

Trapper Questionnaire

**Statewide Annual Report
1997–1998**

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation**

A TRAPPER'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. Respect other trappers' grounds' particularly brushed, maintained trap lines with a history of use.
2. Check traps regularly.
3. Promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching nontarget animals.
4. Obtain landowner's permission before trapping on private property.
5. Know and use proper releasing and killing methods.
6. Develop set location methods to prevent losses.
7. Trap in the most humane way possible.
8. Properly dispose of animal carcasses.
9. Concentrate trapping in areas where animals are overabundant for the supporting habitat.
10. Promptly report the presence of diseased animals to wildlife authorities.
11. Assist landowners who are having problems with predators and other furbearers that have become a nuisance.
12. Support and help train new trappers in trapping ethics, methods and means, conservation, fur handling and marketing.
13. Obey all trapping regulations and support strict enforcement by reporting violations.
14. Support and promote sound furbearer management.

This code of ethics was copied from the Alaska Trappers Manual. The manual was created through a joint effort between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Trappers Association. The manual is available in Alaska book stores and from the Alaska Trappers Association for approximately \$20.00

STATE OF ALASKA

Tony Knowles, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Frank Rue, Commissioner

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Wayne L. Regelin, Director

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Doreen Parker McNeill
Wildlife Biologist
ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation
P.O. Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526
(907) 465-6197

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ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation
P.O. Box 25526
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ALASKA'S REGIONS AND GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS

REGIONS

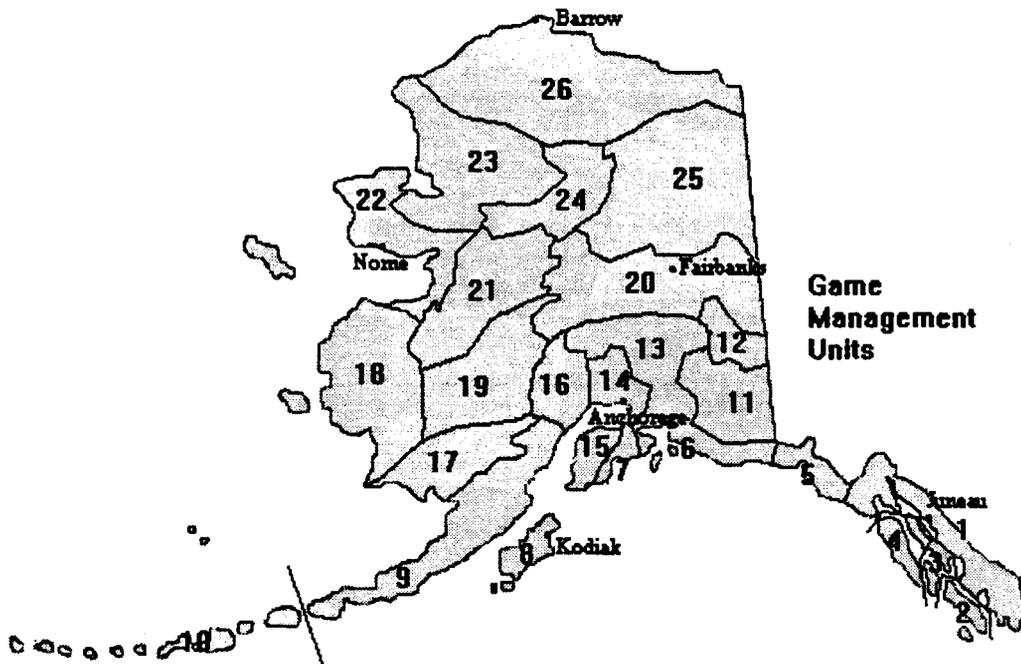
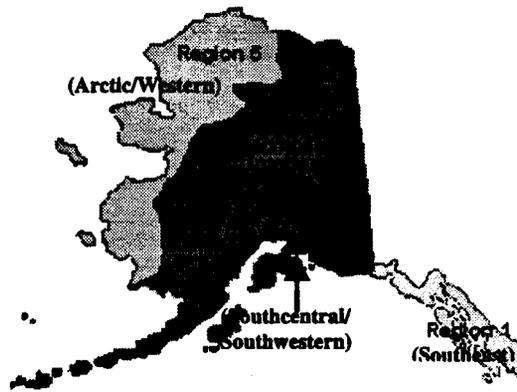


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ALASKA TRAPPER REPORT, 1997-98

