices. Red and cross fox pelts were in particularly high demand

by the fashion industry and both the trapping and farming of foxes grew to become lucrative occupations in Alaska. Increased participation in the cash economy allowed the purchase of improved rifles and traps. The use of newly introduced technology, such as motorized boats, brought remarkable improvements in river travel and access to fishing and trapping camps beginning in the late 1920s (Loyens 1966).

Other important events with respect to trapping took place during the 1920s. The Alaska Game Commission was established in 1925. Out of concern for some furbearer populations that had been over-trapped, the Commission instituted several closed seasons on marten and beaver during the mid to late 1920s (Webb 1985). Despite these closures, by the winter of 1928-29 high prices paid for fur had tripled the number of trappers in Alaska over the early 1920s and a record fur harvest of $4.5 million was recorded in Alaska that year (Webb 1985).

The price of furs dropped dramatically during the economic depression of the early 1930s followed by a gradual recovery in prices between 1935 and 1946 (Tanner 1966). By the 1940s the demographic pattern of the Athabaskan population of interior Alaska had changed from many dispersed, semi-nomadic bands into fewer and larger permanent settlements. The typical settlement pattern was for families to occupy fish camps along the major rivers during summer and semi-permanent villages during winter from which trapping activities were conducted (Hosley 1981).

The trapping heyday of the 1920s was past as fur prices declined and demand for wild furs dropped. Lynx populations in the early 1940s were at a low in their population cycle, closed seasons on marten continued, and the Alaska Game Commission instituted new sealing requirements for beaver designed to prohibit the shooting of beaver (Webb 1985). Trapping was no longer lucrative for large numbers of trappers. Some trappers turned to new wage employment opportunities in the development of Alaska's military infrastructure in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, with diligence, some men could still manage to earn income from trapping as part of the seasonal, mixed economy.

The Period 1949 to 1980

In spring 1949 fur prices dropped 30 percent over the previous year. In addition, decades of intense trapping in some areas of Alaska had resulted in population declines in some of the more lucrative furbearing species such as marten, mink, muskrat, and beaver, and brought increasingly restrictive regulations (Shimkin 1955; Hosley 1981; Webb 1985). Fur prices continued to be depressed throughout the 1950s and trapping became the winter occupation of only the most skilled and dedicated trappers.

In the 1960s, snowmachines began to be introduced into the interior, which affected subsistence patterns across the North (Francis 1969; Hall 1971). For trappers, the snowmachine promised faster travel over larger areas. This allowed many trappers to set more traps and freed them from the year-round burden of feeding and caring for sled dogs. While some trappers quickly abandoned the use of dogs, the transition to snowmachines was neither immediate nor complete (Andersen 1992). Snowmachines were relatively expensive to purchase, operate, and maintain, necessitating a fairly substantial yearly cash income. Early snowmachine models suffered from reliability problems and some trappers found snowmachines less functional than dog teams in certain terrain and snow conditions (Andersen 1992). Some trappers tried snowmachines and returned eventually to the use of dogs as their primary transportation on the trapline. Others developed a dual pattern of using both snowmachines and dogs for specific trapline tasks. Nonetheless, for trappers and others, snowmachines emerged in the 1970s as the dominant mode of winter transportation in rural Alaska (Andersen 1992).

Studies conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, show that furbearers continue to be utilized today, and trapping remains an important component of the mixed subsistence-cash economy for many households and communities throughout interior Alaska (Wolfe 1992). Additional aspects of contemporary trapping in Alaska are discussed in more detail below.

TRAPPING IN ALASKA IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

Participation in Trapping

The number of people who trap in Alaska in any given year is highly variable and difficult to determine precisely. In 1992 (regulatory year 1991-92) there were about 18,100 Alaska residents licensed to trap. While this provides a rough estimate of the number of potential trappers, it is likely that this number exceeds the number of individuals who actually trapped. There are several reasons for this. An individual may become a licensed trapper by purchasing one of four license types: a trapping license; a hunting/trapping license; a hunting/trapping/sport fishing license; or, for those that qualify, a low-income license which is only sold as a combination hunting/trapping/sport fishing license. Trappers are often hunters as well, and most purchase combination hunting/trapping or hunting/trapping/fishing licenses. Since the 1960s one-third to two-thirds of those recorded as licensed trappers were purchasers of the low-income combination license. Many of those are thought to be primarily hunters that do not intend to trap, but are recorded as licensed trappers because of the combination license they hold. This may also be true for some of those that purchase the full-price combination hunting/trapping/fishing license. An unknown number of individuals purchase the full-price combination license at the start of each year simply to provide financial support to wildlife management programs they think are worthwhile or to keep all their options open for outdoor activities in the coming year. There is likely a core number of trappers who trap every year, but also a number of individuals who determine whether to trap each year based on the projected prices being paid for fur, winter weather conditions, and the availability of other cash earning opportunities.

Because there is no accounting of which activities are actually undertaken by a license holder, and because some licenses are only available as combination licenses, license sales are a poor gauge of the actual number of trappers. Likewise, records of fur

sales track the number and species of furs sold or exported, but statistics are not routinely kept on the number of trappers involved in those exchanges. Some trappers commonly retain harvested furs for home use or handicrafts and their participation in trapping may not be reflected in records of raw fur sales or exports. In addition, because some fur animals may be harvested and sold by hunting license holders, not all of the fur sold or exported is harvested through trapping.

Although license sales probably overestimate the number of trappers, it is reasonable to assume that the number of trappers has at least some relationship to the number of trapping licenses or combination licenses sold. That number has varied in recent decades from about 8,600 in 1965 to a high of about 30,000 licenses in 1984 (Fig. 2). In Figure 2, the number of licensed trappers in each year is based on the combined sales of the four license types that allow an individual to trap. These data show that since the early to mid-1980s the number of licensed trappers has decreased steadily. This is probably due to general declines in the prices paid for furs over the same period which have made trapping less profitable.

Trapping and Mixed Subsistence-Cash Economies

The economies of most rural interior communities in Alaska are characterized by few full-time jobs and high participation in wild food harvests for personal consumption (Wolfe and Walker 1987). Average household incomes are well below those in urban centers and are frequently pieced together from a variety of income sources consisting of several seasonal or part-time jobs. Often, large proportions of household incomes are channeled into the purchase or maintenance of equipment such as boats, outboard motors, and snowmachines that will allow participation in hunting, fishing, and trapping activities (Wolfe and Ellanna 1983). This general economic pattern is what is referred to here as the mixed subsistence-cash economy.

