

# **Trapper Questionnaire**

**Statewide Annual Report  
1994–1995**

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Wildlife Conservation**

# **CODE OF ETHICS**

## **A Trapper's Responsibility**

- 1. Respect other trappers' grounds; particularly brushed, maintained trap lines with a history of use.**
- 2. Check traps regularly.**
- 3. Promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching nontarget animals.**
- 4. Obtain landowner's permission before trapping on private property.**
- 5. Know and use proper releasing and killing methods.**
- 6. Develop set location methods to prevent losses.**
- 7. Trap in the most humane way possible.**
- 8. Dispose of animal carcasses properly.**
- 9. Concentrate trapping in areas where animals are overabundant for the supporting habitat.**
- 10. Promptly report the presence of diseased animals to wildlife authorities.**
- 11. Assist landowners who are having problems with predators and other furbearers that have become a nuisance.**
- 12. Support and help train new trappers in trapping ethics, methods and means, conservation, fur handling and marketing.**
- 13. Obey all trapping regulations and support strict enforcement by reporting violations.**
- 14. Support and promote sound furbearer management.**

**[This code of ethics was copied from the Alaska Trappers Manual. The manual was created through a joint effort between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Trappers Association. The manual is available in Alaska book stores for approximately \$20.00.]**

**State of Alaska**  
Tony Knowles, Governor

**Department of Fish and Game**  
Frank Rue, Commissioner

**Division of Wildlife Conservation**  
Wayne Regelin, Director  
Ken Taylor, Deputy Director

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# **ALASKA TRAPPER REPORT, 1994-95**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report includes information contributed by you, the Alaska trapper. Our mailing list for the 1994-95 season included 852 trappers. We received information back from 303 individuals (35.6%). Of these, 65 people trapped in Southeast, 158 trapped in Southcentral, and 80 trapped in Interior Alaska. On the following pages you'll find out how other Alaskans run their traplines, how much effort they put into catching fur, what their primary target species are, and how many furbearers were trapped in the state. You'll also find summaries of current department furbearer activities, and comments of trappers that were written on the back of the questionnaires. As always, we strive to maintain strict confidentiality, and names of individuals and references to specific traplines are not included. We hope you find this report informative, and please let us know how we can improve it in the future.

## **A PROFILE OF ALASKA'S TRAPPERS**

We requested trappers like you to answer the following questions to help us develop this report.

### **Did you trap in 1994-95?**

Seventy-two percent of the trappers who responded to this questionnaire said they trapped during the 1994-95 season. This about the same percentage as the last 5 trapping seasons.

### **How many total years of trapping experience do you have?**

On average, trappers in Alaska have been taking furs for 21 years. In southeast, trapper experience averaged 18 years, in southcentral experience averaged 20 years, and in the interior experience averaged 25 years. Again, this is about the same as the last 5 seasons.

### **How many years have you trapped in Alaska?**

Most trappers had gained some trapping experience outside Alaska. Trappers averaged 16 years trapping experience in the state. Trappers in southeast averaged 12 years experience in the state, those in southcentral averaged 15 years, and trappers in the interior averaged 22 year trapping experience in Alaska. These results have been similar for the last 5 years.

**Table 1. Regional and area descriptions for southeast, southcentral, and interior Alaska, Alaska Trapper Questionnaire, 1994-95.**

**Southeast Region:**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Game Management Unit/Subunit(s)</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Fish &amp; Game Area Office</u>
KPW	1A, 2	Ketchikan, Prince of Wales Island, and adjacent islands	Ketchikan
PWK	1B, 3	Petersburg-Wrangell, Kupreanof Island, and adjacent islands	Petersburg
JDY	1C, 1D, 5	Juneau-Douglas-Haines-Yakutat	Douglas
ABC	4	Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands	Sitka

**Southcentral Region:**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Game Management Unit/Subunit(s)</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Fish &amp; Game Area Office</u>
CUS	11, 13	Copper River and Upper Susitna River Basins	Glennallen
LSB	14, 16	Lower Susitna River Basin	Anchorage/Palmer
PWS	6	Prince William Sound and North Gulf Coast	Cordova
KEP	7, 15	Kenai Peninsula	Soldotna
KOI	8	Kodiak Archipelago	Kodiak
AKP	9, 10	Alaska Peninsula	King Salmon
BRB	17	Bristol Bay Area	Dillingham

**Interior Region:**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Game Management Unit/Subunit(s)</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Fish &amp; Game Area Office</u>
LTB	20ABCDF, 25C	Lower Tanana River Basin	Fairbanks/Delta
UTB	12, 20E	Upper Tanana, Charlie and Fortymile River Basins	Tok
MYK	21BCD, 24	Middle Yukon and Koyukuk River Basins	Galena
UYB	25ABD, 26BC	Upper Yukon River Basin	Fort Yukon

# Game Management Regions

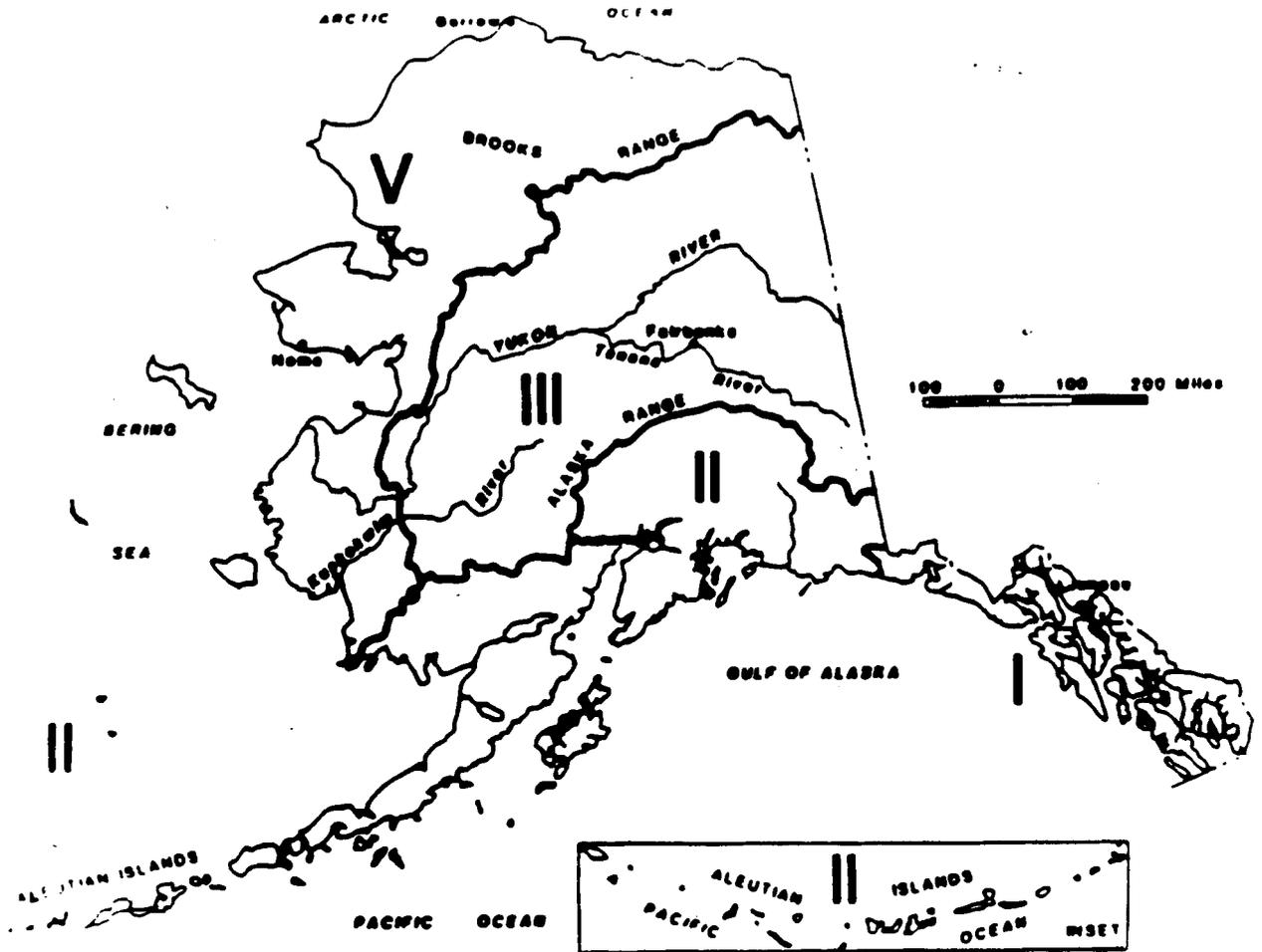


Figure 1. Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Game Management Regions

