



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

STATE FURBEARER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Spring 2008

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.

2008& 2009 TRAPPING REGULATIONS

Trapping regulations and furbearer seasons for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 seasons and furbearer quotas for the 2008-09 season will be tentatively adopted by the FWP Commission at their June 12, 2008 meeting in Helena. Under a biennial, or two-year, season setting schedule trapping regulations and furbearer seasons are now up for review at the June meeting which provides the opportunity to implement changes based on FWP recommendations and Commission action. Public comment and discussion on regulation changes is important during this meeting so trappers and other interested individuals are encouraged to attend. Information on furbearer population trends, species harvest data, and trapper effort is evaluated in FWP recommendations, as well as consideration of public comments regarding regulation changes. To receive copies of the tentative regulations adopted on June 12 by the Commission, contact the FWP Wildlife Division or go to the FWP website. The Commission will take final action on trapping regulations and furbearer seasons at its August 5 meeting in Helena, which will follow a 30-day public comment

period on the tentative regulations. 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.

FEDERAL DECISION ON WOLVERINE

On September 29, 2006, as a result of a complaint filed by Defenders of Wildlife and others alleging that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) used the wrong standards when it denied a 2003 wolverine listing petition, the U.S. District Court in Montana ruled that the USFWS 90-day petition finding was in error and ordered the USFWS to make a new 12-month finding for the wolverine.

On March 11, 2008 the USFWS determined that protecting the population of wolverine in the contiguous United States as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA is not warranted. Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) agrees with this federal decision because Montana provides extensive wolverine habitat and supports the largest wolverine population in the lower 48 states. The USFWS determined that wolverine in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming are not a distinct population segment from continuous populations in Canada and that they do not constitute a significant portion of the wolverine range, which includes Canada and Alaska. The USFWS estimated population numbers for western Canada at 15,000 to almost 19,000 individuals and the

Rocky Mountain states of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming at approximately 500 animals. FWP considers the majority of this population to be in Montana.

LYNX CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSED

On February 28, 2008 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced a proposal to revise the critical lynx habitat designation in Montana from the current Glacier National Park to also include northwestern Montana and the Greater Yellowstone Area. The Northern Rocky Mountains unit would include approximately 11,000 mi² in Flathead, Glacier, Granite, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Lincoln, Missoula, Pondera, Powell, and Teton counties. The Greater Yellowstone Area unit would include almost 3,000 mi² in Gallatin, Park, Sweetgrass, Stillwater, and Carbon counties. The proposed rule and maps of the two units in Montana are available on the USFWS website at <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/mammals/lynx/>. Although the comment period deadline was April 28, 2008 the USFWS often receives extensions so check their website to see if this occurred.

TRAPPER EDUCATION LEGISLATION

During the 2007 legislative session FWP submitted a bill to amend the education and safety course statute to include trapper education. Both the Montana Trappers Association (MTA) and FWP worked together in support of this legislation that would have required first time general trapper license buyers to complete a trapper education and safety course. Unfortunately the bill died. However, FWP will request that this same legislation be introduced again during the 2009 legislative session. This legislation is an important step to demonstrate that licensed trappers have proper training and are responsible trappers and that mandatory trapper education may preclude additional regulation. Trapper support for this bill during the 2009 legislature is critical to its passage.

WOLF DELISTING IN MONTANA

On March 28, 2008 wolves were officially delisted, or removed from the federal ESA in Montana and the Northern Rockies and are now under FWP management authority. The US Fish & Wildlife Service had previously approved Montana’s wolf management plan, which includes hunting and trapping as methods to manage wolf numbers and distribution, as long as there are at least 15 breeding pairs in the state. The most recent minimum Montana wolf population estimate was 422 wolves in 73 verified packs, of which 39 qualified as a breeding pair. This is about a 34% increase from the 2006 population estimate. Despite the increase during 2007, 102 wolf mortalities were documented, of which 73 were livestock related. The remaining mortalities were 7 illegal kills, 6 vehicle or train strikes, 1 legal harvest in Canada, 7 incidental and agency-related, 3 natural deaths, 1 incidental snaring, and 4 unknown. The FWP Commission has set a hunting-only season under a quota system beginning this September, unless litigation precludes the state’s first public hunt.

AVERAGE PELT PRICE VALUES

Average pelt prices are from the March 2008 wild fur sale by North American Fur Auctions.

Species	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Beaver	20.50	23.49	24.80
Otter	100.00	80.00	40.91
Muskrat	3.50	3.20	3.23
Mink	15.00	12.88	15.22
Marten	45.50	61.57	77.29
Fisher	35.00	74.31	87.51
Wolverine	300.00	217.85	280.35
Bobcat	345.00	257.33	449.45
Coyote	38.50	43.36	37.90
Red Fox	25.00	20.84	22.49
Raccoon	11.50	22.05	33.22
Weasel	3.00	4.96	5.69
Skunk	6.50	4.04	5.27
Badger	27.50	27.57	42.60