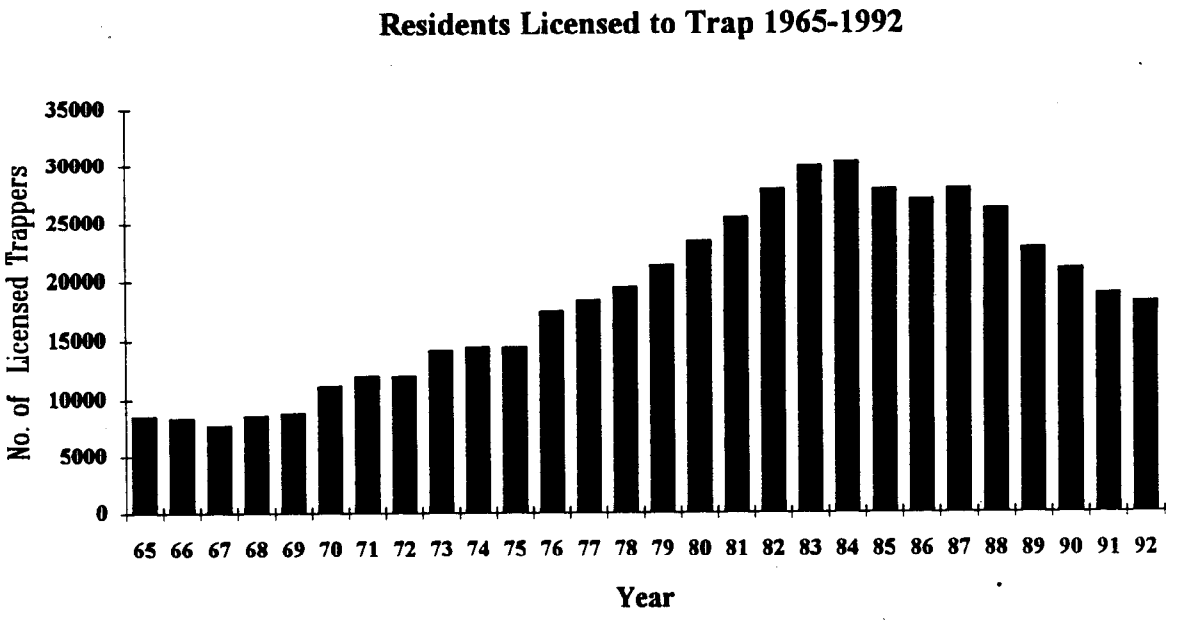

Fig. 2. The number of Alaska residents purchasing trapping licenses from 1965 to 1992.

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Administration, License Accounting.

In many rural Alaska communities, trapping still represents one of the few cash-earning options during winter months and is an integral part of the mixed subsistence-cash economy. Trapping is especially important in the Yukon and Kuskokwim River drainages of interior Alaska where a wide variety of furbearers exist and where weather conditions produce prime quality pelts and relatively long trapping seasons. Wildlife harvest surveys have shown that the percentage of households participating in trapping frequently exceeds 50 percent in rural interior communities (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992). Figure 3, for example, shows the percentage of employed households reporting income from trapping in 13 communities throughout the Yukon, Koyukuk, and Tanana River drainages of interior Alaska. From these study communities, the percentage of households with income from trapping ranged from 18.2 percent in Tanana to 86.7 percent in Stevens Village (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992). In 7 of the 13 communities listed, 50 percent or more of the households with employment reported that trapping contributed to their income. These data indicate that in the mixed subsistence-cash economies of rural interior Alaska communities, trapping remains a major activity and source of employment for many individuals and households.

While participation in trapping often has been significant, incomes derived from trapping have been relatively low in recent years. Figure 4 shows the mean gross monetary value of fur harvests per trapping household for 13 study communities in interior Alaska. These data show that potential household incomes from trapping, assuming all harvested furs were sold, ranged from $412 in Tetlin to $7,549 in Fort Yukon (Wolfe 1992). In 6 of the 13 study communities, mean gross trapping incomes were below $2,000 and all but two of the study communities had mean gross trapping incomes below $4,000 (Fig. 4). These income levels are similar to those reported for rural trappers in Skwentna, along the Susitna River in southcentral Alaska. For 15 trapping households surveyed in that study, potential gross incomes from the sale of all furs harvested ranged from $0 to $4,902, averaging $1,488 per trapping household. On

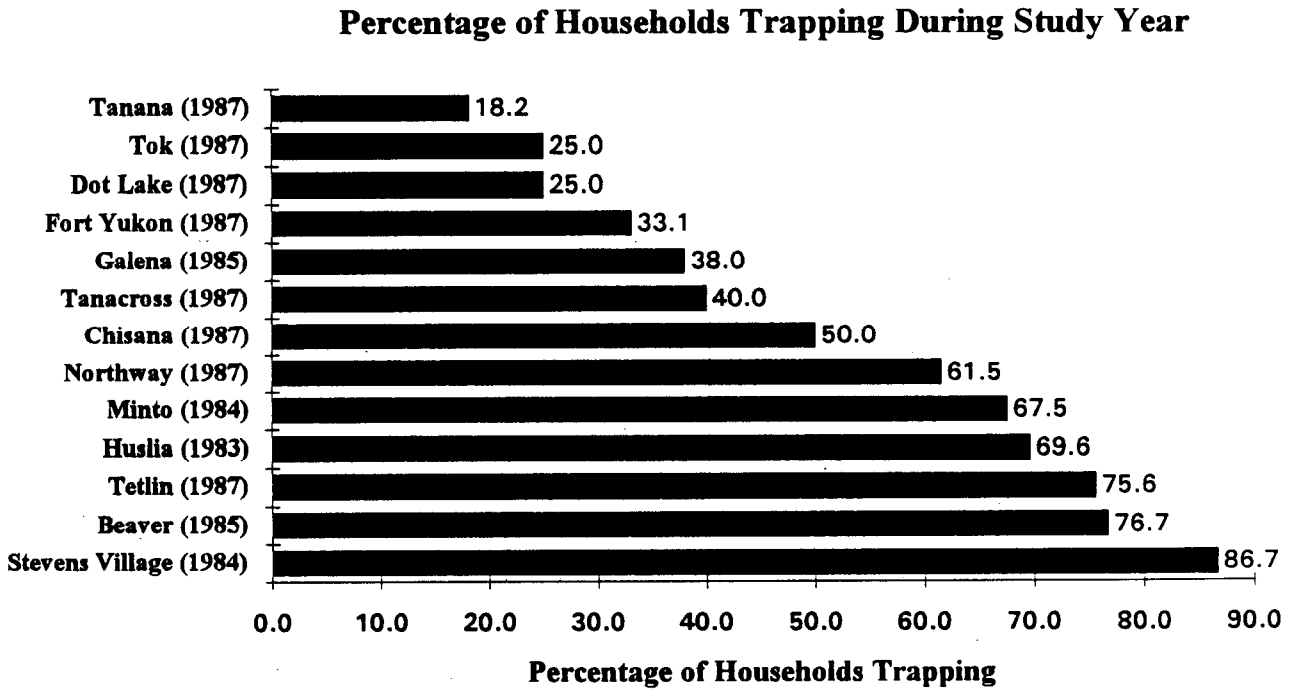

Fig. 3. Percentage of employed households* reporting income from trapping in 13 interior Alaska communities.

