



# *Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

## **STATE FURBEARER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER**

**Spring 2014**

**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.

### **FURBEARER HARVEST SURVEY**

Trappers need to please remember to return the 2013-2014 FWP furbearer harvest survey questionnaire that you received several weeks ago. It's made easy to return the completed survey with its enclosed postage paid envelope. This survey questionnaire is for you to report your trapping, hunting, or hound hunting activities for the 2013-2014 season. The information you provide is important to a successful state furbearer management program. Harvest data provides the information necessary to support the continuation of your harvest activities as a sound wildlife management strategy and assists FWP in maintaining the flexibility to manage your furbearer resources in Montana. The state furbearer program coordinates this management activity and many other FWP issues involving furbearer species. Thank you for taking the time to fill out and return this harvest questionnaire.

### **COMMISSION SETS REGULATIONS**

Furbearer regulations for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons and furbearer quotas for the 2014-15 season will be proposed to the FWP Commission at their upcoming May 22,

2014 meeting at Fort Peck just outside of Glasgow in Trapping District 6. Please note that this meeting has been moved up a month from the June meetings of the past, primarily so trapping regulations in general can be discussed at the same meeting for both furbearers and wolves. Wolf regulations would continue to be presented at the May meeting. There may be some proposed changes to furbearer regulations and trapping district quotas will be adopted for otter, bobcat, fisher, wolverine and swift fox for the 2014-15 season. Public comment will be taken at the meeting on any proposed changes. Furbearer quota levels are adopted by the FWP Commission on an annual basis while trapping regulations are adopted every other year. Data on species population trends, species harvest data, and trapper effort in each trapping district may be used to make proposed recommendations by FWP regarding any changes. Comments on any proposed changes 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) For this meeting, please check the FWP website to confirm date and location. Following a public comment period on the adopted proposals, the Commission will take final action on furbearer regulations and harvest quotas at its July 10, 2014 meeting in Missoula.

### **LYNX LAWSUIT IN MONTANA**

This lawsuit was filed in March of 2013 alleging the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Department of Fish Wildlife and

Parks has authorized trapping in occupied lynx habitat that has resulted in the illegal incidental take of lynx. The lynx is listed under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species in the United States.

FWP believes that recent, specific regulation changes made to reduce the incidental take of lynx and a limited exemption of lynx take in bobcat sets under the federal CITES bobcat tagging program provides a lack of standing by the plaintiffs in this case. This lawsuit continues to be ongoing at this time.

**Recommendations To Improve Trapping Efficiency, Selectivity, and Animal Welfare**

- Use pan tension devices to avoid non-target catches.
- Use extra swivels and center-mounted chains to hold more animals and reduce the chance of injuries occurring.
- Use modern positioning techniques at dirt hole sets to increase selectivity.
- Use short trap chains for most land sets and especially those targeted for fox and coyote.
- Use guarded or “stop-loss” traps for muskrats in shallow water or dry land sets.
- Use dispatching methods that are quick and humane.
- Use trap sizes that are appropriate for the target species – foot pad catches are desirable for fox, coyote, raccoon, and most other animals because they cause fewer injuries.
- Use baits and lures that attract target species but not other animals.
- Use cage, box, or species-specific traps near barns, outbuildings, and other locations where domestic animals may be present.
- Use common sense in choosing set locations that maximize opportunities to catch target species and minimize opportunities to catch other animals.
- Use secure methods of attaching traps – tailor methods to hold the largest species you may catch.
- Use traps with laminated jaws where the risk of non-target catches is high.
- Use discretion and select trap site placement carefully when setting body-gripping traps.
- Use time to your advantage – do not set more traps than you can handle.
- Use early morning trap checks to reduce the time an animal is held, reduce its chances of pulling out, and avoid theft of traps and animals.

**AVERAGE PELT PRICE VALUES**

Average pelt prices listed below are from the February 17-23, 2014 wild fur sale by North American Fur Auctions (NAFA) in Canada. The market has softened for otter, bobcat, and red fox but remains strong for muskrat, marten, and coyote, and fisher also sold well.

Species	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Beaver	38.22	30.91	22.50
Otter	102.29	112.58	65.46
Muskrat	10.19	11.51	11.41
Mink	23.14	29.05	21.10
Marten	55.94	84.70	85.92
Fisher	74.99	145.30	104.52
Wolverine	319.67	235.74	232.43
Bobcat	426.31	589.08	393.49
Coyote	77.30	93.98	90.67
Red Fox	57.49	65.78	47.29
Raccoon	19.45	27.56	21.61
Weasel	3.16	3.13	3.20
Skunk	7.30	4.26	4.26
Badger	38.61	25.45	24.38

**FURBEARER HABITATS**

Habitat conservation and maintenance are critical to the survival of furbearer species. Loss of wetlands, stream channelization, and the removal of bank cover by rural subdivision development or the loss of mature forest stands by excessive clearcutting, all contribute to a reduction in furbearer numbers and species diversity. As a trapper, become involved in land use decisions that affect these furbearer habitats.

**TRAPPER LICENSE SALES**

An increasing trend in trapper license sales continued through the 2012-2013 season, which is the most recent year with data. The sale of 6,299 licenses represents a 20% increase over the 5,503 licenses sold in 2011-2012 and is 35% above the 4,073 sold during 2010-2011. Although pelt prices have generally increased in value over the period, this probably does not only reflect an increase in trapping and hunting. Another explanation for this jump is likely the new wolf trapping opportunity that began in 2012.