



# *Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

## **STATE FURBEARER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER**

**Spring 2011**

**Wildlife Division P.O. Box 200701 Helena MT 59620-0701**

This newsletter is provided through Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) state furbearer program to inform trappers, hunters, the public, and department personnel about current furbearer management activities and issues in the state of Montana – Brian Giddings, State Furbearer Coordinator.

### **LEGISLATION - TRAPPER EDUCATION**

During the 2011 legislative session Representative Pat Connell of Corvallis sponsored HB 475 that would require first time general trapper license buyers to complete a trapper safety and education course. A coalition of organizations that included the Montana Trapper's Association, Montana Furbearer Conservation Alliance, Montana Woolgrowers Association, Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Wildlife Federation, and Montana Farmers Union was formed to support this bill during the session. These groups, trappers, and FWP all testified in support of the bill during committee hearings. HB475 passed the full House, and as of this writing was passed in the Senate Fish & Game committee. This legislation is important to demonstrate that newly licensed trappers have proper training and are responsible trappers and also that mandatory trapper education may help to avoid future regulations and public conflicts.

### **2011 FURBEARER HARVEST QUOTAS**

Harvest quotas for the 2011-12 furbearer seasons will be tentatively adopted by the

FWP Commission at their upcoming June 9, 2011 meeting in Helena. Trapping district quotas are in place for otter, bobcat, fisher, wolverine, and swift fox. Quota levels are adopted by the FWP Commission on an annual basis. Data on furbearer population trends, species harvest data, and trapper effort are evaluated in recommendations by FWP regarding quota changes. Trappers should try to attend the meeting or to receive copies of the proposed quotas contact the FWP Wildlife Division. The FWP Commission will take final action on furbearer harvest quotas at its August 11, 2011 meeting, after the public comment period on proposed quotas. Comments should be sent to FWP Commission, Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701 or through the FWP website at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov)

### **10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL YOUTH TRAPPER CAMP**

In working together for trapping's future the Montana Trapper's Association, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Montana 4-H will again be sponsoring the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Trapper Camp (YTC). The YTC is scheduled this year for June 10, 11, and 12, 2011 in Beaver Creek County Park south of Havre. A variety of classes are conducted for first year attendees from furbearer identification to water sets to pelt preparation and second year students from stretcher building to furbearer management. The third year advanced attendees may set up coyote trap/snare lines on ranches in the Bears Paw Mountains and/or water sets for beaver

throughout the weekend. Drawings and awards including donated traps and lure are presented to students at the end of camp. For more information and registration packets contact Fran or Jim Buell at 406-376-3178 or [7mbuell@itstriangle.com](mailto:7mbuell@itstriangle.com) Registration is due by May 15 but limited to 150 participants.

### **STATUS OF WOLVERINE & FISHER**

On December 14, 2010 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its 12-month petition finding to list the North American wolverine as an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The finding states that wolverine in the contiguous U.S. are a distinct population segment (DPS) from the rest of North America and are warranted for listing. However, an actual listing is precluded by higher priority listing actions by the USFWS with other species. Therefore the wolverine is a candidate species under an annual review of threats to the species, primarily climate change and the associated impacts on population vulnerability from warmer temperatures and the potential for declining snow pack.

Currently a 12-month petition finding is underway by the USFWS for the fisher. In 2010 a preliminary 90-day finding determined that the Northern Rocky Mountains population of fisher may be warranted for listing as an endangered or threatened species. The pending finding will also decide if fisher in the Northern Rocky Mountains of Idaho, Montana, and possibly Wyoming should be considered as a DPS. State wildlife agency comments on the status of fisher in both Idaho and Montana have been provided to the USFWS. The petition also highlights Montana's harvest season as being potentially detrimental to population persistence. FWP maintains that a closely regulated season with low harvest quotas in place is not causing a decline or threatens fisher in the Northern Rockies but accommodates, on a sustainable basis, the

interest in this unique harvest opportunity by Montana residents. Both harvest and survey records over the past 25 years indicate Montana's fisher population is stable and has actually expanded its distribution to some new forested habitats in northwestern and west-central Montana.

### **NEW SWIFT FOX SEASON IN 2010**

November 1, 2010 marked the opening day of the first swift fox season in Montana. With a harvest quota of 20 fox in the northern portion of trapping district 6 and a trapper limit of 3 foxes, the season ran until March 1, 2011. The FWP Commission adopted the season after considering recommendations by FWP clarifying the robust status of the species. FWP has funded and conducted research and survey activities on swift fox for over 15 years, which indicate a growing population in north central Montana. In addition to the swift fox harvest season, the FWP Commission also endorsed the translocation of 20 swift fox during the fall of 2010 to the Fort Peck Reservation to augment the recently established population.

### **AVERAGE PELT PRICE VALUES**

Average pelt prices listed below are from the February 2011 wild fur sale by North American Fur Auctions in Canada.

Species	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Beaver	25.21	16.74	16.57
Otter	30.85	51.10	57.63
Muskrat	2.55	4.23	6.66
Mink	11.53	17.39	17.48
Marten	37.58	47.76	61.98
Fisher	42.83	50.08	47.58
Wolverine	254.67	211.42	253.15
Bobcat	281.35	346.54	411.84
Coyote	30.70	35.29	73.16
Red Fox	21.59	22.34	24.37
Raccoon	17.86	18.02	18.50
Weasel	4.02	4.07	3.13
Skunk	2.32	2.34	2.11
Badger	24.80	72.56	24.12