INTRODUCTION

This report includes information contributed by you, the Alaska trapper. Our mailing list for the 1997-98 season included 1126 trappers. We received information back from 297 individuals. Of these, 52 people trapped in Southeast, 87 trapped in Southcentral & Southwestern, 62 trapped in Interior Alaska, and 22 trapped on the Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Rivers. Others returned the questionnaire, but did not trap. On the following pages you'll find out how other Alaskans run their traplines, how much effort they put into catching fur, what their primary target species are, and how many furbearers were trapped in the state. You'll also find summaries of Department of Fish and Game furbearer activities, and comments of trappers that were written on the back of the questionnaires. As always, we strive to maintain strict confidentiality, and names of individuals and references to specific traplines are not included. We hope you find this report informative, and please let us know how we can improve it in the future.

WELCOME TRAPPERS FROM GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 18

For the first year ever, trappers from the lower Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers are reporting. Roughly, this includes the area from Lower Kalskag and Russian Mission to the east, Kotlik to the North, and Cape Newenham to the south. This area is called Game Management Unit 18 by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Wildlife Conservation. We hope more trappers and fur hunters from Western and Arctic Alaska will join us for the next report.

A PROFILE OF ALASKA'S TRAPPERS

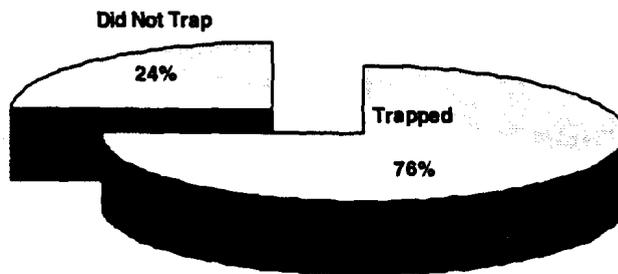
We asked trappers like you to answer questions to help us develop this report. In the following pages you will find how your fellow trappers answered those questions. Where possible we showed how trappers answered those questions over the past few years. Issues facing trappers and reports by Fish and Game's regional furbearer biologists begin on page 35. Comments by trappers begin on page 45.



Did you trap in 1997-98?

76% of the trappers who responded to this questionnaire said they trapped during the 1997-98 season. This is slightly higher than the last 5 year average.