# Game Management Units

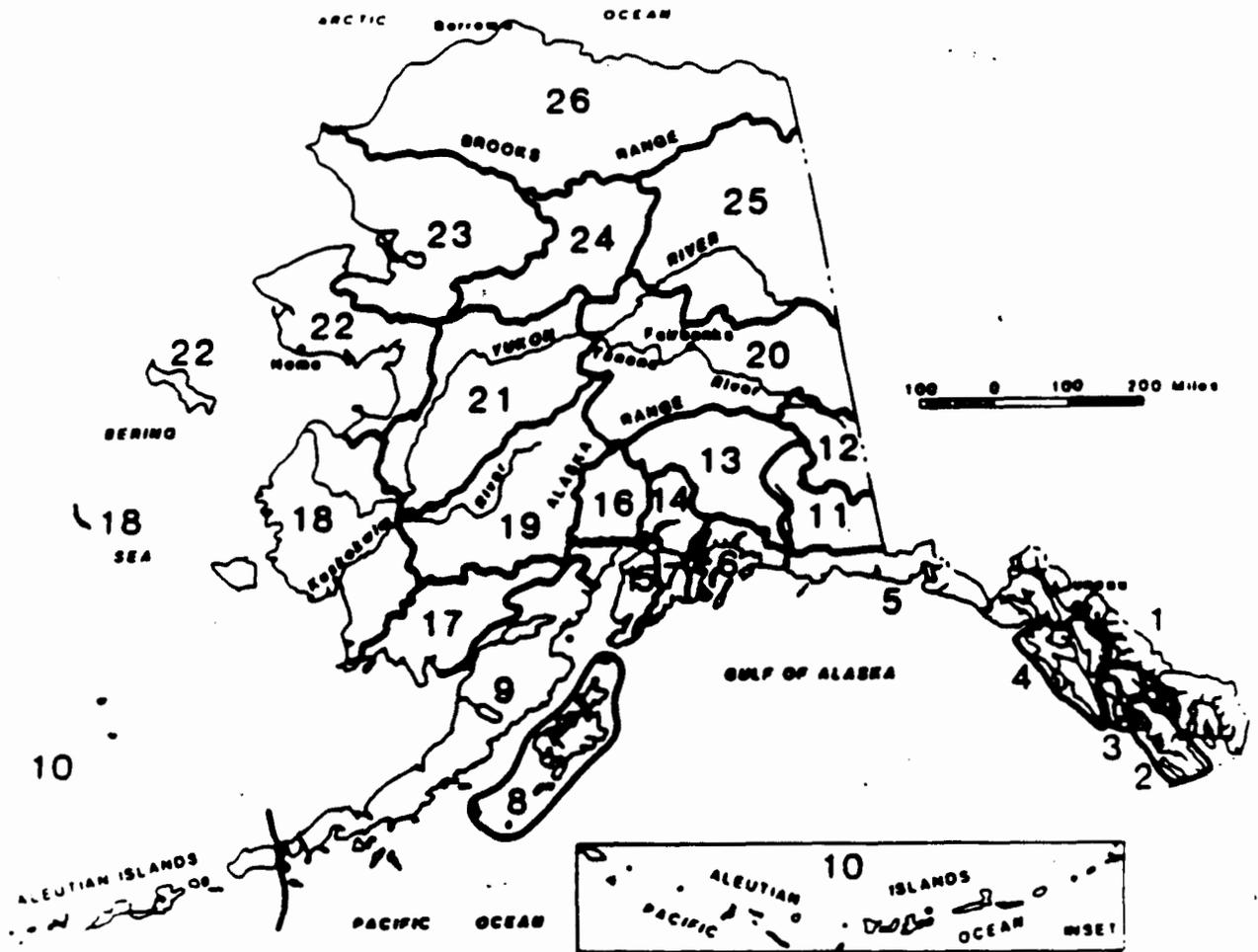


Figure 2. Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Game Management Units

### What is your age?

Average age of trappers in Alaska is almost 44 years. Average age was 41 in southeast, 44 in southcentral, and 47 in the interior. This is the first year we've asked this question. We'll let you know whether the age structure of Alaskan trappers changes in the future.

### Did you have a youngster (under 16) with you on your trapline this year?

Over one-third (43%) of trappers had someone 16 or younger with them on their trapline at least once. Percentages in the three regions were: 56% in southeast, 36% in southcentral, and 48% in the interior.

### What transportation did you use to get to your main trapping area?

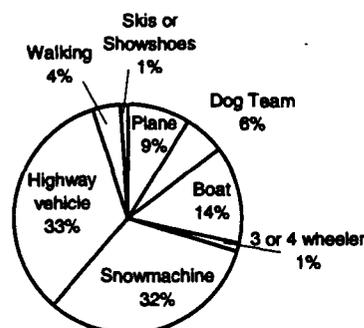
Most trappers in southeast Alaska used boats (59%) to get to their traplines. Many used highway vehicles (27%). Other modes of transportation to get to the traplines were walking (7%), snow machines (5%), and skis or snowshoes (2%).

In southcentral Alaska, a wider variety of transportation was used to get to the traplines. Highway vehicles (42%) were used by many, while snow machines (32%) were also common. Other methods were: airplane (9%), dog team (9%), boat (4%), walking (4%), 3 & 4 wheelers (2%), and skis or snowshoes (1%).

Trappers in the interior favored snow machine (52%) to get to their traplines. Highway vehicle (25%) was the second most popular method of transportation. Interior trappers also used airplanes (13%), dog teams (8%), and boats (2%) as the main method of getting to their traplines.

Transportation used by Alaskan trappers throughout the state to get to their traplines is summarized in the following pie chart:

Transportation to get to Trapline



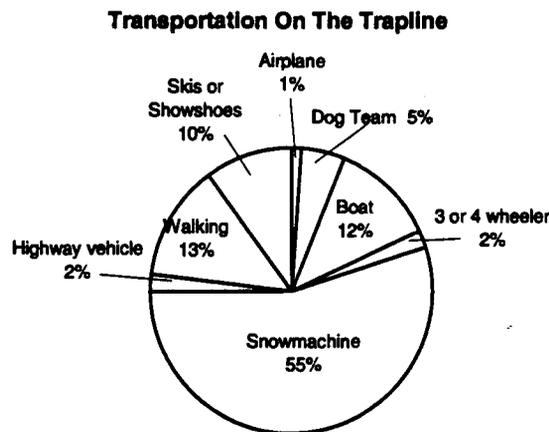
### What transportation did you use run your main trapline?

Most trappers in southeast Alaska used boats (54%) to run their traplines. Many walked (27%), and some used skis or snowshoes (12%), highway vehicles (5%), or snow machines (2%) to run their traplines.

In southcentral, a wider variety of transportation was used to run the traplines. Snow machines (59%) were most popular. Walking (15%), airplanes (10%), skis or snowshoes (9%), boats (4%), dog teams (6%), 3 & 4 wheelers (4%), and highway vehicles (3%) were also used.

Trappers in the interior favored snow machines (85%) by a wide margin to run their traplines. Skis & snowshoes (8%) and dog teams (7%) were the other ways trappers got around on their traplines.

Overall percentages of transportation used by Alaska's trappers to run their traplines are summarized in the following pie chart:



### How long was your main trapline in 1994-95?

The average trapline length in Alaska was almost 37 miles. Traplines varied from 0.2 miles to 300 miles. In southeast Alaska, average trapline length was 16 miles, and varied from 0.2 to 80 miles. In southcentral, average length was 33 miles, and ranged from 0.5 to 200 miles. In the interior, traplines averaged 62 miles long, and ranged from 2 to 300 miles.

