



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

A Short History of the Trappers Advisory Committee

In October 1998, FWP Director Pat Graham appointed 10 citizens to a Trapping Advisory Committee and charged the group with identifying problem areas and developing recommendations. At the Committee's first meeting in November 1998, Director Graham reiterated that Montana FWP regards trapping as a legitimate use of wildlife that can be important in controlling damage to property and human health. At the same time, however, he emphasized the need to develop educational and regulatory measures designed to minimize the incidence of conflicts, including accidental trapping of pets. Given Montana's growing population, and the increasing number of people recreating in the forests and on the streams and rivers of this state, the occurrence of conflicts between trapping and other activities is bound to increase, if left unaddressed.

Citizens appointed to the Trapping Advisory Committee are: Joe Axtell of Bozeman, Sean Boushie of Columbia Falls, Marty Connell, DVM of Billings, Kevin Feist of Kalispell, John Hughes of Roundup, Dave Pauli of Billings, Peggy Shunick of Arlee, Melissa Tuemmler of Ulm, Jay Parrott of Great Falls and Craig O'Gorman of Broadus.

The charge given to the Trapping Advisory Committee by FWP is to:

Identify recommendations for the Director's consideration to minimize conflicts between land-use practices, outdoor recreation, and trapping practices.

The Trapping Advisory Committee identified 9 problem areas and drafted recommendations for each one. The group's draft recommendations target multiple-use public lands and the urban interface, rather than remote public lands and private lands.

The information reproduced on the enclosed four pages are the final recommendations of the above described Trappers Advisory Committee who spent six months and held public meetings throughout Montana in an effort to minimize conflicts between society and trapping opportunities. Please consider these recommendations when making decisions concerning regulations on trapping in Montana.

TRAPPING ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT
May 17, 1999

Trapping Advisory Committee's Charter: *"Identify recommendations for the Director's consideration to minimize conflicts between land-use practices, outdoor recreation and trapping."*

In keeping with the charter and the understanding that trapping is an "appropriate activity" and a sound wildlife management practice, the following recommendations approved by the Trapping Advisory Committee (TAC) are proposed to minimize conflicts while maximizing trapping opportunities. To provide maximum benefits to society, pet owners, outdoor recreationists and trappers must become more educated and responsible for their activities. Due to the dramatic increased activity within public areas, it has become necessary to place restrictions on dog-owners and recreationists as well as the trappers. There have been comparatively few reported catches of non-target animals by trappers. However, public perception is that dogs and other pets, livestock and wildlife are being caught in traps at alarming rates. The committee recognizes these concerns and addressed them in the following recommendations.

TAC REQUESTS THE FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS COMMISSION MAKE SEVERAL REVISIONS TO THE EXISTING FURBEARER REGULATIONS.

1) Adopt the following definitions to provide additional clarification:

Water Set - Any trap originally set in or on any body of water. This shall include traps on floats in the water and those that are set with a minimum of one third of the trap submerged. In addition, for purposes of these regulations, the term water set shall apply to traps set on beaver dams, in bank holes and in the water at bank slides. This shall not apply to temporarily standing water resulting from any cause, such as rainfall, snow runoff or flooding. (10/0)*

Ground Set - Any trap originally set in or on the land (soil, rock, etc.). This shall include any traps elevated less than 36 inches above the natural ground or snow level. (10/0)

Other Sets - This shall include any set not defined as a water or ground set. including without limitation, elevated sets originally set 36 inches or more above natural ground or snow level. (10/0)

Publicly Owned and Maintained Road - A road owned by a subdivision of the government, including city, county, state or federal government and maintained by the government for year-round, legal car and light truck traffic. (9/1)

2) Rescind the current regulation for **Conibear Ground Sets**. As an alternative to that regulation, adopt the following regulation:

Body Gripping Ground Sets: On public land, ground sets using 7x7 or larger body gripping ground traps must have a trigger recessed a minimum of seven (7) inches within a secure enclosure that provides openings no greater than fifty-two (52) square inches each. (6/3)

- 3) Rescind the current regulation that prohibits trapping on the **Right of Way** (8/1) of publicly maintained roads and the current regulation that specifies **Conibear Setbacks** (9/1). As an alternative to those regulations, adopt the following regulation:

Ground Sets Along Public Roads: Ground sets using 7x7 or larger body-gripping traps are prohibited within thirty (30) feet of the centerline of any publicly owned and maintained road. An exception to this requirement, to be granted by FWP, should be allowed for damage control where there is a need to address specific problem situations, provided the area is posted. (10/0)

