

**Trapping Committee “Work in Progress” Document:
Agreements and Progress Related to the “Important Questions”**

January 31, February 1, 2019

A. Is trapping constitutionally protected in Montana and if so, what language in the Constitution protects it?

- Guiding Principle - As members of the Trapping Committee, we accept and affirm the Charter given to us by Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Agreement – Question A is completed

- The Guiding Principle is affirmed by the Committee.

B. How is trapping supported financially by/within FWP? What is the data related to the number of trappers who pay for a license to trap in Montana? What direct income do Trappers bring to FWP and what might be the income from supporting industries?

- Guiding Principle - We recognize that sportsmen and women financially support wildlife management. We believe that those license fees as well as federal dollars received by FWP should continue to support trapping within Montana.
- Guiding Principle - We believe there are opportunities for supporting industries to financially contribute to wildlife management and trapping contributes to that economy.

Agreement – Question B is completed

- The Guiding Principles are affirmed by the Committee.

C. What is the spectrum of trappers and their activities (e.g., recreation, livelihood, predator control, cultural/historical, commercial, etc.)? Might certain regulations be applicable to different kinds of trappers?

- Description – The spectrum of trapping includes recreation/tradition, damage control, commercial/livelihood and research.
- Guiding Principles:
 - We believe that “the rule of thumb” (heuristically) should be that created regulations are to be guided by concern for the viability of fur and animal harvest; enforceability; and humaneness concerns (not in rank order).
 - We believe fur harvesters should endeavor to minimize non-target capture and target animal injury while not drastically reducing capture efficiency.
 - We believe that humaneness is connected to and influenced by trapper expertise in terms of set, equipment and timing as well as capture time.
 - We believe that all trappers should obey the law and regulations and guide their decisions in accordance with target species and purpose for capture with due regard for reducing non-target and incidental catches or take.

Agreements – Question C is completed (recommendation)

- The Committee reached agreement on the Guiding Principles. They also noted that those principles demonstrate the importance and need for mandatory Trapper Education.
- The Committee recommends that regulations be more easily presented and understood (e.g., In a chart form such as: Predators do’s and don’ts; Fur bearers do’s and don’ts; what on private land; what on public land, etc.)

D. What outcomes do we desire related to trapping? How will our accepted recommendations be evaluated for effectiveness related to our desired outcomes? How can the Committee forward issues to FWP where they cannot reach agreement and/or it involves another entity beyond the Department?

- Guiding Principle - We agree that our desired outcome is to reduce conflict related to trapping.
- Guiding Principle - We believe that the effectiveness of any of our accepted recommendations should be evaluated every 5 years or sooner if a situation or data requires it.
- Guiding Principle - We believe that fostering communication among FWP, other state and federal agencies, cities and counties, NGO's, the Legislature and the public can result in reducing conflict related to trapping.

Tentative Agreements:

- The Committee affirmed the Guiding Principles.
- The Committee **recommends** that the effectiveness of its recommendations be evaluated every 5 years or sooner if a situation or date requires it.
- The Committee will revisit how to forward consensus recommendations and areas where they are not in agreement at the end of the process in April.

E. What is meant/how do we collectively define terms like “ethical” and/or “positive trapping behaviors/actions”? What are the varying/different impacts on animals from different kinds of traps? Based on our definitions, are there particular traps that should be encouraged and why?

- Guiding Principle - We believe that ethical trapping is both following regulations as well as showing concern through behavior and choices for minimizing impacts to non-target animals, target animals and public sensibilities
- Discussion:
 - Wolf and furbearer regulations and language regarding non-target and protected species needs to be consistent if possible.
 - Match language and improve definitions so they are not confusing or seemingly opposing.
 - Match reporting regulations and require for protected species.
 - We need discussion about “injured” vs “uninjured”.
 - There should be consideration of “capture” technique vs “killing” technique and how humane dispatch/euthanasia happens – depending on the situation.
 - It's also suggested that regulations be more easily presented and understood (e.g., In a chart form such as: Predators do's and don'ts; Fur bearers do's and don'ts; what on private land; what on public land, etc.)

Agreements – Question E is completed (recommendation)

- The Committee affirmed the Guiding Principle.
- It's recommended that regulations should be consistent where possible, practical and legal.

F. What behaviors related to trapping need to be addressed? What can be done about “bad” (outlaw) trappers? What can be done about unethical trapping? What “tickets”/fines are given for what infractions related to trapping? Geographically, where are the most tickets given?