Since the 1990-91 season, when the average trapline was 38 miles, (the first season we included southeast Alaska in the survey), average trapline length has decreased by one mile, after a low of 31 miles in the 1993-94 season. The longest trapline in the state has fluctuated between a low of 220 miles in 1990-91 to a high of over 400 miles in 1992-93. These changes are likely due to different people answering the questionnaire, as well as trappers adjusting the length of their traplines for a variety of reasons, including weather, fur prices or abundance, and time spent doing other things.

**How many years have you been trapping in the same area?**

The average amount of time that Alaskans have been trapping the same area is about 11 years. The longest period of time in the same area is 50 years. In southeast, the average time in the same area is almost 8 years, in southcentral the average was 11 years, and in the interior trappers averaged 15 years in the same area. On average, time spent trapping has remained about the same since the 1989-90 season, when the average trapper worked the same area an average of 12 years.

**How many sets did you make on your line in 1994-95?**

Throughout Alaska, the number of sets per trapline varied a lot between regions and between trappers. Most Alaskans (83%) put out 100 or fewer sets. Throughout the state, 6% of trappers put out more than 300 sets. All trappers in southeast had lines with 100 or fewer sets. Most southeast trappers (44%) put out fewer than 25 sets, 41% put out 25-50 sets, and 15% put out 51-100 sets on their traplines. In southcentral, 90% of trappers had 100 or fewer sets on their lines, and most (38% of the southcentral trappers) had fewer than 25 sets. Only 2% of southcentral trappers had more than 300 sets. In the interior, the average number of sets was distributed more evenly. A small majority (57%) of trappers had 100 or fewer sets, while 47% had 101 or more sets. Eighteen percent of interior trappers had more than 300 sets.

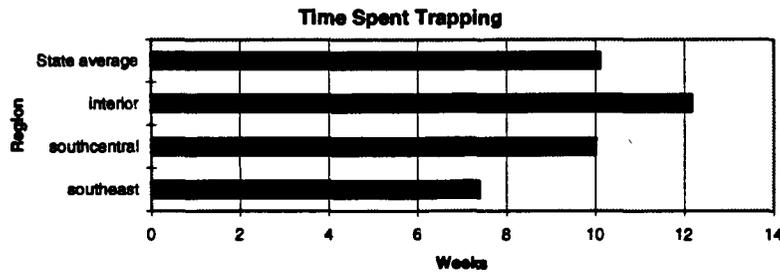
**What were the three most important species you were trying to catch in 1994-95?**

In southeast, the main species targeted by trappers were marten (34%), otter (20%), and mink (19%). In southcentral, the majority of trappers were after marten (20%), wolf (15%), and wolverine and beaver (11% each). In the interior, trappers targeted mostly marten (34%), wolf (21%), and lynx (15%). For the entire state, marten (25%), wolf (17%), and otter and wolverine (10% each) were most often listed as the important species.

Since we first asked this question in 1992-93, marten has been the species most often mentioned as important to Alaskan trappers. Wolf has also remained an important furbearer.

**How many weeks did you trap during the 1994-95 season?**

The average trapper in Alaska trapped for 10 weeks, the same as in 1993-94. Trappers in the interior trapped the longest (12 weeks). Trappers in southcentral trapped an average of 10 weeks, and trappers in southeast averaged 7 weeks of trapping.



**Was your trapping effort during the 1994-95 season less, the same, or more than the last season you trapped?**

Most trappers (43%) said they trapped less than the last season they trapped. Thirty-four percent said their effort was the same, and 24% said they trapped more.

**How did you change your trapping effort for the 1994-95 season?**

Many trappers (61% of those who said they trapped in 1994-95) didn't answer this question, so reporting percentages would be misleading. Therefore, we have listed the number of trappers who responded to each part of this question:

Type of Change	Number of Responses		
	Southeast	Southcentral	Interior
Changed species	11	21	7
Trapped new area	10	29	5
Trapline length increased	8	25	2
Trapline length decreased	15	16	21
Sets increased	8	28	4
Sets decreased	17	25	22
Weeks trapped increased	4	14	1
Weeks trapped decreased	15	25	22

**What were trapping conditions like on your trapline?**

Most trappers (78%) indicated that conditions on their traplines were good to fair. This has been the trend since we began asking this question in 1992-93.

**Trapline Conditions**



**Did last year's fur prices affect your trapping effort in 1994-95?**

Most of the trappers who responded to this question said that last year's prices did not affect their trapping effort this year. Throughout the state, 88% said last year's price didn't affect their trapping effort. In the interior, 71% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. In both southeast and southcentral 80% said last year's price didn't affect their effort.

**Did the 1994-95 pre-season advertised prices affect your trapping effort in 1994-95?**

More than 75% of respondents said that pre-season prices did not affect their trapping effort this year. Overall, 80% said pre-season prices didn't affect their effort. In southeast, 85% said pre-season prices didn't affect their effort, in southcentral 79% were not affected by pre-season prices, and in the interior 76% were not affected.

**Did the presence of other trappers in the area that you trap affect your trapping effort in 1994-95?**

About 73% of trappers in the state said the presence of other trappers did not affect their trapping effort this year. Those changing their trapping effort because of other trappers were: 29% in southeast, 28% in southcentral, and 22% in the interior.

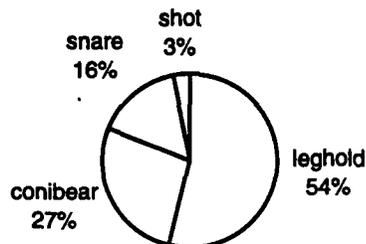
## ALASKA'S FURBEARER POPULATIONS - TELL US WHAT'S HAPPENING

Only 5 of the 15 species defined as furbearers require sealing statewide: beaver, lynx, otter, wolf, and wolverine. Marten are required to be sealed in some units, but not statewide. Consequently, information on the numbers, distribution, and utilization of many furbearers is limited. On this year's trapper questionnaire we are asking trappers for harvest information on all Alaska furbearers. As usual, strict confidentiality will be maintained. Thanks for your help!

### METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

Trappers were asked to provide, for each furbearer species taken, the approximate percentage of animals taken with leghold traps, conibears, snare, gun, or other methods. About 54% of the furbearers taken in southeast were trapped in legholds, 27% were trapped in conibears, 16% were snared, and 3% were shot. In southcentral, about 50% of the furbearers were taken in legholds, 29% were trapped in conibears, 16% were snared, 4% were shot, and 1% were taken by other means. About 64% of the furbearers in the interior region were trapped in legholds, 12% were trapped in conibears, 23% were snared, and 1% were shot. The overall percentages for the state were:

Entire State: Method of Take



We asked this question because of the increasing pressure from animal rights activists to require more humane trapping methods. We want to document the extent to which Alaskan trappers rely on leghold traps, conibears, etc. As time goes on, we want to be able to document what changes in trapping methods trappers initiate on their own.

### ALASKA'S FURBEARER HARVEST

As noted above, beaver, lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine require sealing statewide. In addition, marten are required to be sealed in Game Management Units 1-5, 7, 13E, and 14-16. Harvest estimates for these species are determined from sealing records. Please refer to Table 2 for a summary of furbearer harvest estimates (for species that require sealing) from 1992-93 through 1994-95.

**Table 2. Reported furbearer harvest totals in Alaska, 1992-93, 1993-94, and 1994-95.**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Reported Harvest 1992-93</b>	<b>Reported Harvest 1993-94</b>	<b>Reported Harvest 1994-95</b>
<b>Beaver</b>	I	145	324	225
	II	1517	1720	1892
	III	956	1886	1720
	V	621	685	520
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>3239</b>	<b>4615</b>	<b>4357</b>
<b>Lynx</b>	I	29	22	6
	II	268	188	172
	III	1047	999	587
	V	22	11	13
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>1336</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>778</b>
<b>River Otter</b>	I	327	409	557
	II	449	449	488
	III	79	139	97
	V	353	118	220
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>1208</b>	<b>1115</b>	<b>1362</b>
<b>Wolf</b>	I	193	226	219
	II	218	368	413
	III	527	840	668
	V	113	149	143
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>1051</b>	<b>1583</b>	<b>1443</b>
<b>Wolverine</b>	I	22	25	35
	II	151	186	246
	III	143	242	293
	V	79	61	48
	<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>622</b>
<b>Marten*</b>	I	1393	1560	2170
	II	192	159	277
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>1719</b>	<b>2447</b>

\*Marten sealing is required in Region I and II (GMU's 1-5, 7, 13E, 14-16) only.

## COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING FURS

We also have records of commercial transactions involving furs. Individuals who engage in fur dealing and who purchase, or acquire through consignment or barter, raw skins of furbearers must report the transactions on department fur acquisition forms. Each transaction report shows the species, number of each species, and location in which furs were trapped.

The average prices paid for raw furs by three dealers in interior Alaska are listed below:

<u>Species</u>	1992-93 (\$)	1993-94 (\$)	1994-95 (\$)
Beaver	17.50	26.00	31.50
Coyote	25.00	25.00	27.50
Fox	17.50	17.50	22.00
Lynx	70.00	85.00	77.50
Marten	35.00	42.50	38.50
Mink (wild)	15.50	17.00	12.00
Muskrat	1.25	1.25	2.00
River otter	35.00	60.00	60.00
Squirrel	1.00	1.00	1.00
Weasel	1.75	1.75	2.00
Wolf	275.00	235.00	250.00
Wolverine	235.00	235.00	275.00

Raw fur export reports are filled out when an individual sends raw furs outside of Alaska. The same information is collected for these reports as for the acquisition reports.

Note: The fur acquisition and raw fur exports are not actual records of furbearer numbers harvested in a given regulatory year. Both reports may include furs taken in previous years, and many trappers keep their furs for tanning and use at home. In addition, some individuals may not fill out the required forms. Consequently, these transaction reports are used only as a general indicator of harvest trends. For individuals seeking out more information about these trends, contact your regional or statewide furbearer coordinator.

**AREA REPORT FROM  
KODIAK ISLAND, (GMU 8)**

**Joe Dinnocenzo, Wildlife Tech**

Thirty-one trappers who had been actively harvesting fur in GMU 8 were sent questionnaires asking about their levels of effort and success in the winter of 1994-95. Fourteen trappers (45%) responded, and 5 of these people had not trapped in 1994-95. Of the 9 trappers who did harvest fur, 8 reported what they harvested. The total reported harvest by these trappers is presented in the table below. The total reported harvest should be considered a minimum figure. Many trappers do not report their catch either because they only trap species that don't require sealing, or they just don't get fur sealed. For comparative purposes, fur sealing records are also shown in the table below:

**REPORTED 1994-95 FUR HARVEST IN GMU 8**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Trapper Questionnaire Data</b>		<b>Fur Sealing Data</b>	
	<b>Number of Trappers</b>	<b>Animals Harvested</b>	<b>Number of Trappers</b>	<b>Animals Harvested</b>
<b>Otter</b>	6	63	14	89
<b>Beaver</b>	4	27	8	29
<b>Fox</b>	8	92	sealing not required	sealing not required
<b>Muskrat</b>	3	27	sealing not required	sealing not required
<b>Marten</b>	1	30	sealing not required	sealing not required
<b>Weasel (ermine)</b>	3	23	sealing not required	sealing not required

## **FORT YUKON (GMU'S 25A, 25B AND 25D)**

**Bob Stephenson, Area Biologist**

Dear trapper,

I'm writing to thank you for participating in the trapper questionnaire program, and also to let you know about recent changes in beaver trapping regulations.

In response to the concerns of local residents in Unit 25 about high beaver populations, and the desire to take some beaver for food and pelts during spring, the Board of Game passed a regulation making it legal to shoot beaver in units 25A, 25B, and 25D from April 16 to June 1, with a bag limit of 1 per day. This regulation applies to the current year (1996). The Board changed this regulation at their March meeting by increasing the bag limit to 2 beaver per day. This means, that beginning in the spring of 1997, you may take 2 beaver per day with a firearm between April 16 and June 1. In addition, the law requires that the meat of beavers taken during the spring season must be salvaged for human consumption.

If you have questions, please contact me at ADF&G, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701 (907) 459-7236, or Craig Fleener at 662-2747 in Fort Yukon.

Sincerely,

**Bob Stephenson**  
Fort Yukon Area Biologist

# **SUMMARIES OF FURBEARER MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

## **SOUTHEAST REGION**

by

**Southeast Regional Furbearer Coordinator, Rod Flynn**

The department has a limited furbearer research and management program in the Southeast Region. Research activities have focused on martens with the completion of a fifth year of field work on northern Chichagof Island. In addition, marten carcasses were collected from several areas - the Ketchikan area, Prince of Wales Island, and northern Chichagof Island - to monitor the age composition of the catch and female productivity. The numbers of beavers, land otters, lynx, martens, wolves, and wolverines taken were monitored by area managers from the sealing of their pelts. The rest of the furbearers do not need to be sealed and our only sources of information were from fur export reports, trapper reports, and this survey. Some furbearers are rare in Southeast Alaska. For example, red foxes and coyotes are only occasionally reported. A fisher carcass was found along the Taku River last year, the first confirmed fisher record for Southeast. We like to receive information on all furbearers and appreciate your reports.

Martens are the furbearer taken in the largest numbers by trappers in Southeast Alaska. Since the 1988-89 trapping season, the number of martens trapped in Southeast Alaska has averaged 2,310 animals. In comparison, an average of 404 otters and 207 wolves were taken each year over the same time period. Broken down by Game Management Unit, the greatest numbers of martens were usually taken from Units 4 (34%), 2 (32%), and 1A (12%). The remainder of the units (1B, 1C, 1D, 3, and 5) provided less than 10% of the average regional catch. During the 1994-95 trapping season, 2,165 martens were taken by trappers in Southeast, or slightly fewer than the 5-year average. By Game Management Unit, marten catches in Units 1C, 1D, 2, and 5A were greater than the 5-year average; Units 1A, 1B, 3, and 4 were less than the average. The marten take in Unit 4 has decreased each year since a high of 2,104 animals in 1991-92. In 1994-95, the marten catch in Unit 4 (241) was 89% less than the high and 69% less than the five-year average.

On our northeast Chichagof Island study area, we estimated a density of 1.3 martens per square mile during late winter in 1995. During the same period in 1994, our density estimate was 0.7 martens per square mile. Thus, our data indicated that marten numbers increased about 86% on northeast Chichagof Island. The population increase has resulted mostly from increased production of young. Also, we have observed a reduction in mortality of adult martens. Based on the carcass work, female martens should have reproduced at near maximum levels in spring 1995. With the increased recruitment, a larger percentage of juvenile martens should be available in 1995-96. We have found that small mammal prey (mice and voles) have increased in number

since 1992 and provide a good food source for the martens. When vole numbers are high, the martens feed mostly on them and populations appear to do well. During years with low vole numbers, the martens feed on a variety of foods including squirrels, birds, carrion, and salmon. Because most female martens do not reach reproductive maturity until they are 2 years old, it takes 3 to 4 years for a marten population to recover from low numbers. We are probably seeing this slow recovery in Unit 4 now.

For further information on these and other furbearer related projects, contact Rod Flynn at his Douglas office at 465-4353.

## **SOUTHCENTRAL REGION**

by

**Southcentral Regional Furbearer Coordinator, Howard Golden**

Our furbearer management and research projects focused on lynx, martens, wolverines, wolves, river otters, coyotes, and snowshoe hares. We've geared most of our work toward testing and developing new techniques for monitoring fur populations. Of course, we still rely a great deal on what you trappers tell us you've been seeing on your lines, but we do need additional information to do a better job of fur resource management.