Of the 297 Trappers Who Returned the 1997-98 Questionnaire



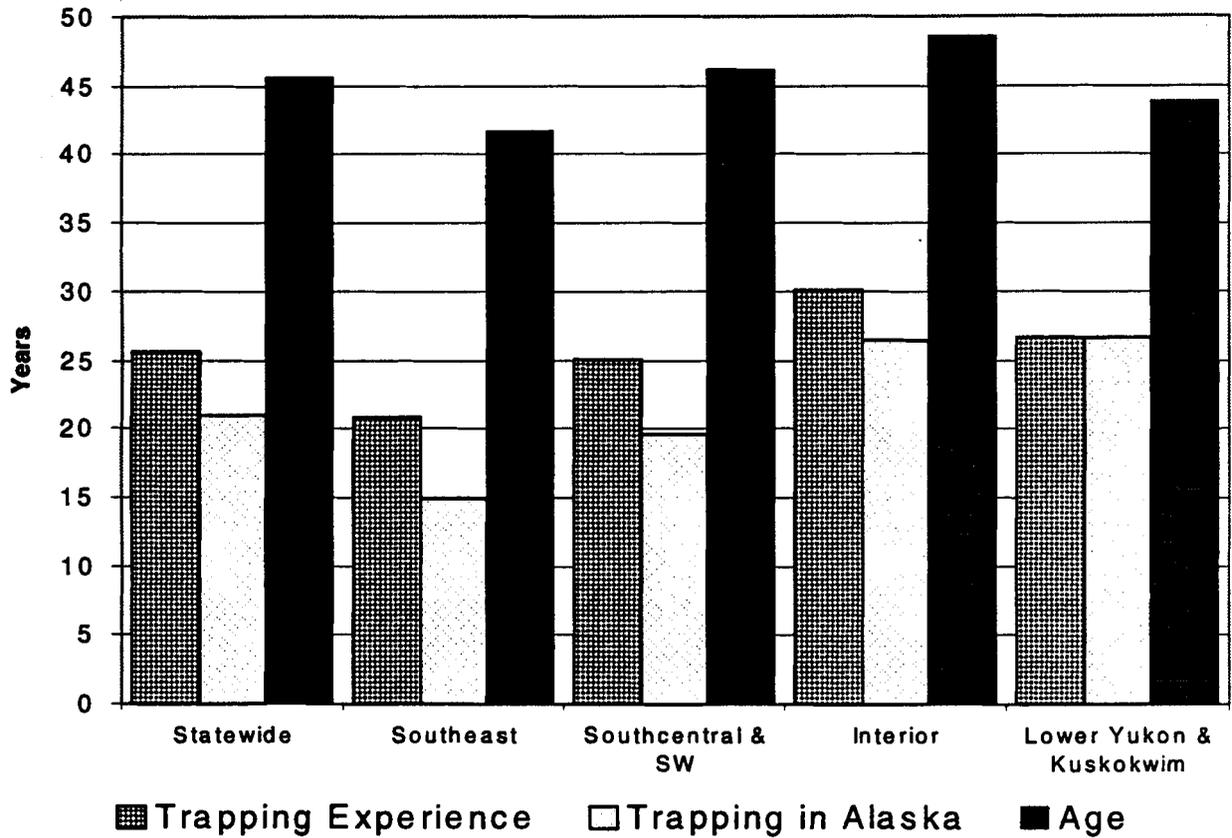
Trapper Age and Experience

On average, trappers in Alaska have been taking furs for over 25 years, 21 of those years in the state. The average trapper in Alaska is almost 46 years old. Average age was 42 in Southeast, 46 in Southcentral and Southwestern, 49 in the Interior, and 44 on the Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Rivers (Game Management Unit 18). The oldest trapper reporting was 87 and the youngest was 9. And yes, that trapper with many girlfriends reported again this year. Trapper age and experience has steadily increased since we began asking this question in 1993-94. This suggests we either need to send the trapper questionnaire to more (younger) trappers or trappers need to recruit young people. If you know a young trapper who would like to get this report, please send us their name and address with your questionnaire.

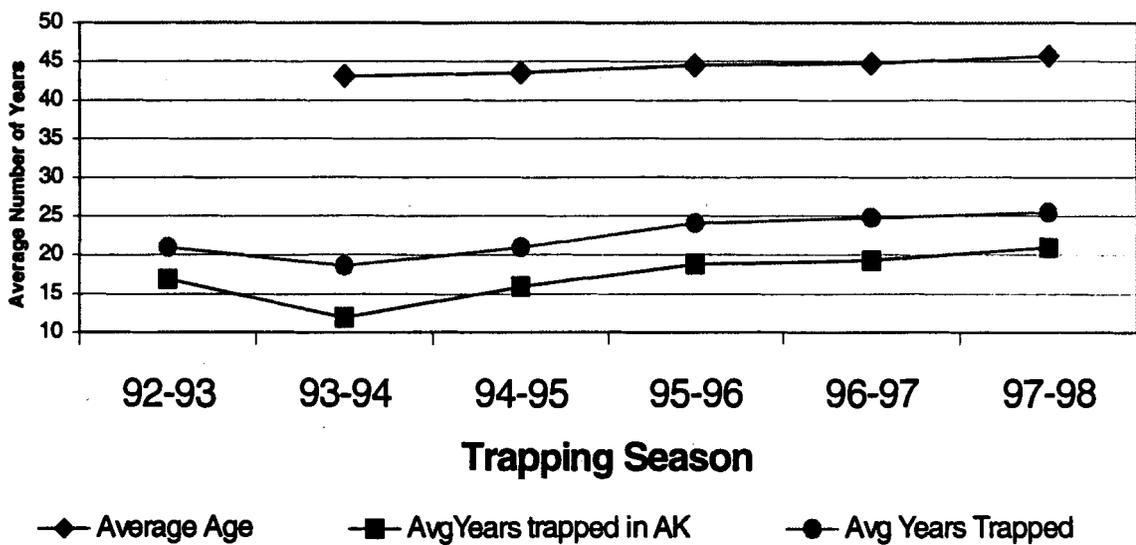
The graphs on the next page illustrate the breakdown by region and the trend over the last 6 winters.