*** Employed households were those households reporting any source of employment by any household member during the study year.**

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992

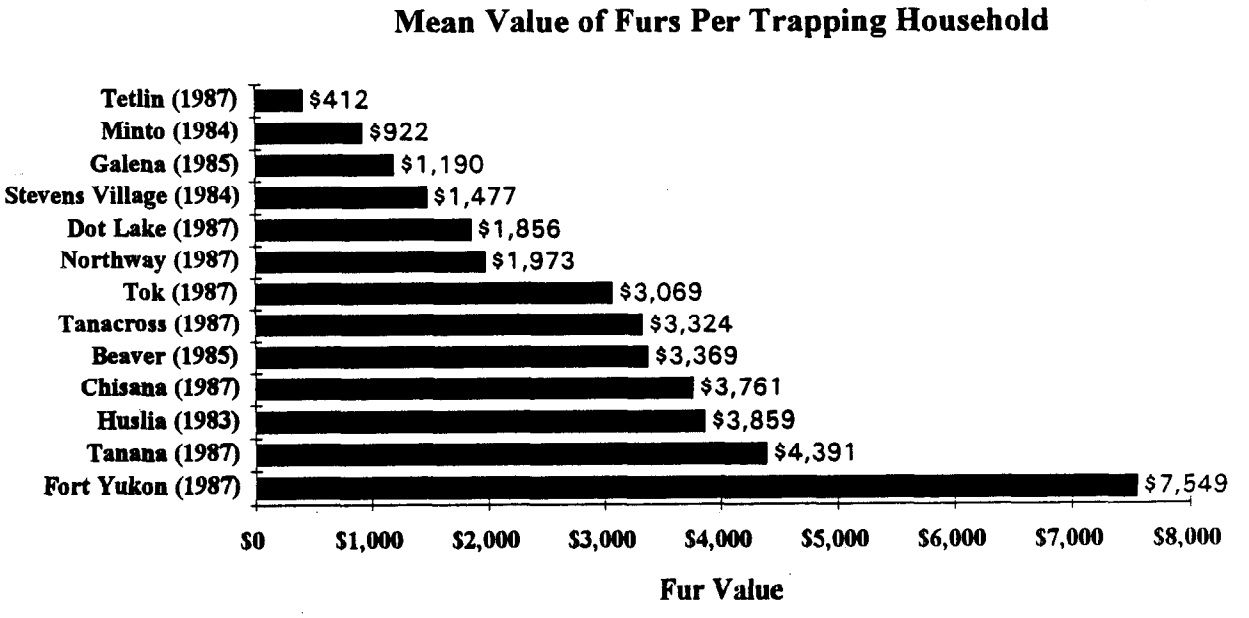

Fig. 4. The mean value of fur harvests per trapping household in 13 interior Alaska communities.

Source: Wolfe 1992

average, households estimated that trapping represented about 20 percent of their gross household income. Net incomes from trapping accounted for equipment and operating costs using one of several cost accounting methods described in the analysis. In general, net incomes from trapping by Skwentna households equaled about 50 percent of gross earnings (Stanek 1987; Wolfe 1992).

Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of 23 trappers in 19 trapping households in the Yukon River community of Nulato were described in another study (Robert 1984). Trappers in this predominantly Athabaskan community were generally males between the ages of 17 and 69 with an average age among male trappers of 42. Two female trappers, both age 49, assisted their husbands with trapping activities. Trapping households ranged in size from 1 to 11 members with an average household size of 4.6. Of 15 trapping households responding to questions about annual income, 40 percent reported that household incomes from all sources totaled less than $10,000 and 87 percent reported incomes below $20,000. Thirty-eight percent of Nulato trappers trapped alone, while 62 percent utilized trapping partnerships. Partnerships were generally kinship-based pairs such as husband and wife, father and son, or father and son-in-law. Traplines were generally patrolled using snowmachines.

Other products and benefits derive from trapping in addition to money. Some furbearers represent important sources of meat for both human use and for feeding dogs. Beaver and muskrat, for example, are furbearer species that are commonly eaten. With the recent decline in prices paid for beaver pelts, the fur value of beaver is often considered secondary to the food value of beaver meat (Robert 1984). Some furs are retained rather than sold and used to make essential cold-weather clothing items such as hats, mitts, and parka trim. In addition to fur harvests, other subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, and wood cutting are commonly carried out in conjunction with activity on the trapline.

In considering the value and importance of trapping, social aspects cannot be overlooked. The social value of trapping in rural communities is difficult to quantify. Being regarded as a good trapper still carries with it a certain respected social standing because it involves a variety of skills such as knowledge of animal behavior and tracking, and winter travel and survival. These skills are acquired largely through interaction and communication between young men and their elders (Nelson, Mautner, and Bane 1978). Trapping is also a way for individuals and families to reaffirm historical ties to specific locations and land use areas. Trapping is an important part of the socialization of young males perpetuating knowledge, skills, traditions and beliefs, and systems of land tenure that contribute immeasurably to the general welfare of individuals and communities (Wolfe 1991).

Traditional Native Beliefs Regarding Treatment of Furbearers

The controversy over use of leghold traps is basically one over the ethical treatment of animals. Traditional Native values and belief systems are deeply rooted in principles of respect for and proper treatment of animals that might seem to conflict with the use of devices such as the leghold trap. This apparent conflict deserves some discussion.

Nelson (1983) described some of the basic principles of Koyukon Athabaskan ideology that continue to govern almost every aspect of how Koyukon Athabaskans of the Koyukuk River region interact with their environment. These principles likely apply more broadly to northern Athabaskans in general. They include beliefs that: 1) the natural and supernatural worlds are inseparable; 2) natural entities are endowed with spirits and with spiritually based power; and 3) humans and natural entities are involved in a constant spiritual interchange that profoundly affects human behavior. Under these general principles, Nelson (1983) lists a myriad of more specific beliefs and practices,

some of which seem directly applicable to trapping and the treatment of furbearers including the following:

> -*Avoidance of live capture and captivity.* Trapping animals is not disrespectful in itself, but they should always be killed as quickly as possible and used. None should be released alive after being caught.
>
> -*Humane treatment of living organisms.* Killing should always be done as quickly and painlessly as possible within practical limitations. Wounded or infirm animals should be killed to end their suffering.
>
> -*Treatment of usable animal or plant remains.* All usable parts of natural entities must be treated respectfully, according to rules pertaining to the species.
>
> -*Treatment of unusable animal or plant remains.* Unusable remains or uneaten portions must be disposed of in a respectful way, as prescribed for the species involved.
>
> -*Living organisms die slowly and/or their spiritual essence lingers after death.* Animals with powerful spirits are said to "live" or remain sensitive to certain kinds of treatment for several days to several years after they are killed.
>
> -*Offensive behavior toward natural entities is punished by bad luck, illness, or death.* A transgression against a natural entity alienates its spirit, which then takes vengeance according to the gravity of the offense. Each animal or plant has its own spirit, but an affront to the individual can affect all members of its species. Thus, someone who mistreats a fox may be unable to catch any foxes for months or years afterward.