### **Lynx Management Model Development**

We're nearly ready to send out copies of a lynx management model called "LynxTrak", which will help us follow the lynx tracking harvest strategy. This strategy allows the department to increase or decrease lynx seasons depending on population levels and trends during the 9-11 year lynx cycle. The modeling approach we're using is based on the same type of decision-making logic we all use to get along in life. Sometimes we may be able to use hard facts and figures to guide us and at other times all we can do is give it our best shot based on experience. We're using a computer program to help us build a model that combines quantitative data and qualitative knowledge. It lets us take harvest data, trapper observations, our own ground and aerial track surveys, and information from the wildlife literature and consider them all together. The big advantage of a model such as this is that it helps us remember to consider all of the important things so that we reach clear, logical, and consistent decisions. We'll be asking many trappers who live in the road-connected areas of Alaska where the tracking harvest strategy is used to help us test the model.

### **Distribution and Trend of Marten, Lynx, and Snowshoe Hare Populations**

We recently completed one phase in our testing and development of techniques to monitor changes in the distribution and trend of lynx, marten, and snowshoe hare populations. We set up a cooperative study to determine how much variation there is in how the tracks of these species are deposited and retained over time in different areas. As you might guess, we found track counts varied a lot from day to day. But when we allowed tracks to accumulate over several days,

a good deal of the variation was eliminated; that is, track counts showed a more straight-line increase over time. This was good to find out because it means we can use track counts as indicators of population change. However, we need to be careful because there is still plenty of variability in track counts. For example, we found track counts would often start to level out or actually decline after 3-4 days following a snowfall, due to track overlap, snow evaporation, or some other cause.

We've used track counts in the past to monitor population changes and we'll continue to use them in the future, but we'll be careful about how we use them. We'll probably never get to the point where we can rely on track counts as our only monitoring method. We'll always need to consider trapper observations, harvest levels, small mammal abundance, and other factors in tracking furbearer trends. We'll also be looking more closely at a couple of other things to improve our techniques. One of these is to determine how well different people count tracks from the air so that we can train better observers. Another is to measure differences in the sightability of tracks in different types of forest. Our research, and that of other studies, has shown lynx and snowshoe hares prefer middle-aged forests and marten generally use heavily wooded forests and some recently burned areas. Because these animals tend to occur in those habitats, it's important to be able to compare track counts between areas. To do that, we may need to develop correction factors for the different habitat types.

#### Wolf and Wolverine Density and Trend

We continue to make progress in the development of techniques to estimate the density of wolves and wolverines through aerial surveys of tracks in snow. So far, we've used these surveys to estimate densities of wolves in GMUs 7,11,13,14,15, and 16 and wolverines in GMUs 7,11,13,14 and 15. The techniques seem to be reliable when conducted under favorable survey conditions where snow is fresh and forest cover is not too thick. More research is underway to verify the accuracy of these techniques, which we will soon use on a regular basis in trend areas across the state. In addition to the above research on density estimation, we continue to investigate the distribution, movements, habitat use, and harvest patterns of wolverines in three areas of Southcentral. We spend most of our effort in the eastern Talkeetna Mountains, where we have several radio-collared wolverines. We are cooperating with the National Park Service in the Wrangell Mountains and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service on the Kenai Peninsula. One of our most important objectives is to use the data we gather and information from previous studies of wolverines to improve our ability to determine sustainable harvest levels.

#### Coastal River Otter Populations

In April, 1995, we began a study of coastal river otter populations in Kachemak Bay on the Kenai Peninsula. The main objective of the study is to try to develop a reliable technique to monitor river otter population changes. To do this, we will use the coastal river otter's habit of using latrine sites near shore to determine their relative abundance. We caught 4 otters and surgically implanted radio transmitters in their abdomens to determine how they use their habitat. The movements of these animals and the use of latrine sites by all otters in the area should provide us

with information about the importance of certain habitat features and the potential effects of logging and human development on population densities. We'll also be examining the food habits of these otters through scat analysis. This study should help us in determining sustainable harvest levels of coastal river otters. We'll be expanding this work into Prince William Sound in cooperation with the University of Alaska later this year.

### **Coyotes in the Anchorage Bowl**

A study of the coyote population in the Fort Richardson area near Anchorage began this winter. This is a cooperative study with ADF&G and the U.S. Army. The objectives of the study are to (1) estimate the distribution and relative abundance of coyotes on the fort, (2) determine home range sizes, movements, productivity, food habits, and winter habitat, (3) locate dens, and (4) estimate snowshoe hare abundance. So far, ADF&G staff, with the assistance of a local trapper, have live captured and radio collared 2 coyotes. Trapping will continue throughout the winter.

For further information on these and other furbearer related projects, contact Howard Golden at his Anchorage office at 267-2177.

## **INTERIOR REGION**

by

**Interior Regional Furbearer Coordinator, Mark McNay**

### **The Lynx Cycle, Population Surveys, and Trapping Seasons in the Tanana Basin**

As most trappers know from experience, lynx numbers increase and decline in a surprisingly regular 10 year cycle. For almost 200 years harvest records from Canada have documented the regularity of this cycle. Records of Alaskan lynx harvests, which have been kept for about 85 years, show the same pattern of periodic peaks in the lynx catch. This cycle in the life history of the lynx is easy to explain; it is caused by the 10 year cycle in the snowshoe hare population. Lynx are specialists in preying on hares, and don't do well when hares are absent.

The cycle in the hare population is not so easy to explain. Since the 1920s various theories have been advanced to explain the hare cycle. Weather cycles, cycles in food availability, disease eruptions, predation, and even sunspots have been theorized as primary factors creating the hare cycle. The most recent and widely accepted explanation for the hare cycle includes a combination of these factors. The theory evolved from a 16 year study of hares in Alberta.

In brief, the Alberta theory suggests that hares increase until they begin to overbrowse their food supply and reduce the amount of new plant growth that becomes available each year. When hares begin to run out of food, they produce smaller litters and adults begin to die from starvation and become more susceptible to the effects of weather, disease, and predation. All those factors combine to increase annual mortality and the hare population begins to decline. Predator populations, such as lynx, which have increased because of the abundance of hares, begin to have

an increasingly significant affect on the hare population when hare numbers decline. Eventually predation drives the hare population to a level that is very low, even lower than the depleted vegetation could support. Having depleted their own food supply, the predators die, leave the area, or switch to other food sources.

Once the predators are gone hares are able to increase rapidly because each year they can have up to 4 litters with 2-4 young in each litter. Predators reproduce more slowly than hares and it takes them some time to catch up with the increasing hares, so after the low in the hare cycle, hares can increase rapidly and the cycle begins anew.

To manage these roller coaster populations of lynx the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has adopted a policy of tightly restricting the harvest of lynx during the low and increasing phases of the cycle, and liberalizing harvests during the high and declining phases of the cycle. In those areas where the trapping pressure is high we must make frequent changes in seasons to accomplish that harvest management.

Currently lynx are emerging from the low in their population cycle and the Department reduced the lynx season in some portions of interior Alaska to 1 month (15 December - 15 January) for the 1995-96 season. We arrived at that decision after reviewing survey information, trapper questionnaire results, harvest records, and discussions with leader of local trapping organizations.

Aerial surveys in eastern and central portions of the Tanana basin were conducted in February and March of 1995. Patterns of hare and lynx tracks mapped on those surveys suggest that lynx numbers were low throughout the Tanana basin, but hare numbers were beginning to increase in the area around Tok. In game management Unit 20A, south of Fairbanks, hares and lynx existed in localized "pockets" and large areas of suitable habitat were devoid of both lynx and hares.

Department biologists collected 84 lynx carcasses taken by trappers during the 1994-95 season. Examination of the reproductive tracts from adult females showed that the number of kittens produced by females in the eastern interior, where hares were most abundant, was higher than the number of kittens produced in the central interior where hares were less abundant.

Early reports from trappers during the 1995-96 seasons indicate that hare numbers are increasing throughout the Tanana Basin; if so, lynx may start to increase soon. However, we have unusually low snow levels throughout interior Alaska this year and hares probably do best when snow levels progressively increase throughout the winter. Because they are well adapted to running on top of the snow, they more easily escape predators like foxes and coyotes when the snow is deep. In addition, increasing snow depths allow hares to reach higher and higher into the willow and birch shrubs, thereby increasing their available food supply.

Biologists will continue to monitor the lynx population cycle in interior Alaska and trappers will see increased seasons as the cycle builds momentum and lynx approach another 10 year peak.