- 4) Adopt the following regulations to reduce user conflicts in high use and urban interface areas:

Occupied Dwellings: Ground set traps are prohibited within 1000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification of the occupant. (9/1)

Public Campgrounds: Ground sets, including snares, are prohibited on public land within 1000 feet of a designated public campground or fishing access site, except for human health and safety. (10/0)

Cross Country Ski Trails: When using a body gripping ground set during times normally used for skiing, a 30-foot setback is required along designated public land cross-country ski trails. An exception to this requirement, to be granted by FWP, should be allowed for damage control where there is a need to address specific problem situations, provided the area is posted. (10/0)

Hiking Trails: When using a body gripping ground set, a 30-foot setback is required along public land, non-motorized trails with designated trail heads that are actively used for hiking during the trapping season. An exception to this requirement, to be granted by FWP, should be allowed for damage control where there is a need to address specific problem situations, provided the area is posted. (7/3)

- 5) When considering amendments to current regulations, the Committee recommends that the department and the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission place greater weight on comments from identified Montana residents than on comments from non-residents or anonymous e-mail due to the fact that wildlife belongs to Montanans. (10/0)

TAC REQUESTS THE FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS COMMISSION TO RETAIN SEVERAL EXISTING FURBEARER REGULATIONS.

- 6) TAC recommends that there be no change to the language in the current regulations with respect to trap checks. Mandatory trap checks are not necessary because the recommendations on education, improvements to devices, urban interface area restrictions, mandatory trapper education, and existing wasting of fur laws adequately address concerns related to trap check. (8/2)
- 7) TAC recommends no change to the language in the current regulations *[concerning?]* exposed bait because the current rule seems to protect raptors based on the *[unreadable in original scan]* and the Bald Eagle Working Group. (9/1)

- 8) TAC recommends that no action be taken by the Commission to restrict trapping on muskrat huts and beaver lodges because more information is needed to indicate whether this is a problem in Montana. (8/2)

TAC BELIEVES THAT CONFLICTS BETWEEN TRAPPERS AND NON-TRAPPERS CAN BE REDUCED THROUGH IMPROVED INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONS REGARDING GOOD TRAPPING PRACTICES.

- 9) Require completion of a trapper education program for all individuals under the age of 18, and individuals obtaining their first Montana trapping license, and all trappers convicted of violating FWP regulations. People required to take this training will have completed the training no later than 11/1/02. (10/0)
- 10) Require breakaway devices for snares: Gregson breakaway snare lock, Hopkins "S" hook, shear pin breakaways, Amberg stop button breakaway, or any other lock that can be shown to break away at no more than 350 ft. lb. pressure. [To be in effect no later than 11/1/02] (10/0)
- 11) Require offsets (3/16" or larger) for all foothold traps, size 1³/₄ or larger, that are used in ground sets. [To be in effect no later than 11/1/02] (9/1)
- 12) Request that FWP and the Montana Trappers Association develop a general information brochure to include such information as: traps and snares, how to release domestic animals, responsible pet practices, benefits of trapping and trapping seasons. It could be distributed by all multiple use land agencies and at the time of obtaining other licenses and permits. (10/0)
- 13) Include trapping information on Block Management maps and materials. (10/0)
- 14) Request the Montana Trappers Association develop "Trapping in Progress" signs and make them available to trappers and landowners. (10/0)
- 15) Request that FWP will work cooperatively with the Montana Trappers Association to get information out to the public on the benefits of trapping. This could include, but is not limited to, media spots, displays, brochures and other methods. (10/0)

TAC BELIEVES THAT CONFLICTS BETWEEN TRAPPERS AND NON-TRAPPERS CAN BE REDUCED THROUGH ADOPTION OF POLICIES THAT ADDRESS SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREAS.

- 16) Require FWP to establish trapping policies for problem areas on public lands. Trapping policies should establish "trapping only" and/or "trap-free" areas and periods to prevent conflicts between trapping and other recreation and to protect public health and safety. (10/0)
- 17) Increase the penalties for violating the current regulation pertaining to theft of traps and fur (87-3-507 MCA). Violators who break this law should be fined and ordered to pay restitution for fur or traps that are disturbed, destroyed or stolen. (1 0/0)
- 18) Include information on regulations addressing tampering with traps in hunter Education. (10/0)

19) Request that the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission ask land management agencies to post highly visible, permanent signs at entrances to public areas and trail heads, stating that trapping may be in progress. (10/0)

20) Request that the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission ask the State Land Board to add a sentence to the State Land Recreation Permit alerting users that trapping may be occurring on state lands. (10/0)

TAC's draft recommendations included a proposal to require all users of non-federal public land to obtain a Conservation License. TAC determined that this proposal was not appropriate at this time. Even though TAC withdrew this proposal, TAC felt that it was appropriate to advise FWP that the purpose for the draft recommendation was to provide a means to identify and license people who are engaged in general recreation; provide a method to enforce general recreation violations; and, use licensing as an additional point for the dissemination of information. In that regard, TAC requests that FWP consider developing recommendations for the licensing of general recreation.

