



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

STATE FURBEARER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

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.

10th ANNUAL YOUTH TRAPPER CAMP

In working together for trappings future the Montana Trappers Association, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Montana 4-H will again sponsor the 10th annual Youth Trapper Camp (YTC). The YTC is scheduled for June 12, 13, and 14 south of Havre in Beaver Creek County Park. A variety of classes are conducted for first year and second year attendees from trap line safety and water sets to stretcher building and furbearer management. The third year advanced attendees may predator call and usually set up coyote trap/snare lines on ranches in the Bears Paw Mountains and water sets for beaver throughout the weekend. For more information and registration packets contact Fran Buell at 406-376-3178 or 7mbuell@itstriangle.com. Registration is due by May 15 but limited to 150 participants.

2009 FURBEARER HARVEST QUOTAS

Furbearer quotas for the 2009-10 season will be tentatively adopted by the FWP Commission at their upcoming June 25, 2009 meeting in Helena. Harvest quotas are in

place for otter, bobcat, fisher, and wolverine. 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 FWP recommendations regarding quota changes. Trappers should try to attend the meeting or to receive copies of the tentative quotas contact the FWP Wildlife Division or go to the FWP website. The Commission will take final action on furbearer harvest quotas at its August 13 meeting in Helena, which will follow a 30-day public comment period on the tentative quotas. Comments should be sent to FWP Commission, Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701 or through the FWP website at www.fwp.mt.gov.

GRAY WOLF DELISTING - AGAIN

For the second time, a final rule to establish a Gray Wolf – Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment and remove it from the federal list of Threatened and Endangered Species became effective May 4, 2009. The rule delists wolves in Montana, Idaho, eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of northcentral Utah. Wolves in Wyoming will remain under regulatory mechanisms of the ESA. The US Fish & Wildlife Service will continue to manage wolves in all of Wyoming under provisions of the 1994 nonessential experimental population rules. With the delisting, environmental groups have already stated their intent to challenge the federal

decision in court, by sending the required 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue letter to Interior Secretary Salazar. On May 4, Montana's state laws and the FWP Commission rules and regulations took effect. Under a biennial season setting process, last year the FWP Commission set a hunting-only season under a quota system beginning this September, unless litigation precludes the state's first public wolf hunt.

TRAPPER-RELATED LEGISLATION

During the 2009 legislative session FWP requested two bills be submitted, one was HB 62 sponsored by Representative Robin Hamilton of Missoula that would require first time general trapper license buyers to complete a trapper safety and education course. FWP, the MTA and the recently formed Montana Furbearer Conservation Alliance believe this legislation is important to demonstrate that licensed trappers have proper training and are responsible trappers and that mandatory trapper education may preclude additional regulation. HB 62 passed the House Fish & Game committee after a number of trappers testified in support of the bill and it then passed the full House on a 51-48 vote, but later stalled in the Senate Fish & Game committee with the absence of proponent testimony and eventually died. The same legislation died in a Senate committee during the 2007 session under similar circumstances.

The other bill was HB 63 sponsored by Representative J.P. Pomnichowski of Bozeman that would provide FWP authority to revoke a commercial fur dealer license for violations under the existing fur dealer statute. FWP does have the authority to revoke all other commercial licenses. HB 63 passed the House Fish & Game committee and initially passed the full House on a 50-49 vote, but apparently after trapper opposition to the bill, it was reconsidered on a 2nd reading that failed by a 46-54 vote so the bill was not transmitted to the Senate and died.

ESA PETITION TO LIST FISHER

On February 24, 2009 Defenders of Wildlife and several other environmental groups filed a petition with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to list the fisher under the Endangered Species Act. The groups are requesting that fisher in the Northern Rocky Mountains be designated as a Distinct Population Segment and then listed as federally threatened or endangered. The petition discusses threats under the five listing factors used by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and argues the Northern Rockies fisher population is distinct from other populations. The petition also highlights Montana's harvest season as being 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, and simply recognizes the interest in this unique harvest opportunity. Harvest and survey records over the past 25 years indicate Montana's fisher population has actually expanded in its distribution to occur in new habitats across northwestern and west-central Montana.

AVERAGE PELT PRICE VALUES

Average pelt prices are from the February 09 wild fur sale by North American Fur Auctions.

Species	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Beaver	23.49	24.80	25.21
Otter	80.00	40.91	30.85
Muskrat	3.20	3.23	2.55
Mink	12.88	15.22	11.53
Marten	61.57	77.29	37.58
Fisher	74.31	87.51	42.83
Wolverine	217.85	280.35	254.67
Bobcat	257.33	449.45	281.35
Coyote	43.36	37.90	30.70
Red Fox	20.84	22.49	21.59
Raccoon	22.05	33.22	17.86
Weasel	4.96	5.69	4.02
Skunk	4.04	5.27	2.32
Badger	27.57	42.60	24.80