Wolverine Research in the Upper Kuskokwim Drainage

In the western interior, within the upper drainage of the Kuskokwim River, biologists are planning research into wolverine movements and densities. Concern over low wolverine populations in the lower 48 states have prompted some groups to ask the federal government to list the wolverine as an endangered species. In Alaska wolverine populations are widespread and healthy, but it is difficult to estimate wolverine numbers. To insure wolverine harvests are managed correctly, we need the ability to periodically estimate wolverine population size.

Biologists will radio tag a number of wolverine in the upper Kuskokwim this winter to determine population size and to estimate the distance wolverines travel in a day. With that information biologists hope to develop survey techniques that will allow us to estimate wolverine numbers in several key areas in the interior. Similar studies are being conducted in south central Alaska. The combined results from these studies should provide survey techniques that will improve management of wolverines and insure that wolverine populations remain well distributed and abundant in Alaska.

For further information on these and other furbearer related projects, contact Mark McNay at his Fairbanks office at 459-7261.

# APPENDIX 1. TRAPPER COMMENTS, 1994-95

## SOUTHEAST REGION

All traps should have trap tags with the trappers name and current address. Areas being trapped should be marked with trap signs stating trappers name or license number, along with the year it is being trapped, to allow ADF&G and the public to know there is trapping effort in the area. Deer hunting should be closed earlier or trapping season opened later in my area to stop problems between hunters and trappers - I have a lot of problems with hunters fouling my wolf traps and otter sets.

For several years I've trapped land otter and I feel that I am somewhat successful at it. I've used leg traps 100% of the time and had good luck with them. The last season I experimented with a few snares and conibears. The conibears out-produced the snares but did not come close to the leghold traps. Just wanted to express my opinion on this.

In the seventeen straight years on the same trapline my ratio for male-female marten has rarely gone over 25% females. This year it was 0% females. My most effective sets for marten are blind (non-baited) sets. In fact some years I use no bait at all. Exactly why this occurs I cannot say but these types of sets are only effective with leg-hold traps. I have tried conibear traps and have found them not as efficient although the conibears will catch. The bottom line is I'm out there to catch fur and to try and make sure there is fur for the next season. For marten the leg-hold trap is the most effective tool I have to insure that I not only take fur in any given season but for seasons to come.

In the areas of my line that clearcut logging occurred several years back the marten populations have either been displaced or have been eliminated, of the latter I feel is the case.

I wish the department would take a more serious attitude in documenting our wolf predation problems here in southern Southeast before we lose more isolated deer populations to the most blood-thirsty, marathon swimming, prolific, wasteful and yes cruel predator I've ever had the pleasure to trap and kill. Thanks for this opportunity to comment, my opinions may not be politically correct, but then I'm a realistic person trying to feed my family.

I'd like to see registered trap lines and the wolf-wolverine season shortened - December 1st to March 15th or April 1st.

As I stated earlier, there were a lot more trappers everywhere I went. Most were agreeable to me trapping the same area. Many of these areas I had trapped for over fifteen years off and on. I have no problem sharing an area with other trappers. In an area like Juneau, there is no other

alternative. For example, during the summer, I can't lay claim to my favorite fishing hole and expect others to stay out. Thank you for the opportunity to air my views.

The shoreline from Eagle Beach to Echo Cove should be reopened to trapping - at least to small traps, 110's, 120's, etc. This will take some of the pressure off the road accessible streams, as there are very few of these, and the effort is too concentrated. Not everyone has a jetboat or snow machine.

Consider opening Area 1 November 1st. Fur is prime at this time, and can't see logical reason for December 1st opener. It seems that the weather turns harsh just prior to opening day, concentrating trapping effort along roadsides and beach areas. This isn't snow machine country, and a guy can only snowshoe so far. As a recreational trapper, I would certainly like to be able to cover more backcountry in the limited time available, and with most trails in this area closed, and a very limited road system, an earlier opening, in November, would provide that opportunity.

ADF&G. should investigate the feral cat situation around Eagle River north of Juneau. I did not trap the area last year, but after passing through the area to check game sign I found mostly cat tracks. Took a couple of cats, one of which was nursing kittens. I have trapped this area for 12 years and have seen occasional cat sign but the population has now exploded.

Would like to see trappers have an area and trapline of their own to manage. The foothold trap is a good trap. It has been used for years. As long as the trapper is experienced and doesn't put out more traps than he can care for. I do think that the conibear and the snare are more humane. The change in sets takes time if one is used to footholds, which may result in less catch and can be very time consuming. I love my time I spend on the trap line. It's become part of my life, and can't see myself not being able to go out and spend my winters on the trap line.

I am 68 years old and have trapped close to 40 years. I have been able to maintain two lines and three girlfriends, but am slowing down. I will have to shorten my lines or drop one lady. I think \_\_\_\_\_ will have to go, but I'm not going to tell her till December 1.

I still believe in trapline registration as a tool for trapline management.

I feel that due to the falling prices of some furs it is better not to trap a species that does not have a good market. It is better to let them live and reproduce. I find that the market for Southeast Alaska fur, marten and wolf, is not a highly priced fur as the northern fur. I enjoy reading the Trapper Questionnaire Report - I find it very educational and informative. Thanks for listening to us!

My son and I trap only for the fun and thrill of it. If we catch 1-2 animals per week that is just about right. This year we caught about three and it was starting to be like work.

I don't know about the marten population on NE Chichagof Island, but after being entirely shut down last season, I think the rest of the island could support the regular season this year.

I don't think that Europeans should tell us how to trap our fur, however, I don't think legholds are vital to catching mink, marten, or otter.

As I said the last two years the marten season should be shortened to the first month of the season. This will help the population in my area by not allowing a trapper to take most of the females in a given area. It seems that after the first three or four weeks, you stop catching the wandering males but keep catching the resident females and without females, of course, you don't have marten to resupply the diminishing stock. Also I think that the closure of Chichagof Island was a joke. If you want to shut down the logging roads that's fine. But to close the 300 miles plus of beaches including Slocum, North Arm of Hoonah Sound, Peril Strait, Lisianski, etc. is wrong. Once again, if you're worried about the population, shorten the season, don't close down the whole island because of a study done in a specific area.

Tell the U.S. Forest Service to mind their own business about the ABC islands.

Why do we hire state game managers to set trapping laws only to have them overruled by federal bureaucrats? The area I normally trap (West Chichagof) which the feds closed last season has had fluctuations in animal abundance but I feel this is more due to weather and availability of prey species than trapping effort. I've never seen another trapper in this area. When animals are plentiful I increase my trapping time, if not, I shorten it. I don't believe this affects the overall health of the species. It strikes me that last year's closure of this area was more a federal power play than anything to do with game management and hopefully the state can re-take control next season.

## **SOUTHCENTRAL REGION**

Doing a good job - Need to do more to get control of all wildlife back to the State of Alaska. Shouldn't have stopped the control wolf trapping - hope it continues again this coming winter.

Saw very little sign early in the year of coyote and wolf. Good sign showed up in mid-February but the season was nearly over. After pulling sets we had sign all over. Found a few more beaver this year but we pushed a little into new territory. Harvested only one beaver a lodge and hope for good sign in 95-96!

How about holding a wolf trapping clinic in southcentral Alaska, either in Anchorage or Palmer?

The state would be better informed if this questionnaire were mandatory. And the trappers would be better off if the state spent more money on habitat protection than printing fancy covers and meaningless stats to justify the existence of so many non-essential personnel. The state should do everything possible to return management of Alaska's resources to the people of the state, not the federal (king's men).

I have four boys growing up so my work is cut out for me! My two oldest boys have their own rabbit snare line and have caught a couple of fox also on that line this year. I would like to see more fish and wildlife protection in my area - at least once checking trapping licenses. I think the biggest problem I've seen in the ten years I've trapped is airplanes taking wolves and otter and wolverine. I thank you for this opportunity to say something about this effort you are making. My family and I do enjoy trapping and will for many years.