Average Trapper Age & Experience

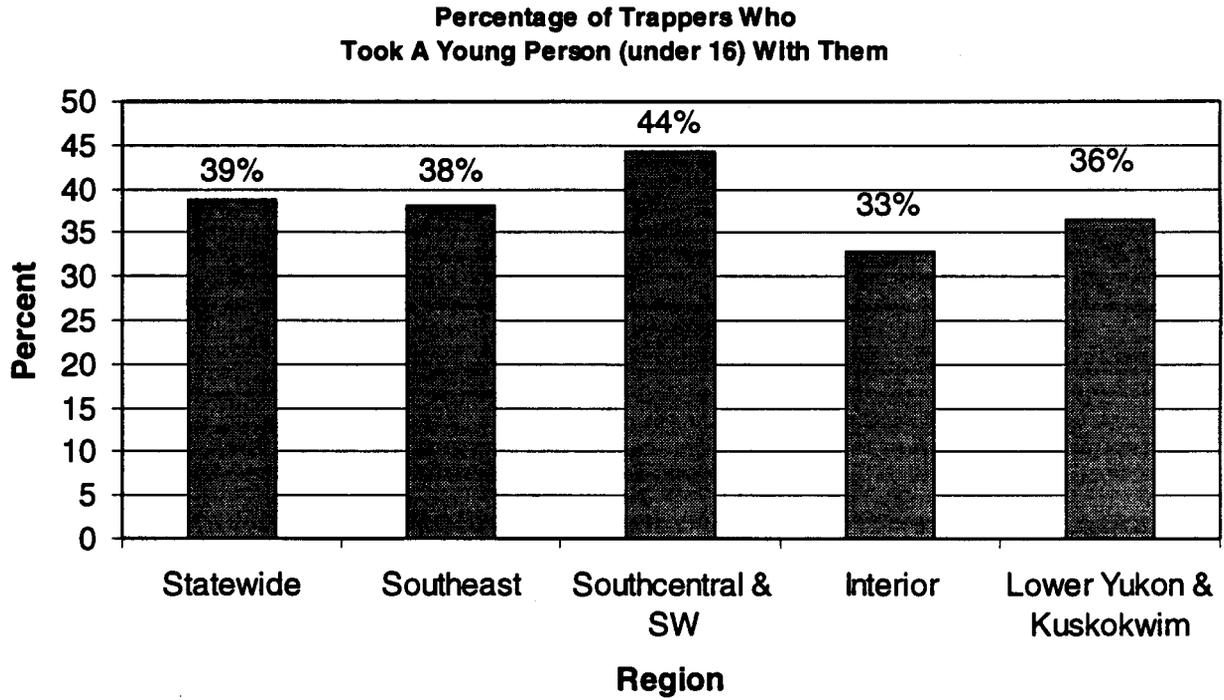


Trappers Get Older & More Experienced



Did you have a youngster (under 16) with you on your trapline this year?

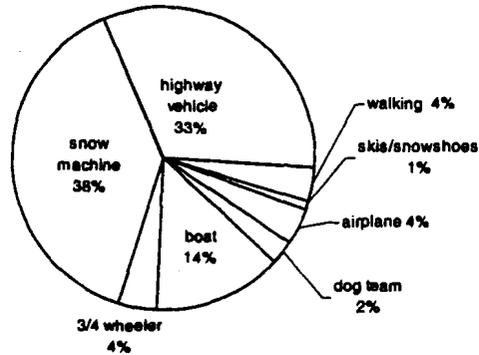
39% of trappers had someone 16 or younger with them on their trapline at least once. Percentages are listed by region in the graph below.



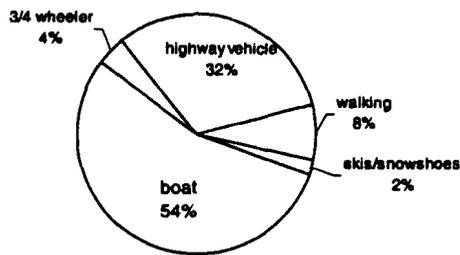
What transportation did you use to get to your main trapping area?

Transportation used by trappers throughout the state to get to their traplines is summarized in the following pie charts:

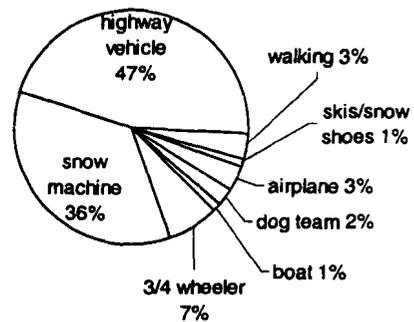
Statewide Transportation To Trapline
(224 trappers reported)