Koyukon beliefs and treatment of specific furbearing animals illustrates how such guiding principles are translated into actions. Beaver, for example, are prized both for their fur and as food for people and dogs. They are also regarded by the Koyukon as spiritually powerful animals. Traditional Koyukon beliefs dictate how, where, and when a trapped beaver carcass may be skinned; how long a skinned carcass must "rest" before it can be consumed; how beaver are cut during butchering; the treatment and disposition of beaver bones; what kinds of meat may be eaten by the trapper during beaver trapping season; and special rules prohibiting the use or harvesting of beaver by women of child-

bearing age (Nelson 1983). Violation of these rules will bring bad luck in beaver trapping. Similar sets of rules apply to most other economically important and spiritually powerful animals, including most furbearers. Strict adherence to all facets of these traditional rules by contemporary Koyukon Athabaskans may vary.

Such rules focus on the respectful treatment and handling of animals after they have been harvested rather than prescribing specific methods of harvest. This is perhaps because there is a general belief that the animal knowingly and willingly allows itself to be taken by an individual hunter or trapper and that it would not do so if the method of harvest itself was somehow inappropriate or disrespectful. Thus, from the Koyukon perspective, humane or proper treatment of animals has less to do with the method of capture than it does with how the animal is treated after it is killed. In this view, leghold traps themselves do not represent inhumane treatment of animals as long as trapped animals are properly dispatched and respectfully handled.

It is interesting to note that steel traps took decades to be fully accepted by Athabaskan trappers along the Yukon River, and that traditional deadfalls and other trapping methods remained in common use into the 20th century (VanStone 1974). It is easy to imagine some initial concern on the part of contact-era Athabaskan trappers over how individual animal spirits might react to the use of this new technology. Whether this delay of a generation or so in adopting the steel trap represented a period of simply learning how to afford and efficiently use them, cautious experimentation to determine the cosmic consequences of using them, or a decided preference for old ways, will perhaps never be known.

The Anti-Trapping and Animal-Rights Movement

Anti-trapping sentiment is not a recent development. As early as 1925 an organized effort was underway in the United States to outlaw the steel leghold trap and change public opinion regarding furs and trapping. In that year the Anti-Steel-Trap

League (ASTL) was founded (Gentile 1987). Between 1925 and 1930 the ASTL was successful in increasing its base of support and passing anti-trapping legislation in several states. This movement coincided with, and was perhaps fueled to some extent by, world fashion trends that popularized the use of red fox and other furs, and high prices paid for furs. By 1939, bills to ban leghold traps had been passed in five states and considered in at least 13 others. At least 99 anti-trapping bills were considered at the federal, state, and local government levels during the period 1925 to 1939 (Gentile 1987).

The search for alternatives to the leghold trap also dates back to the 1920s. In 1921, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals offered a $500 cash prize for a humane trap design. Almost 600 trap designs were submitted, but none were found to be suitable and the prize money was never awarded. Between 1921 and 1933, as the anti-trapping movement began to build, several other organizations, including the National Association of the Fur Industry and the American Humane Association, sponsored similar contests with prize money as high as $10,000. These efforts prompted the submission of thousands of trapping devices from individuals all over the world. From these submissions, one device, a leg-snare invented by V. Bailey in 1933, was marketed, but it met with little success in replacing the more popular and efficient leghold trap (Gentile 1987).

Beginning in the early 1940s the anti-trapping effort began to diminish and even lose ground as some of the bans on leghold traps passed earlier were reconsidered. Following the Great Depression and World War II there was a new demand for fur. Trapping and the fur industry were seen as beneficial American traditions and institutions. By 1948, all of the existing state bans on trapping had been reversed. During the 27-year period 1940 to 1967 less than a dozen anti-trapping bills were submitted at the state and federal levels. During this period, the search for new humane traps continued. In 1959, a humane trap contest with a $20,000 prize offered again by

the American Humane Association led to the successful development of the Conibear trap that is widely used today for some furbearers (Gentile 1987).

The late 1960s and 1970s saw the rebirth of anti-trapping sentiment. Between 1968 and 1986 more than 360 anti-trapping bills were introduced at federal, state, and local levels (Gentile 1987). While most of these initiatives were unsuccessful, they reflect growing public sympathy for the anti-trapping movement, and by 1991 at least seven states had banned or severely restricted the use of leghold traps (Melchior 1991).

Many anti-trapping sympathizers now include themselves under the broader heading of animal-rights activists or groups concerned with a wide range of animal welfare issues. These organizations are growing both in size and number and are increasingly well-funded. About 200 animal-rights groups were recognized in 1991 in the United States. The four largest animal-rights organizations in the U.S. have over 1.4 million members and combined financial reserves of over $150 million (Fish and Wildlife Reference Service 1991).

The anti-trapping and animal-rights movements have been particularly strong and politically active in parts of Europe, such as Britain and The Netherlands. In other parts of Europe, such as Italy and Spain, fur is still considered fashionable and the manufacture and sale of fur garments are major industries. Due to widespread habitat loss, however, the trapping of wild fur in Europe is rare and much of the fur produced within European countries is now ranch-raised fur. Under intense lobbying from increasingly vocal and powerful animal-rights groups, the countries comprising the European Economic Community passed legislation in November 1991 calling for a ban on the importation of certain furs from countries that continue to permit those species to be harvested using leghold traps. These import restrictions are scheduled to take effect January 1, 1995. Terms of the ban are discussed more specifically below.

Terms of the European Economic Community (EEC) Fur Import Ban

Thirteen furbearer species are subject to the import restrictions imposed by the EEC legislation. Those 13 species are badger (*Taxidea taxus*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), bobcat (*Felis rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), ermine (*Mustela ermina*), fisher (*Martes pennanti*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), marten (*Martes americana*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), otter (*Lutra canadensis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), sable (*Martes zibellina*), and wolf (*Canis lupus*). The legislation states that raw or processed furs from these species, and goods made from them, may not be imported into Europe from countries that allow them to be harvested using leghold traps after January 1, 1995, or have not adopted internationally accepted humane trapping standards by that date. There is also a provision that delays implementation of the ban by one year, to January 1, 1996, if nations can show that they are making good progress toward adopting humane trapping standards. A copy of this legislation (Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3254/91) appears as Appendix 1 of this report.