Wolves, wolves, and more wolves up to 50 seen a day, up to 17 in one pack. Not many caribou wintered in our area, so the moose were hammered by the wolves, wolves, and more wolves. Too much politics in game management, the state needs to let the biologists manage the game.

Too much work (main profession), too little play. No time to run the length line I have in previous years. After six years of attempting to snare, I finally learned how and all by trial and error. I'll still never give up my legholds!

I don't trap foxes, beaver, and other species because the price is too low on them. I'm not going to kill an animal for a price that won't cover my time.

Enforce aerial wolf regulations! 90% of wolves and a large number of wolverine taken in this area are illegally taken by airplanes or snowmobiles.

A November 1 opening for Southcentral for all species would be good. Tagging traps is a hassle and I don't want enforcement goofing with my sets to see if there's a tag on them. They can leave a calling card or whatever or wait until I get there if they want to talk to me. Tagging requirements for traps would invite unwanted disturbance of sets and could lead to harassment of trapper if name and address were on the tags. Is there some particular problem that enforcement is trying to address by suggesting mandatory trap ID or are they just trying to make their job easier?

Concerning tags on traps I would not like to see them required because of the following reasons:

1. It identifies the trapper name to everyone and may cause future harassment from the anti-trapping public.
2. Trap tags get torn off by predators, especially coyote etc. I trapped in Wisconsin where tags were required and had to constantly check for missing tags after each catch.
3. Tags can be stolen and used on illegal sets.
4. It would be a simple matter for anyone to clip off a tag to make the trap illegal and thus the trapper would be violating the law.
5. Most trappers here in Alaska advertise their trapline activities with local trappers, etc.

It was interesting to note that the majority of trappers responding to the survey supported the future use of the leghold trap regardless of the EEC threatened ban on furs shipped to Europe. It seems that the Alaskan trappers were not coerced into giving up their right to sound resource management of furbearers in order to appease the animal rights and anti-movement. There will always be a market for wild fur throughout the world!

Trapping was on a low key this year. What few furs were caught were sent to the tannery except for the muskrats and mink shipped to the international fur auctions in Canada. The prices were

low for the rats and mink. The rats averaged around \$1.25 and the mink averaged \$16.00. I had two otter sets that produced six otters during the season. These set locations have always been good producers in past years. The other highlight for the season was a mink set that caught four mink - wish I had more of those! Thanks for the opportunity to respond to this survey.

I hope the November and December moose hunts in 14A, 14B, and 16 don't cause any problems for people trapping. The last thing anybody needs is a bunch of moose hunters following their trails.

I only will trap occasionally from now on for my own pleasure. As I have stated before, the marten season in Unit 16 is open at times convenient for only the residents of Unit 16 and/or aircraft trappers, excluding us that have to wait for ice to form on the Susitna River. It's too bad the Board is prejudiced against Unit 14 residents that wish to trap Unit 16 - but it has been so for many years now.

Regarding beaver season in 13 and 14, to extend it to May 15th is not wise. The last beavers I caught in the end of April were red rumped, blue skinned, and rubbed, basically useless. To move the beginning from October to November hurts me very much. I rely on those couple of days worth of open water trapping at the end of October. It lets me get beaver skins (fresh) to the first auctions of the season when prices are best. Plus these beaver all grade good and prime. You guys really hurt my income! Also, mushers want to buy carcasses early, not in the spring. So I lose income here also.

Overall, the biologists appear to be doing a good job! We should continue to let them do a good job and KEEP the politicians out of the system.

Keep up the good work. This survey is a very good communication tool. Keep political pressure from governing sound management decisions. Forget the E.E.C. If they don't want our furs, we will find other markets that do. If they ban importation of our furs we should ban importation of their autos. If they screw our economy we screw theirs. An eye for an eye. Does a mink suffer less than a marten in a leghold? This makes no sense. Why ban importation of leghold caught marten, but allow importation of leghold caught mink? Or is it just that they need our mink worse than they need our marten? We need to separate animals from people here. No wild animals spend their old age in pampered retirement homes - they normally die while suffering to a much greater extent than they would experience in a leghold trap.

I feel the ADF&G is doing a pretty good job overall with fur management. I would like to see trapper/hunter education in the schools increased, like furbearer sustained yield. I have noticed many of today's teachers are basically anti-fur and anti-trapping (especially in Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla). This is a serious threat on the home front and affects local attitudes toward trappers. Increased fur management awareness is what I would like to see.

I am in hopes that something is resolved on the European ban. If not I will have to seek another market for what fur I take. I would like to see the marten season extended to the end of February

again. This for two reasons, first being that I can move my lines around more to put less impact on one area, and second to take advantage of better weather.

I had to go out of state for training on my full time job and missed most of the season. My partner, a new trapper, ran a small line, learned a lot and took some fur. He is really hooked now and we are looking forward to next season. Had some bad trappers in the bunch and saw early sets, late sets, stolen fur and stolen traps. Saw more coyotes and less wolf, not sure why.

Marten reappeared in Valdez area this past year - first time in a decade or more.

I appreciate the information contained in the questionnaire report and although I did not take the opportunity to run a trapline last year, I plan to in the future. I would like to see an extension (later start if necessary) on the river otter season as they are just becoming prime at the time it closes.

It seems the whole trapping industry is headed towards a program of removal strictly for management, not for utilization of a resource. When all of us "old" trappers are gone how are you going to gather your information? You all do a good job, keep up the good work!

Concerning the EU ban - it will have an effect on all Alaskan trappers whether it be financial - or style of trapping. Rather than letting someone else make a decision for us, I think we should voice our opinion. Trappers are an independent type and because of this our state association is probably made up of a small % of the actual number of trappers. If Fish and Game could include in the yearly questionnaire or even a separate questionnaire the basic choices of trappers and their possible repercussions and then publish the results you would be doing us a great service. Questions I would like to see answers to include: Do you agree that if trappers do not change our methods to conform to a humane trapping standard we could possibly lose a major part of our fur market? Would you change your method of taking furbearers to conform to a humane trapping standard? Should our political representatives get more involved with helping trappers solve this problem?

Extend otter season into February to be able to trap beaver also at same time. Beavers are blocking key salmon streams and are not native to Kodiak. Raise limit on beaver too. If someone wants to trap them let them get as many as they want. My furbuyer doesn't care for Kodiak's red beavers. Proper beaver management could be critical in future small salmon runs on certain small streams. Join the Alaska Trappers Association!!! Support wolf management and don't listen to emotional outside issues from non-sportsmen and women.

Weather bum, traveling bum, prices bum.

This is the first time in over two decades that I've not trapped. I missed it more than I thought I would. Even my dog noticed the funny looks I was giving her in the late spring.

Due to my efforts to reactivate a predator control program in 20A, and to promote reinstatement of aerial wolf hunting in Alaska, I was unable to devote time to trapping in 1994-95. I do plan to trap in 1995-96 though.

The reason I have not trapped the last few years is there are too many trail riders on my line these days. I trapped all along one creek but since it is on BLM maps for trail rides it is hard to keep a line going. People steal your fur and traps and also run over my traps so I lost that fight. If I can find a good area with less people then I will gear up for the trap line. I enjoyed trapping wolf and wolverine the most and they don't like people so I had to give it up for now.

I always enjoy filling out the trapping questionnaire. You state game biologists are doing a good job considering the pressure you are under. Don't let politics interfere with your decision making processes concerning management of game. I would like to see an earlier trapping date for wolf. In my wanderings around the brush I always see lots of wolf sign in October, but can never set it up because season doesn't open til Nov. 10. I have to mention one point about the so-called tourism boycott threat that we hear every year from the animal lovers - especially concerning hunting and trapping issues. I'm in the tourist business 5 months out of the year, May-September, and our business has increased, not decreased. Just about every business I talked to feel the same way. So don't let the so-called tourism boycott threat from the animal lovers influence your decision making.

Not sure what the answer to the snow machine problem is, but we need something done. Fox and wolves are the main species these idiots chase, but they will chase anything they can chase and shoot. We don't have any more snow machiners than the past several years, but sure an increase in irresponsible ones.

I am only a recreational trapper. I enjoy the sport and greatly appreciate your efforts in protecting our rights to hunt and trap.