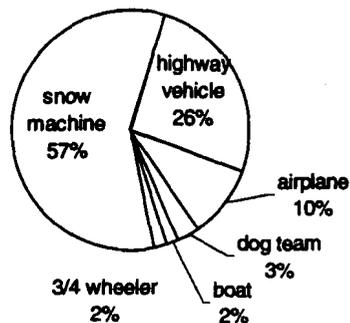
Southeast Transportation To Trapline
(53 trappers reported)



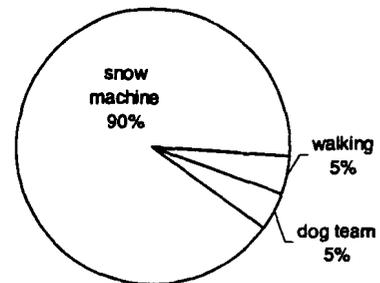
Southcentral & Southwestern Transportation To Trapline
(87 trappers reported)



Interior Transportation To Trapline
(62 trappers reported)



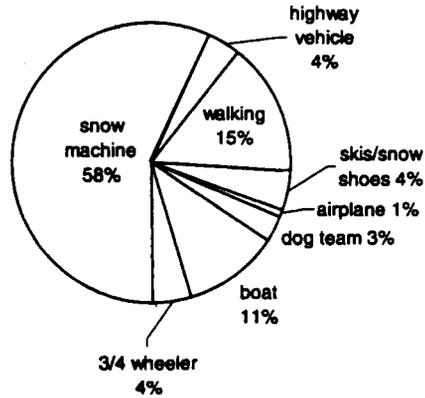
Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Transportation To Trapline
(22 trappers reported)



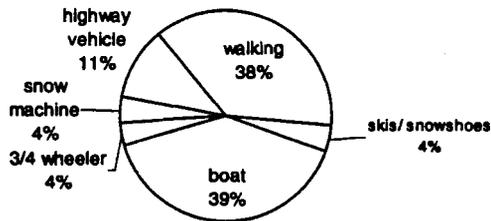
What transportation did you use to run your main trapline?

Overall percentages of transportation used by Alaska's trappers to run their traplines are summarized in the following pie charts:

Statewide Transportation On Trapline
(224 trappers reported)



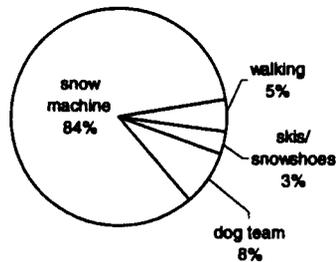
Southeast Transportation On Trapline
(53 trappers reported)



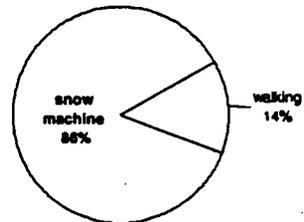
Southcentral & Southwestern Transportation On Trapline
(87 trappers reported)



Interior Transportation On Trapline
(82 trappers reported)



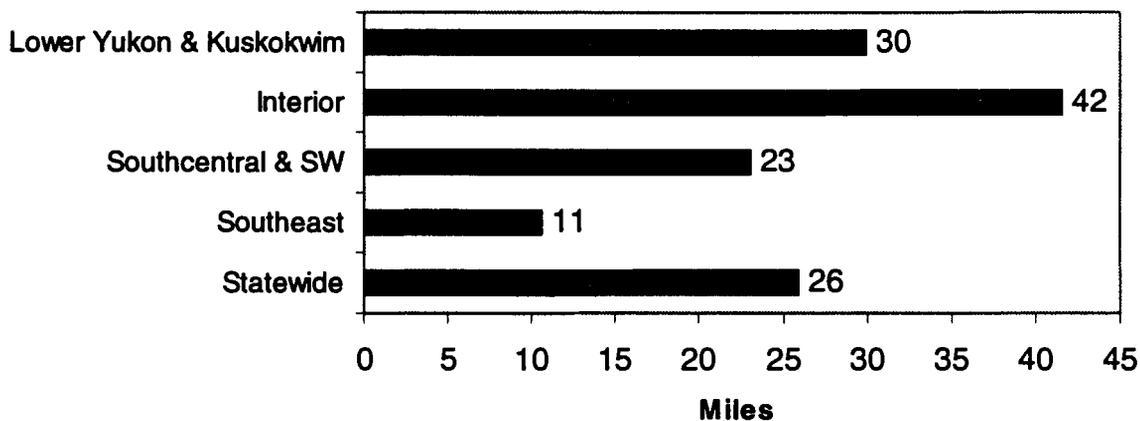
Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Transportation On Trapline
(22 trappers reported)



How long was your main trapline in 1997-98?