Several aspects of the legislation are noteworthy. First, not all furbearers are covered by the list of species in the legislation. Mink, red fox, arctic fox, and wolverine are among those species not included on the list that are frequently harvested by trappers in Alaska. The EEC legislation places no restrictions on the harvest or importation of these species.

Second, two options are provided for countries to comply with the terms of the ban. Compliance with the import ban can be accomplished by: 1) banning the use of leghold traps for the listed species, or 2) adopting internationally accepted humane trapping standards. Both of these options require action at the national level and both are discussed in more detail below.

Many trappers and trapping organizations are opposed to the outright banning of leghold traps. For many trappers, using leghold traps is the preferred method of trapping many of the listed species. Leghold traps are preferred for a variety of reasons. Leghold

traps operate reliably in a wide variety of habitat and environmental conditions. Leghold traps do little or no damage to pelts. While wire neck snares are commonly used for some species, snares are not likely to be considered a humane alternative to leghold traps and are not effective for all species or in all habitats. Body-gripping or Conibear-type traps are widely used by some trappers for some species. While they kill animals very quickly, a reported drawback to body-gripping traps is that an animal can "freeze in" to the trap, increasing the potential for damage to pelts and requiring trappers to carefully thaw traps and carcasses before they can be removed from traps. Body-gripping traps are not practical for lynx or canid species such as fox, coyote, or wolf because of behavior that makes them unlikely to be drawn into a Conibear-type set. Furthermore, a body-gripping trap large enough to accommodate these relatively large animals would present unacceptable dangers to the trapper setting it.

Padded-jaw leghold traps are now offered for sale by most major trap manufacturers and are required in some states. These traps are meeting with mixed reviews. Trappers report some problems with padded traps springing spontaneously. Others report increased "pullout" rates or lost animals (Linscombe and Wright 1988; Messineo 1992). It remains to be seen if padded-jaw traps will meet the humane standards being considered. Some interests in the fur industry assert that acceptable, proven, versatile, and efficient alternatives to leghold traps are not yet available. Since the search for a practical and humane replacement for the leghold trap has been underway since the 1920s, it seems unlikely that any revolutionary new trap design will be developed, marketed, and accepted by trappers prior to January 1, 1995.

The second option, compliance by adopting humane trapping standards, may hold more promise for a solution and is the now the focus of much effort. Several international technical committees and working groups have been formed to work with the International Standards Organization (ISO) to reach agreement on what constitutes "humane" trapping methods and devices. Countries involved in these negotiations are

optimistic that, at a minimum, this process will cause implementation of the ban to be delayed until 1996.

Those involved in the ISO process for developing humane trapping standards are charged with examining killing-type traps or killing-type sets to see if they meet strict "quick-kill" standards that they will be required to develop. Depending on these standards, existing or slightly modified traps may be deemed acceptable for some species, such as Conibear-type traps with added striking bars or leghold traps used in drowning sets. Or, it may be that only new trapping devices will be able to meet these standards.

Committees are also reviewing standards for restraining-type traps which will meet acceptable limits for stress and injury to animals caught in these types of traps. Again, depending on the standards that are eventually set for stress and injury, new traps may be required, or existing traps such as padded-jaw leghold traps may be found to be acceptable for some species. For both killing-type and restraining-type traps, the standards that the committees establish must be based on scientifically achievable and repeatable measurements. Trapping devices must also be reasonably efficient and practical for trappers to use. A variety of interest groups are participating in the development of these standards, including input from the National Trappers Association. Alaskan interests are being represented through Alaska Department of Fish and Game membership on one of the technical advisory groups. Draft standards are scheduled to be announced in late 1994.

As stated above, the EEC legislation requires the compliance of whole nations. Individual provinces, states, or trappers will not be able to comply with the terms of the ban on their own and continue selling furs to Europe if their nation as a whole remains out of compliance. This means, for example, that regardless of what method an Alaskan trapper uses to harvest lynx, be it snare, leghold trap, or some new and approved quick-kill trap, the lynx pelts trapped could not be legally imported into Europe if the U.S. as a

whole had not met the terms of the ban. In the United States, trapping methods and means are controlled by each of the 50 states individually, not by the federal government. Compliance with the terms of the ban, either by banning leghold traps or by adopting the humane trapping standards to be issued by the ISO in 1994, is a process that will likely require the adoption of specific legislation state-by-state. Even if the import ban is delayed until 1996, this state-by-state legislative process will probably not even be initiated, let alone completed, prior to the implementation of the ban. Because of the factors listed above, it is highly likely that in 1995 or 1996, trappers across the U.S. will find themselves to be out of compliance with the EEC legislation and find Europe to be a closed market for the listed fur species. The potential impacts of this lost market can best be assessed by looking at what fur species are commonly exported from Alaska and where they go.

Alaskan Fur Exports and Markets

Each year, thousands of furs worth millions of dollars are exported from Alaska. Trappers often export furs directly to dealers or auction houses outside of Alaska. Others sell furs to in-state fur buyers or dealers who handle the exporting. In either case, export permits and reports are required and these records provide information on the number of pelts leaving the state each year.

Table 1 lists the total number of furs exported from Alaska by species for the four year period 1985-89. In terms of number of pelts, marten is consistently the top species exported, followed by beaver, muskrat, mink, and red fox, not necessarily in that order. The number of each species exported is variable from year to year depending upon pelt prices, natural cycles in species abundance, trapping regulations, and weather conditions that may impact trapping effort. Most furs are exported. However, some furs are retained for household or local use and others are sold and processed in-state, so the total number of each species harvested exceeds the number exported.

TABLE 1. ALASKA FUR EXPORTS, 1985-89

SPECIES	Number of Pelts Exported			
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Beaver	11,498	14,598	15,598	9,666
Coyote	381	274	248	489
Lynx	1,349	989	588	807
Marten	24,387	25,471	28,135	29,053
Mink	5,576	4,857	5,376	6,966
Muskrat	7,911	12,178	5,142	18,663
Otter (Land)	1,135	1,328	1,642	1,432
Red Fox	4,354	4,857	4,526	6,630
Red Squirrel	2,473	118	456	2,002
Weasel	286	406	467	933
White (Arctic) Fox	335	385	610	1,295
Wolf	420	448	535	596
Wolverine	377	325	472	486
Total Exports	**60,662**	**66,234**	**63,795**	**79,018**

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1988a, b; 1990a, b.

The monetary value of Alaska's fur exports is highly variable depending on fashion trends and fluctuating prices paid for various species and grades of fur. In recent years, marten have been the "bread-and-butter" income species for many trappers. In 1988-89, the value of marten exports alone was estimated to be almost 2.25 million dollars. Based on average prices paid for other furs that year, marten accounted for more than 60 percent of the total monetary value of the furs exported from Alaska that year (ADF&G 1991).