- Definition - “Illegal trapping” is trapping not in compliance with established Montana regulations and ordinances.
- Discussion – Sorting out/discussing issues/problems related to ethics:
 - We see “ethics” as how you behave when no one is looking. You can’t regulate ethics. Education is key with a component of enforcement and consequences to back it up.
 - Factors that contribute to ethical trapping and should be considered include device choice (e.g., lethal, restraining); set choice (e.g., location, bait); goal of actions (e.g., trapping for pest control; trapping for fur; recreational trapping). Trappers might consider choosing traps/sets/goal that cause the least impact.
 - Ideas to encourage ethical trapping include following Best Management Practices; creating a culture that acknowledges unethical behavior/works to combat it; mentorship.
 - Some trappers involved in predator control on private land work within their own agency’s jurisdiction and rules – and the Committee recognizes that they operate outside FWP jurisdiction.
 - Enforcement entities need to be supported in terms of training and manpower.
 - Existing laws need to be enforced (e.g., Wanton Waste law).
- Guiding Principle: We recognize that education and enforcement are key to addressing negative trapping behaviors.

Agreement – Question F is completed (recommendation)

- Mandatory Trapper Education should be pursued through the Legislature and is considered key to many of the issues being discussed.

G. How might a particular problem be best resolved – education, regulation, enforcement, consequences, etc. How can the public be made aware of traps – where, when, how, etc. – to decrease negative interactions between traps and the general public? What is the rate of citation for pets at large (e.g., off leash in a leash area; chasing wildlife, etc.)? How can we educate/promote responsible pet ownership in areas with wildlife and where trapping occurs? What are the statistics about how many domestic animals are treated for trap-related injuries compared to injuries from other things? What options are there for implementing an education program related to trapping?

- Guiding Principle - We believe that any issue related to trapping is best addressed with a multi-faceted approach (education, regulation, enforcement, consequences, etc.).
- Guiding Principle - We believe that a well-funded, well-organized education program for all interests can help enforcement; can mitigate capture of non-targets; can enhance reporting; should teach where and when trapping can or should occur; and can teach best management practices and protocols related to lethal, non-lethal, less lethal approaches and dispatching of captured animals.

Question G cont.

- Discussion: Suggestions for pieces of a desired mandatory trapping education program:
 - Needs to be mandatory, in the field, and with FWP oversight.
 - Instructors must be vetted including background checks.
 - Participation by other interest groups in teaching and selecting instructors and involvement in curriculum development is strongly suggested and should be mandatory.
 - The Committee also encourages FWP and the US Forest Service, BLM and State Lands to post signs at all public trailheads stating that fur trapping is in progress from ... (season dates); include setback parameters where applicable.
 - Brochures should be distributed by FWP license agents condensing setbacks, trapping dates, trap free zones and other avenues to help make the public aware.
 - Educate FWP administrative personnel as to information in the brochures.
 - Consider the value of geographical targeted education (e.g., urban vs rural; high use areas, etc.).
 - Committee discussion in this, the 3rd meeting, stressed other areas found in these notes that should be addressed/included in the mandatory education program.

Agreements – Questions G is completed (except leashes, etc.) (recommendation)

- The Committee affirmed the Guiding Principles.
- The Committee will recommend the statutory creation and implementation of a FWP mandatory trapper education program with criteria set for who would fall under the mandatory attendance and suggestions related to content.
- No action is required in the regulations with the exception of citing the mandatory education program.
- The group acknowledged that “mandatory” requires Legislative approval and that while their role is not to design the education program, they would like their suggestions considered.
- A small group of the Committee will bring suggestions to the April meeting about signage, leashes, and trail setbacks. (Dave, Stephen, Pat)

H. What role should enforcement play? What can be done to help enforcement? What information do we need to inform recommendations related to enforcement and trapping?

- Guiding Principle - We believe that simplified consistent terminology is critical to uniform enforcement and data collection.

Tentative Agreement:

- The Committee will finalize this discussion by the end of the process.

I. What are the regulations for the Montana Department of Agriculture related to trapping on private land and how are those regulations different from FWP?**Agreement – Question I is completed.**

- The Committee understands that that FWP does not have authority related to predator control trapping on private land.

J. How can we get useful data related to non-target species and how can we use it for useful analysis? How do we collectively define “non-target” species? What do we mean by “non-target” and “incidental”? What data is available related to incidental catch; what does FWP do when this happens? How can incidental catch data be more effective/accurate?

- Definition – “Non-target” capture is catching a protected species that is releasable. (CF page 6, col. 1)
- Definition – “Incidental take” includes out of season regulated, protected, non-releasable or dead; currently may or may not be reportable. (CF page 4, col. 2)
- Guiding Principle – We accept these definitions in accordance with Montana FWP statutes and regulations.