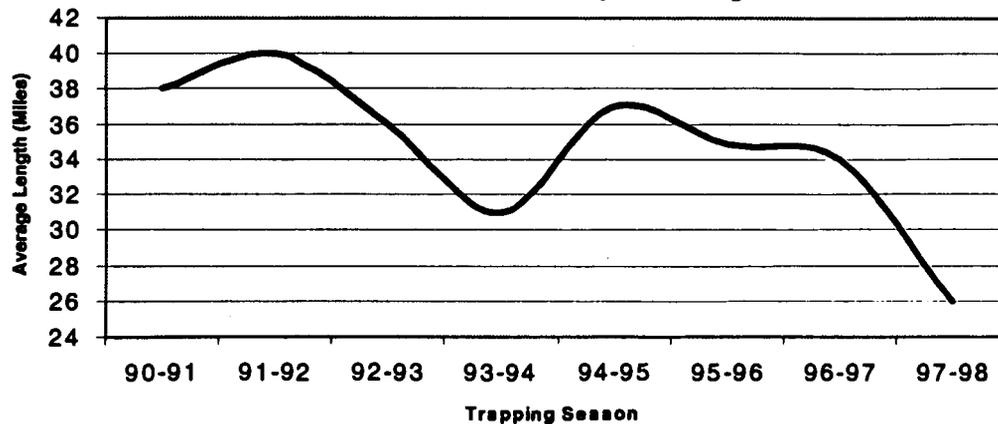
The average trapline length in Alaska was 26 miles. Traplines varied from less than 1 mile in Southeast & Southcentral to 250 miles in the Interior. In Southeast Alaska, average trapline length was 11 miles, and varied from less than 1 to 60 miles. In Southcentral, average length was 23 miles, and ranged from 1 to 160 miles. In the Interior, traplines averaged 42 miles long, and ranged from 4 to 250. On the lower Yukon and Kuskokwim, traplines averaged 30 miles and ranged from less than 1 to 45 miles long.

Average Trapline Length



Since the 1990-91 season, when the average trapline was 38 miles, (the first season we included Southeast Alaska in the survey), average trapline length has remained between 30 and 40 miles, with a low of 31 miles in the 1993-94 season. The longest trapline in the state has fluctuated between a low of 220 miles in 1990-91 to a high of over 400 miles in 1992-93. These changes are likely due to different people answering the questionnaire, as well as trappers adjusting the length of their traplines for a variety of reasons, including weather, fur prices or abundance, and time spent doing other things.

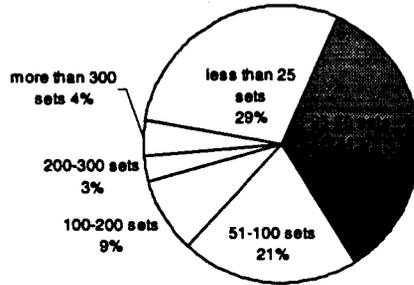
Statewide Trend in Trapline Length



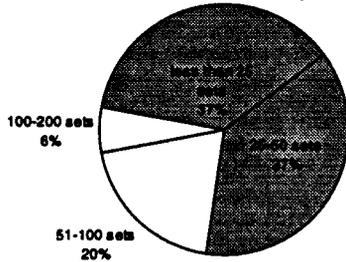
How many sets did you make on your line in 1997-98?

As shown by the graphs below, the number of sets per trapline varied a lot. Most trappers (84%) put out 100 or fewer sets. Throughout the state, fewer than 4% of trappers put out more than 300 sets. Most Southeast trappers (75%) put out fewer than 50 sets, and only 6% of Southeast trappers put out more than 100 sets on their lines. In Southcentral and Southwestern, 62% of trappers had 50 or fewer sets on their lines, 18% had more than 100 sets. Many Interior trappers (47%) had 50 or fewer sets, while 29% had more than 100 sets on their lines. On the lower Yukon & Kuskokwim 86% of trappers had 50 or fewer sets and 5% had 100 or more.