The question "where do furs exported from Alaska go?" is not a simple one to answer. Thousands of trappers scattered throughout the state can market their furs through any number of local fur buyers and cooperatives, or ship directly to major auction houses across the U.S. and Canada. As shown above, the initial sale and export of raw pelts is possible to follow through export permits and reports. These transactions, however, seldom represent the ultimate destination of the furs. Trappers, for example, may sell their furs to a local fur buyer who in turn sells them to an auction house where they are tanned and resold in large lots to garment manufacturers around the world. Using government and industry records it would be difficult, if not impossible, to track an individual fur from trapline to finished product. For this reason, information on the markets for Alaskan furs consists mostly of general impressions and opinions of those involved in the fur industry. Three prominent Alaska fur buyers (one each in Bethel, Fairbanks, and Copper Center) and representatives of three west-coast fur auction houses (Seattle Fur Exchange, H.E. Goldberg Furs in Seattle, and Western Canadian Raw Fur Sales Ltd. in Vancouver, B.C.) provided their views of the current markets for Alaskan furs and Alaska's niche in the world fur market.

Each stressed that Alaska represents a very small part of the U.S. or North American fur industry. Numerous states exceed Alaska production in terms of total numbers of furs sold. One fur buyer noted, for example, that more muskrats are trapped and sold in New Jersey each year than in Alaska. Louisiana is known for being the top

fur-producing state in the nation. While the total number of furs produced by Alaska may be relatively small, Alaskan furs are generally regarded as being very high quality. Specific locations in Alaska have a reputation for producing certain species of fur that because of size, pelt quality, or color are considered by some to be the finest in the world. There are some exceptions; for example, Alaskan muskrat are not particularly highly regarded. Overall, Alaska's niche in the world fur market seems to be one of a moderate producer of generally high quality furs.

Alaska is also unique in that a relatively high percentage of the furs harvested are retained for local use rather than being sold. One fur buyer estimated that as much as 25 percent of the furs harvested in Alaska are retained for personal use or handicraft items rather than sold as raw pelts. Fur hats, mitts, parka ruffs, and whole skins are marketed for local use or to the growing tourist trade. These sales represent ways for some trappers to realize more money from fur sales when raw fur prices decline. Alaskan wolf and wolverine pelts, in particular, are predominantly used to satisfy in-state demands.

Most other Alaskan furs are exported outside of Alaska. Table 2 summarizes comments received from fur dealers concerning markets for Alaskan fur species. Among furs bound for Europe, mink is the one Alaskan species that is tied almost exclusively to a European market. Most Alaskan mink go to Italy. Other Alaskan species bound for Europe include beaver and marten, however, Europe does not appear to be the primary market for those species. Alaskan beaver are marketed primarily in the U.S. and Canada with the remainder going to Europe. Markets for Alaskan marten are primarily in the U.S. and Japan, with Italy described by fur dealers as a distant third-place consumer of Alaskan marten. With regard to long-haired species such as fox, lynx, wolf, and others, Europe has not been a major buyer of these species in recent years according to several fur dealers. Table 2 shows that Alaskan muskrat and most of the long-haired species are marketed within North America. Some lynx and wolf pelts are also sold to Japan.

TABLE 2. PRIMARY MARKETS FOR ALASKAN FUR SPECIES ca. 1992

SPECIES	MARKET COMMENTS
Beaver	Major markets are in U.S. and Canada, followed by Italy.
Lynx	Primarily sold within U.S. and Canada. Some also sold to Japan.
Marten	Markets are primarily U.S. and Japan, with Italy a distant third. Foreign market for Alaskan marten is dominated by Asia.
Mink*	Market for wild mink is almost exclusively in Europe, primarily Italy. Some also sold to Spain and a few to China.
Muskrat	Mostly a domestic (North American) market. Little foreign interest in Alaskan muskrat.
Otter (land)	China is currently developing as the major market for Alaskan otter.
Red Fox*	Currently low demand for wild red fox. Sold mostly within North America. Little foreign interest.
Wolf	Alaskan wolf pelts predominantly sold and used within Alaska. Some also sold to Japan.
Wolverine*	Alaskan wolverine pelts predominantly sold and used within Alaska.

* Species that are not included in the 1995 EEC import ban.

Source: Compiled based on personal communications with fur industry workers at: Alaska Raw Fur Co. in Fairbanks, Cutting Edge Furs in Bethel, H.E. Goldberg Furs of Seattle, Seattle Fur Exchange in Seattle, and Western Canadian Raw Fur Sales, LTD. in Vancouver, B.C.

Thus, looking at the species listed in the EEC legislation and Alaska's current markets for those species, it appears that the import ban will likely affect a relatively small portion of the furs trapped out of Alaska. Mink, which is Alaska's primary fur export species bound almost exclusively for Europe, is not covered by fur import ban. For other species, our analysis indicates that portions, probably less than one-third, of the market for Alaskan beaver and marten will likely be impacted as a result of the fur import ban, but that substantial non-European markets exist for those species and most other exported species of Alaskan furbearers.

Closed markets for certain species of fur in Europe may translate into oversupply and generally lower prices paid in non-European markets. For some species, such as beaver, the effect of lower prices paid for pelts may have little impact on trappers. Some trappers report that prices paid for beaver pelts in 1992 and throughout most of the 1980s have been so low that beaver have been harvested primarily as a food resource and for making value-added handicraft items such as hats or mitts rather than sold as raw pelts. Lower prices for beaver pelts may result in a continuation of this trend. On the other hand, lower prices paid for species such as marten would impact Alaska's most economically important fur export species and could have more widespread negative impacts on trapper incomes. However, fluctuating fur prices are inherent in the fur industry. It is not uncommon for prices paid for some furs to rise or fall by as much as 50 percent over a period of several years. Most trappers have developed strategies to deal with declines in fur prices. These strategies range from putting out more traps, retaining fur until prices rise, shifting effort to other furbearer species, making value-added handicraft items from the fur, forming partnerships or fur cooperatives to share and reduce costs, or choosing not to trap at all.

It is impossible to predict with any certainty how reduced markets for some species will impact Alaskan trappers or how trappers will respond. It is likely that the 1995 EEC ban will manifest itself in Alaska as a downturn in the markets for some

species rather than a total loss of markets. Throughout the past century, the Alaska fur market has been characterized by downturns to which trappers have responded accordingly.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In 1991, animal-rights groups in Europe were successful in passing European Economic Community (EEC) legislation that will place a ban the importation of certain species of fur. The ban begins January 1, 1995 and applies to countries that continue to allow those species to be harvested using leghold traps or that have not adopted internationally accepted humane trapping standards.