Agreements – Question J is completed (recommendation)

- The Committee affirmed the Guiding Principle.
- The Committee recommends agreed to use definitions from FWP legal documents.
- The Committee recommends that FWP design and implement a more accurate and precise reporting system that includes reports of captures of raptors, pets and game animals; reports of average time between trap checks; number of traps stolen; number of trap sets molested by people; and number of times trappers were harassed; a fur bearer regulation page where a trapper can record captures while the season is in progress; and will be evaluated in 5 years after implementation of these recommendations.

K. What does a “trap-free” zone look like and how/when might it be useful? What approach can/should be used for how death takes place for animals (still alive) caught in a trap – or for release from a trap? What do we need to discuss about 24 hour trap checks, mandatory trap checks, etc.? What might be alternative methods – lethal or non-lethal – that could be used in place of trapping – when, where, etc.? Are there changes we might want to consider related to trapping specific species (e.g., beaver, wolves) and specific regulations? Are there opportunities for expanding trapping?

Trap Free Zones

- Guiding Principle - We believe that trap free zones are a legitimate tool to reduce conflict but require clear criteria within which they are established
- Suggestions about trap free zones criteria:
 - Explore trap free zones in high use areas close to highly populated urban areas and areas of high public use (e.g., Bozeman Creek, Mount Helena).
 - Explore dog free zones in areas where dogs and other wildlife have conflicts.
 - Trap free zones should include trailheads, fishing access and campgrounds.

Tentative Agreement

- The Committee affirmed the Guiding Principle.
- A small group of the Committee will bring suggestions to the April meeting related to trap free and pet free zones (Kate, Tom, Shani)

Dispatch

- Suggestions related to dispatch:
 - “Dispatch” must be part of trapper education to include safe, humane, effective techniques.
 - The Committee discussed offering a “preferred”, “recommended”, “suggested” method but had disagreements on which word should be used.
 - The Committee agreed, that in most situations and when safe, practical and legal, a gunshot to the head is suggested.
 - A member asked if any techniques should be prohibited.
- Discussion:
 - Easy answer – open wounds, deviated bones, recumbency/weakness
 - Protected species – lynx, swift fox, grizzly, bald eagle, wolverine, migratory bird inclusions?
 - Other – golden eagle, any raptor?
 - Need instruction/direction on assessment
 - Need instruction/direction on safe restraint and transport for animals and for handlers
 - Need networking for rehab – especially in remote areas (practicality)
 - What should be justifications for humane dispatch at the scene?

Tentative Agreement

- A small group of the Committee will bring suggestions to the April meeting related to death, dispatch, and injury assessment. (Shani, Dave, Stephen)

Beaver

- Draft Guiding Principle – We believe that improved reporting of beaver harvest would allow better management of the species.
- Suggestions/discussion related to beaver
 - Knowledge/input is needed to direct reporting, season length, limits, relocation options (although this was not a goal or a request within this group)

Tentative AgreementWolf

- Suggestions/discussion related to wolf
 - Issues included number of take, season extension, and allowing snaring.
 - Education needs to be in-depth and separate from regular trapping (wolf education occurring now)

Tentative Agreement

- A small group of the Committee will bring suggestions to the April meeting related to wolf snaring, setbacks, etc. (Zach, Lance, Matt)

Lion

Agreement – Discussion is complete because lion is a game animal.

Bobcat

- Draft Guiding Principle
- Suggestions/discussion related to bobcat
 - There is a current 24 hour mandatory reporting requirement for bobcats.
 - The jaw is submitted with the pelt.
 - Members of the Committee proposed a change from tagging the pelt within 10 days of capture to within 10 days of season closure to save time and effort for FWP and trappers.
 - Committee members wondered if the same might apply to otter and swift fox.
 - FWP will do additional research on the proposal and report at the 4th meeting.

Agreement – Working with FWP, the Committee will include this in their recommendations.

Non-Lethal Options

Agreement – The group agreed to drop this issue since it is not within FWP's role..

What do we need to discuss about 24 hour trap checks, mandatory trap checks, etc.?

- Suggestions/Discussion/Options related to trap checks
 - Options include leave as is – 48 hour recommended with increased enforcement; do daily trap checks
 - Does the Department have the ability/capacity to enforce trap checking?
 - Humane concern is driving public sentiment.
 - Landowners may react negatively to frequent access to their lands if trap checks are daily.

Tentative Agreement – Discussion will continue at the April meeting.

Possibilities for Expanding Trapping?

Tentative Agreement - A small group of the Committee will bring suggestions to the April meeting related to any opportunities for expanding trapping. (Pat, Tom)