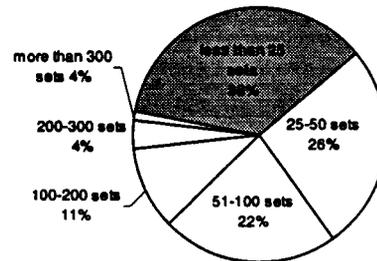
Statewide - Number of Sets on the Trapline



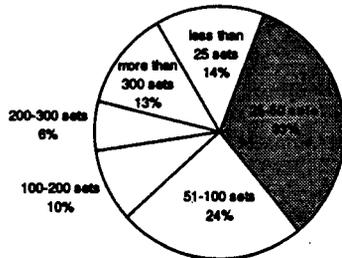
Southeast
Number of Sets on the Trapline



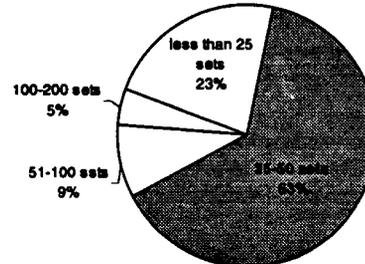
Southcentral & Southwestern
Number of Sets on the Trapline



Interior
Number of Sets on the Trapline

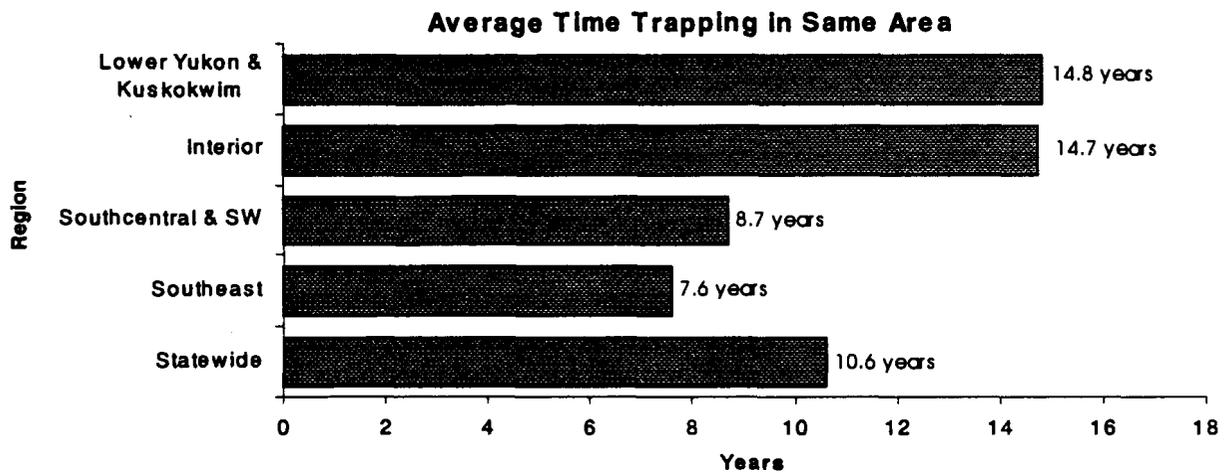


Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Number of Sets on the Trapline



How many years have you been trapping in the same area?

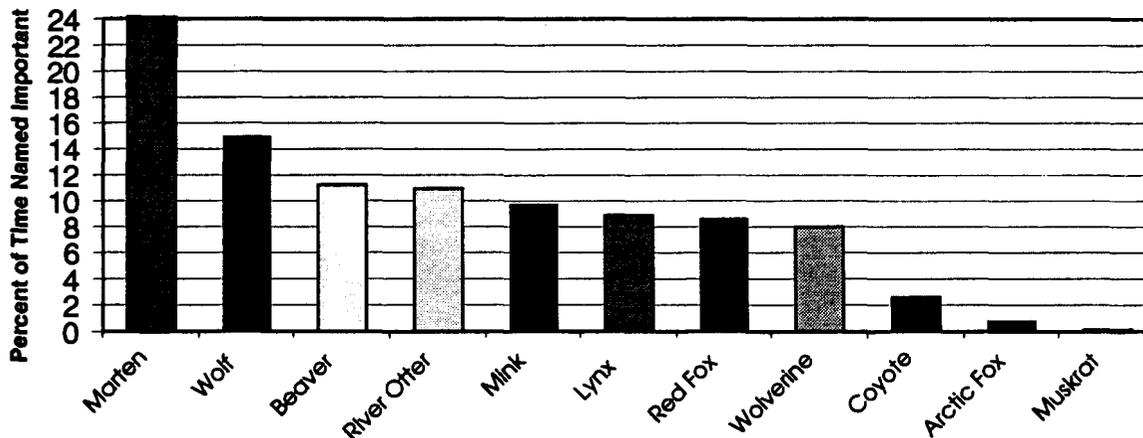
The average time Alaskans have been trapping the same area is almost 11 years. The longest period of time in the same area is 68 years by a trapper on the Lower Yukon or Kuskokwim. In Southeast, the average time in the same area is almost 8 years, in Southcentral and Southwestern the average is almost 9 years. In the Interior trappers averaged close to 15 years, and on the Lower Yukon and Kuskokwim trappers averaged almost 15 years of trapping in the same area. Time trapping the same area has decreased slightly since the 1989-90 season when the average trapper had worked the same area for 12 years.