TAC IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TRAPPING.

21) Support a Constitutional Initiative to make it an inalienable right for Montana residents to legally take fish and wildlife in Montana, under regulations established by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission, unless convicted of a felony. (7/3)

*TAC vote recorded in parentheses

MEMBERS: TRAPPING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Joe Axtell, Bozeman

Rancher/landowner in the Gallatin Valley for 50 years. Experience as a recreational trapper and using trapping for predation control. Owns a 2-mile section of river property where trapping and recreation can coexist.

Sean Boushie, Columbia Falls

B.S. degree in wildlife biology, experience as a recreational and commercial trapper, muzzle loader, buckskinner, snowmobiler, ranch/farm experience, wildlife watcher and general appreciator of nature.

Marty Connell DVM, Billings

Owner/operator printing business, owned/managed Glasgow Veterinary Clinic, founded/operated Glasgow Veterinary Supply, built and operated feedlots and a mobile home park, managed a purebred ranch operation, founded and operates an agricultural and financial management company, founded and operates a sale management company (Yellowstone Venturers, Inc.), experience as a negotiator, trustee of private trusts, a variety of civic and professional activities.

Kevin Feist, Kalispell

Years of personal outdoor experiences related to skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, wildlife observation, tracking, fishing, hunting and responsible dog ownership. Recent contact with many Montanans concerned about trapping issues and conflicts between trapping and other types of winter recreation. Participant in the MTA/FOB/FWP ad hoc meetings during the spring of 1998.

John Hughs, Roundup

Experienced trapper, and agri landowner, bird hunter, Trapper Education Instructor, has raised bird dogs. Active in the BMP (Best Management Practices) process, MTA (Montana Trappers Association), and FWP Commission Meetings.

Dave Pauli, Billings

Past-president Wisconsin Trappers Association, owner/operator of a wildlife damage control business in Madison, Wisconsin, Animal Control Superintendent - City of Billings Police Department, Director of the Bi-County Humane Society (Washington), Regional Director of the HSUS (Humane Society of the United States, humane trapping and translocation instructor with training projects in over a dozen states and countries (including mongoose and feral dog programs in Hawaii and Taiwan); Education Instructor on humane capture/handling/euthanasia of wild and domestic animals in 30 states. Field Research Technician/Advisor on numerous projects involving live-capture of domestic, wildlife and exotic animals (including beaver, coyotes, reptiles and badgers).

Peggy Shunick, Arlee

Agricultural landowner and Montana Woolgrower since 1980, winter trail user and wildlife watcher and professional dog trainer. Interested in the practical and ethical issues confronting people who utilize wild animals (Animals and Public Policy was the topic of her M.S. degree from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine).

Melissa Tuemmler, Ulm

B.S. degree in biology, Environmental Health specialist, trapper, wildlife watcher, bird hunter, pet owner, winter trail user, first coordinator of the Montana Trapper Education Program, member MTA. Very interested in cats - both wild and domestic (and cat owner).

Jay Parrott, Great Falls

Interested in trapping as a means of wildlife management and to better understand the habitat needs of small furbearers, avid upland bird and duck hunter and an officer in the Golden Triangle Sporting Dog Club, owns and trains Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, hiker and skier.

Craig O'Gorman, Broadus

Commercial trapper, worked for USFWS, operator of a private county predator control program, landowner, uses dogs for coyote hunting, experience trapping in Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana.

Facilitator: Barb Beck

Beck Consulting, Red Lodge

----- Resource Staff for Committee-----

Brian Giddings Furbearer Coordinator, Wildlife Division, FWP - Helena

Tim Pool Hunter and Trapper Education Coordinator, Conservation Education Division,
FWP - Helena

Mike Ottman Warden Sergeant, Helena Area Office, FWP - Helena

Larry Handegard State Director, Wildlife Services (USOA:APHIS), Billings