For trappers, there will be impacts associated either with complying or not complying with the EEC ban. There are some indications that ongoing international negotiations to develop acceptable humane trapping standards may result in trap designs and trapping methods for some species that involve only slight modifications to current traps and practices. It is also likely that some devices currently used and preferred by trappers for some species will not meet the strict standards being considered for "quick kill" or "no injury." Given the time deadline for the ban to take effect, and the fact that trapping legislation would have to be passed in each of the 50 states to comply with the ban, U.S. compliance with the EEC ban by 1995 or 1996 appears unlikely.

The impacts of non-compliance with the EEC legislation will be felt by trappers through lost markets. While the EEC ban is not good news for trappers, it does not appear that the EEC ban itself will devastate the trapping industry. In Alaska, several factors will help cushion the effects of the ban:

1) mink, which is Alaska's primary fur export to Europe, is not affected by the current import ban;

2) substantial in-state, domestic/North American, or non-European foreign markets exist for all Alaskan furbearer species listed in the import ban legislation;

3) Alaskan furs are generally regarded in the fur industry as some of the best and most desirable wild furs in the world and may enter alternative markets more easily than furs from elsewhere.

Providing trappers with basic information about the EEC ban and its potential impact in Alaska was an objective of this research project. To accomplish this, a fact sheet on the EEC ban based on the above findings was mailed to more than 5,000 licensed trappers throughout interior and rural Alaska. Appendix 2 of this report presents the text of this mail-out fact sheet.

While the impacts of the EEC ban may be felt less in Alaska than in other states, it should be noted that the fur industry in general has been declining in recent years. One western U.S. fur dealer noted that furriers and fur dealers have gone out of business in increasing numbers and that the current downturn in the fur industry appeared to be deeper than the normal cyclic downturns the industry has experienced in the past. Several reasons for this were cited, including growing anti-trapping sentiment, a world glut of ranch-raised furs, and lifestyle changes that call for more casual dress. The EEC fur ban is merely a reflection of these problems, not the cause (H. Goldberg, pers. comm.).

Thus, it appears likely that, despite the impending EEC fur import ban, trappers in Alaska and elsewhere will continue to find markets for their furs with, perhaps, lower prices paid for some species. While the EEC ban itself may not singlehandedly devastate Alaska trappers, it should not be dismissed as insignificant. The EEC ban, and the sentiment that created it should be seriously regarded by trappers as a sign of growing animal-rights and anti-trapping movements. Trapping and the fur industry are dependent upon consumer willingness to buy fur. In coming years, trappers will likely be increasingly pressured through more restrictive regulations and shrinking or shifting

markets, to adopt new and improved traps and to modify or abandon old methods. Trappers concerned with the future of trapping should be aware of and sensitive to these issues, and be willing to adapt to the changes that will almost certainly come.

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APPENDIX 1. COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No. 3254/91
of 4 November 1991

prohibiting the use of leghold traps in the community and the Introduction into the Community of pelts and manufactured goods of certain wild animal species originating in countries which catch them by means of leghold traps or trapping methods which do not meet International humane trapping standards.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES:

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 113 and Article 103 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission ([1]),

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament ([2]),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee ([3])

Whereas the Berne Convention of 19 September 1979 on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, concluded by the European Economic Community by Decision 82/72/EEC([4]), prohibits for certain species, the use of all indiscriminate means of capture and killing including traps, if the latter are applied for large-scale or non-selective capture or killing,

Whereas the abolition of the leghold trap will have a positive effect on the conservation status of threatened or endangered species of wild fauna both within and outside the Community, including species protected by Regulation (EEC) No. 3626/82([5]); whereas research into the development of humane trapping methods is already in progress and whereas the Community will take into account the work carried out by the International Standardization Organization;

Whereas, in order adequately to protect species of wild fauna and to avoid distortion of competition, it is necessary to ensure that external trade measures relating to them are uniformly applied throughout the Community;

Whereas, therefore, the use of the leghold trap within the Community should be prohibited and measures should be taken to enable the importation of furs of certain species to be prohibited when they originate in a country where the leghold trap is still used or where trapping methods do not meet internationally agreed humane trapping standards,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION

Article 1

For the purpose of this Regulation: "leghold trap" means a device designed to restrain or capture an animal by means of jaws which close tightly upon one or more of the animal's limbs, thereby

preventing withdrawals of the limb or limbs from the trap.

Article 2

Use of leghold traps in the Community shall be prohibited by 1 January 1995 at the latest.

Article 3

1. The introduction into the Community of the pelts of the animal species listed in Annex I and of the other goods listed in Annex II, inasmuch as they incorporate pelts of the species listed in Annex I, shall be prohibited as of 1 January 1995, unless the Commission, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 5, has determined that, in the country where the pelts originate:

-there are adequate administrative or legislative provisions in force to prohibit the use of the leghold trap; or

-the trapping methods used for the species listed in Annex I meet internationally agreed humane trapping standards.

The Commission shall publish in the *Official Journal of The European Communities* a list of the countries which meet at least one of the conditions set out in the first paragraph.

2. The prohibition referred to in paragraph 1 shall be suspended for one year, expiring on 31 December 1995, if the Commission, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 5, has determined before 1 July 1994 as a result of a review undertaken in cooperation with the competent authorities of the countries concerned, that sufficient progress is being made in developing humane methods of trapping in their territory.

Article 4

Countries exporting or re-exporting to the Community after 1 January 1995 any of the goods listed in Annex II, inasmuch as they incorporate pelts of the species listed in Annex I, shall certify that such pelts originate in a country appearing in the list referred to in the second paragraph of Article 3(1) or benefitting from a suspension in accordance with Article 3(2).

The Commission, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 5, shall determine the appropriate forms for such certification.

Article 5

For the purpose of Article 3, the Commission shall be assisted by the committee established by Article 19 of Regulation (EEC) No. 3626/82.

The representative of the Commission shall submit to the committee a draft of the measures to be taken. The committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the Chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter. The opinion shall be delivered by the majority laid down in

Article 148 (2) of the Treaty in the case of decisions which the council is required to adopt on a proposal from the Commission. The votes of the representatives of the Member States within the committee shall be weighted in the manner set out in that Article. The Chairman shall not vote.

The Commission shall adopt the measures envisaged if they are in accordance with the opinion of the committee.

If the measures envisaged are not in accordance with the opinion of the committee, or if no opinion is delivered, the Commission shall, without delay, submit to the Council a proposal relating to the measures to be taken. The Council shall act by a qualified majority.

If, on the expiry of a period of three months from the date of referral to the Council, the Council has not acted, the proposed measures shall be adopted by the Commission.