People are everywhere. Its exploded in the last two years. Snow machiners everywhere. First time ever since trapping in Alaska I've had traps and fur stolen.

We could really manage furbearers better with registered traplines. The marten season in the upper Susitna Valley should be adjusted to a later time when conditions are more conducive to traveling - when rivers are froze up.

I enjoy trapping but with prices low, I may not continue. Too much work for so little return. As the State of Alaska promotes salmon, timber, tourism, oil, etc. shouldn't it promote fur consumption?

Putting wolves on a predator list is not a good idea. Neither is a bounty. Trapper education through Alaska Trapper Association wolf trapping school is best wolf control measure the state can have and use. Promote by requesting a school from A.T.A. in your area - it works.

The lynx population seems to be on an upswing as do the rabbits in my area. Lynx are showing up and living in areas they haven't been in for many years. Four pairs of kittens were living in a fairly small area on my line. Other trappers report the same in their area. It will be interesting to see if this rabbit/lynx trend continues. Foxes seemed to be in pockets with few in-between, despite a good prey base. Overall fur quality of the foxes caught was not as good as past years.

I believe there is an abundance of wolverine in GMU 13 and I think ADF&G should consider extending the season.

With the Denali Highway open year round we have seen a decline in furbearers the last few years.

Very high populations of wolverine. I have never seen so much wolverine sign! The wolverines I took were all large males. The wolverine season should be lengthened and extended to no limit like the rest of the state! As the fur is cyclic it would be nice to have longer seasons for when a species is high - we can trap longer and take more animals. I believe most trappers are like myself, and when the marten or cats are low, we leave them alone. Of course when wolverine or whatever is high, we can take more of them. Also, longer seasons are needed as the trapping conditions go from bad-good etc.

I would like to suggest ADF&G train a couple of people in each community to sedate moose and caribou so they can be removed from snares and traps.

The prices I got on my marten were low due to the quality of the fur, i.e., they weren't primed out because of the short, early season. I would like to see this season either lengthened or moved back a month. Also there should be a bounty or open season for rude snow machiners.

In my portion of Unit 13 I don't believe a calf moose has survived the winter in the past three years! Wolves and bears get most before the fall hunting season, based on track observations as well as glassing from across the valley.

If a trapper is known to be trapping in an area and Fish and Game is flying for counts, forward information on wolves to the trapper so he can help control the wolf population.

If the EEC ban goes into effect don't let people from those countries buy an Alaskan hunting or fishing license.

With the caribou not in the area the wolf were not there. Only seen one wolf cross my trail this year.

We have a good trapping cabin where we would like to trap marten but each year there seems to be less and less. The whole trail you may see only one or two signs. So we and other trappers think it is better if we let them build up. However, that doesn't seem to be the problem as we don't believe it was ever over-trapped. Maybe its because the winters are a lot warmer than they ever used to be.

I have been trapping since I was 13 and feel I have a fair knowledge of animal populations in my area. I think that there are probably more people like me out there who could help you on animal counts and I think the trapper questionnaire is a good idea.

Keep the surveys coming, it's good to hear how others across the state are doing. There is too much politics involved with game management. ADF&G should have the sole power to manage wildlife as they see fit (if it means reducing wolf in certain game units then so be it). The commissioner should not serve at the pleasure of the governor and push his agenda. It is bad for the wildlife and it is bad for the sportsman and rural residents.

I could do better with a longer marten season. My creek doesn't freeze over till late January. Having it open for marten till the end of February will help.

## **INTERIOR REGION**

No changes in fur sign. Plenty of wolves and wolverine. Seem to follow the caribou migration (right through your marten line). I did not run all lines. Can't find me a partner, young or old, that wants to stay out all winter. So I guess after we're gone there will be no more trappers out there. Too bad.

An airplane harassed my trapline all winter. I want to talk to somebody about it.

Many trappers, myself included, feel strongly about preserving our right to trap with our traditional tools of the trade. We don't want government or animal rights advocates determining our trapping techniques for us, based on which way the political wind is blowing. We use the tools that we determine best suit each particular situation. What works for one trapper may be ineffective for another. What is or is not humane is debatable and will no doubt be argued about forever. We have learned over and over again that you cannot compromise with animal rights advocates. NO COMPROMISE, not one link on one chain.

Too many wolves, aerial wolf hunting must be reopened. Also, tell the EU to go to hell.

Wolves are on the rise in our area. Saw many more moose kills than usual. I hope ADF&G can manage game through sound biological logic and not what the anti's dictate. We appreciate the effort our negotiators are doing with the "EU" ban.

You guys do a fine job and your efforts with helping trappers are greatly appreciated. Keep up the good work.

Strongly fight for our right of choice in method of taking furbearers (protect leghold trap use). The main purpose of ban on leghold is supposed to be "it's not humane" - yet no method is deemed acceptable - there's a question if the conibear meets guidelines. And. . . I once witnessed a marten getting caught in a 110 conibear and saw it is not an "instant kill" trap and seemed worse

than the leghold for pain inducement! The conibear is "dangerous" too in that a person can break a finger in a small one or hand in larger one and not be able to get it loose (takes two hands to set). I once had a 330 conibear have its locks come loose and trap "went off" in a backpack and almost got me by the neck. I'm not especially "pleased" with them. It's not possible to have a choice of turning an animal loose with conibear "killer" traps. More than once I've turned poorly furred animals loose from legholds and once caught the same fox the next year - bigger, better furred and fetched more money. And I know of pet dogs and cats turned loose from legholds and not having any permanent damage. So - I strongly support the continued use of legholds!

The shorter lynx season is not needed in the western part of 20C.

I like the new format for the report. I'm very disappointed at ADF&G's decision to further shorten the lynx season in GMU 20. Until you have empirical data to support this type of action, its inappropriate to burden trappers. The decision flies in the face of observations by trappers and fur-buyers in the area.

My trapping efforts were less and I put a lot of time in on my trapline with my boys. My 8 and 9 year olds put a lot of effort into squirrel and weasel trapping. I plan to trap hard this coming season.

Current prices only warrant sport trapping on my line. I have room for expansion but if I cut out my old trails people move in on areas which are marginal habitat and rotated (biannual) - they hit them if I don't have sets out even harder than the year I do. If work is scarce and I have to rely more on the fur money more drastic measures will be taken than in the past. Trapper education does not straighten out the "trapper" with a single digit IQ. Much of my area would not recover in 7 to 10 years even if left totally alone. I'm only setting token traps (some without scent or bait) to discourage these cheechakoes. The only areas with harvestable populations are locations I've left the trail impassable to their snow machines. Some laws or regulations to protect the established, knowledgeable trappers are needed if traditional trapping is to prevail.

Close units 20A-20D, 13, and 12 to taking of lynx until populations increase. Most new trappers will continue to trap these cats while at low levels.

I would like to see the wolf season open October 20. They are real active then and its about the ideal time to use snares. Though travel is difficult then I think it would help to reduce the overpopulation in some areas. Though the hair length isn't great it still is good enough to sell to tourists.

Beaver around Galena are so overpopulated they are starving.

Marten population has fallen dramatically this past season. I will not trap for them this next season unless there is a marked improvement. All other furbearers seem to be at good numbers for the amount of prey available.

I believe the Alaska delegation should support the Alaskan way of life (depending on our wildlife) from the opposition of other countries. The delegation should resolve the problem with leghold traps. We at the villages of Alaska have been trappers of furbearers since time immemorial. When we need clothing we must go out and trap furbearers for that. We should not be required to follow any rules and regulations from foreign countries. Our fur industry in Alaska is a vital one that has the potential to sustain the economic depression that some are saying will happen. There should be a statewide forum of this very important issue soon.

I would like to see some kind of protection on trap lines. Lots of infringement. No legal recourse. Some one could get injured in trap line disputes.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

**If you have questions pertaining to your specific area, please let your local area biologist know that you would like to hear from him/her regarding your concerns. Thank you all for your comments. We appreciate hearing from you, and I am sure that other trappers enjoy reading about what's going on in areas outside of their trapping grounds.**

**Sincerely,**

**Steve Peterson  
Statewide Furbearer Coordinator**

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