Article 6

This Regulation shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done At Brussels, 4 November 1991

For the Council

The President

H. Van Den Broek

Annex 1

List of species referred to in Article 3 (1)

Beaver: Castor canadensis

Otter: Lutra canadensis

Coyote: Canis latrans

Wolf: Canis lupus

Lynx: Lynx canadensis

Bobcat: Felis rufus

Sable: Martes sibellina

Raccoon: Procyon lotor

Musk rat: Odontra zibethicus

Fisher: Martes pennanti

Badger: Taxidea taxus

Marten: Martes americana

Ermine: Mustela erminea

Other Goods Referred to in Article 3(1) ANNEX II

CN Code	Description
ex 4103	Other raw hides and skins (fresh, or salted, or dried, limed, pickled or otherwise preserved but not tanned, parchment dressed or further prepared whether or not dehaired or split other than excluded by note 1(b) or 1(c) to chapter 41
ex 4103 90 00	Other
ex 4103	Raw furskins (including heads, tails, paws and other pieces or cuttings, suitable for furriers' use, other than raw hides and skins of code 4101, 4102 or 4103
ex 4103 40 00	Of beaver whole, with or without head tail or paws
ex 4301 80	Other furskins, whole, with or without head tail or paws.
ex 4103 80 30	Of wild felines
ex 4310 80 90	Other
ex 4301 90 00	Head, tails, paws and other pieces or cuttings suitable for furriers use
ex 4302	Tanned or dressed furskins (including heads, tails, paws and other pieces or cuttings). unassembled, or assembled (without the addition of other materials), other than those of 4303, whole skins, with or without head, tail or paws, not assembled
ex 4302 19	Other
ex 4302 19 10	Of beaver
ex 4302 19 70	Of wild felines

ex 4302 19 90	Other
ex 4302 20 00	Heads, tails, paws and other pieces or cuttings, not assembled
ex 4302 30	Whole skins and pieces of cuttings thereof, assembled
ex 4302 30 10	'Dropped ' furskins other
ex 4302 30 35	Of beaver
ex 4302 30 71	Of wild felines
ex 4302 30 75	Other
ex 4303	Articles of apparel, clothing accessories and other articles of furskin
ex 4303 10	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories
ex 4303 10 90	Other
ex 4303 90 00	Other

1. OJ No C 134, 31.5.1989, p.5 and
   OJ No C 97,13.4.1991, p.10.

2.OJ No C 260, 13.10.1990, p.24.

3. OJ No. C 168, 10.7.1990, p.32.

4.OJ No L 38, 10.2.1982, p.1.

5.OJ No L 384, 31.12.1982, p.1.

APPENDIX 2.

THE LEGHOLD TRAP ISSUE

What's this I hear about a ban on leghold traps?

This is a question many trappers have been asking. They are hearing that the European Economic Community (EEC) has placed a ban on furs from animals taken with leghold traps. There seems to be some confusion and misunderstanding about the ban. We are sending this fact sheet to licensed trappers in Alaska to help explain what is happening.

WHO IS THE EEC? The European Economic Community (EEC) includes the nations of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, and Spain.

WHAT DOES THE FUR BAN LEGISLATION SAY? The law passed by the EEC in 1991 says that after January 1, 1995 they will no longer allow furs or fur products from certain animals to be bought or imported from countries that allow those animals to be caught using leghold traps or that have not adopted "humane trapping standards." The United States must do one or the other, or Europe will not buy certain species of fur from any U.S. state.

WHAT ARE "HUMANE TRAPPING STANDARDS"? International negotiations are currently going on about "humane trapping standards" and to decide what kinds of traps might meet these standards. Some traps and snares currently being used will probably **NOT** meet the quick-kill or no-injury standards being discussed for "humane trapping." It is possible that new traps may have to be developed. For some animals, existing Conibear-type traps, padded leghold traps, or leggholds used in drowning sets **MAY** be found to be humane. The talks on trap standards will not be complete until fall 1994. What those trap standards will be is not certain at this time.

ARE ALL FUR ANIMALS AFFECTED BY THE BAN? Only certain furbearer species are affected by the ban. Some of the listed species do not occur in Alaska. The 13 furbearer species to be banned are: badger, beaver, bobcat, coyote, ermine (weasel), fisher, lynx, marten, muskrat, land (river) otter, raccoon, sable, and wolf. The list does NOT include mink, arctic fox, red fox, or wolverine.

WHEN WILL THE FUR BAN TAKE EFFECT? The ban takes effect January 1, 1995. If countries can show they are making good progress towards adopting humane trapping standards, the ban may be delayed one year to January 1996.

IS EUROPE ALASKA'S ONLY MARKET FOR FUR? Europe is not the only market for Alaskan fur. Europe buys most of the mink trapped in Alaska and some of our marten and beaver. Mink are not on the list of banned species. Beaver, marten, coyote, lynx, wolf, and other species on the ban list have strong markets in Japan, other Asian countries, Canada, and within the United States. Many wolves and most wolverine trapped in Alaska are sold and used within Alaska.

WHAT IS BEING DONE? There has been no official U.S. response to the EEC ban. The U.S. has several representatives participating in the talks on humane trapping standards. Many trappers and trapping organizations are now waiting to see what comes out of these talks (in fall 1994) before taking further action. In 1991 the Alaska legislature passed a resolution recognizing the economic importance of trapping in Alaska and urging support for the trapping industry in international negotiations. Among trapping groups there are several nationwide efforts underway to improve the image of trapping. They are promoting the use of wild fur, educating trappers in trapping and fur handling methods, and educating the public about the value of trapping as a wildlife management tool and its economic importance.

WHAT CAN TRAPPERS DO? Trappers should stay informed regarding this issue and watch for an announcement on humane trapping standards in fall 1994. Some trappers are shifting from leghold to Conibear-type traps in an effort to deal with the issue of humane trapping. However, this may have no affect on the ban for several reasons. First, it is still not certain which traps will meet the final humane standards. Second, the ban requires the U.S. as a whole to adopt humane standards. Individual trappers or states may comply with the ban and still find Europe to be a closed market for certain furs if all 50 states in the U.S. have not met the terms of the ban.

IN SUMMARY: The EEC ban is an attempt by Europe to urge the rest of the world to ban the use of leghold traps and/or adopt humane trapping standards. What "humane trapping" is has not been decided. For the U.S., meeting the terms of the ban by the 1995 deadline will be very difficult. The 1995 EEC ban is not good news for Alaskan trappers, but it does not necessarily mean disaster. Not all fur species are affected by the ban and Europe is not Alaska's only market for listed species. Mink is one of the main Alaskan fur species sold in Europe and is not included in the ban. Some of the marten and beaver taken in Alaska are also sold to Europe. Many Alaskan furs have strong markets in Japan, other Asian countries, or here in North America. In 1995 or 1996, if the U.S. remains out of compliance with the EEC ban, Alaskan trappers and fur dealers will probably lose a portion of their current market for some furs. Trappers should try to stay informed on this issue.

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