What were the three most important species you were trying to catch in 1997-98?

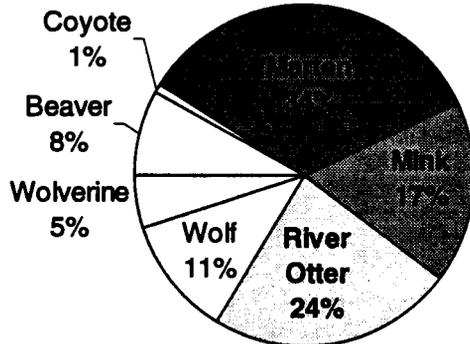
The two species most often listed as important by trappers statewide were marten and wolf. Beaver and river otter tied for 3rd place. Since we first asked this question in 1992-93, marten has remained the species most often mentioned as important to Alaskan trappers. Wolf, beaver and otter also continue to be among the top species named as important, although their rank changes from year to year.

Most Important Species Statewide

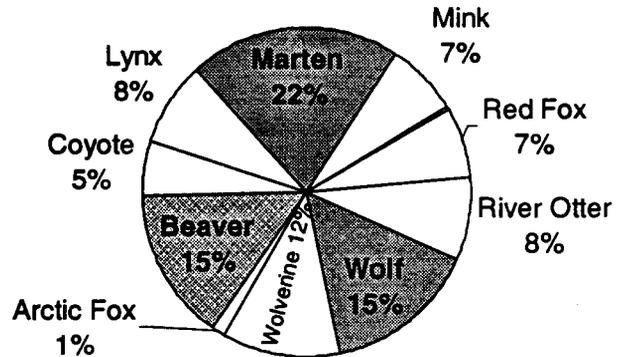


Broken down by region, the results are a little different: These regional differences reflect which furbearers are available and current market value.

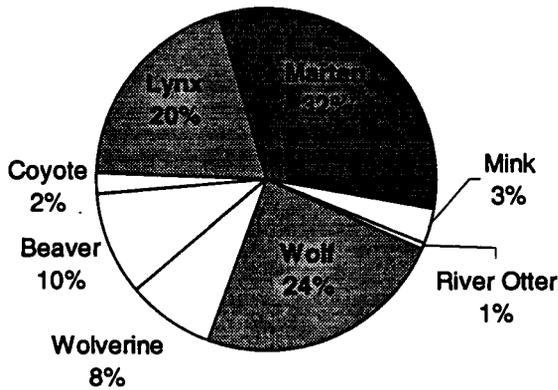
Most Important Species – Southeast



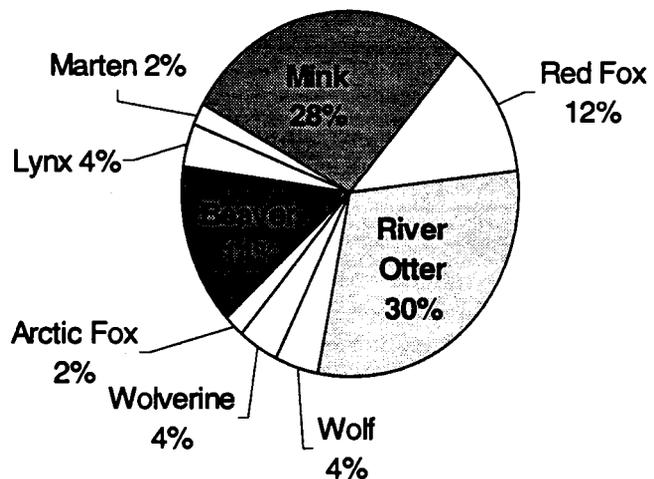
Most Important Species – Southcentral & Southwestern



Most Important Species – Interior



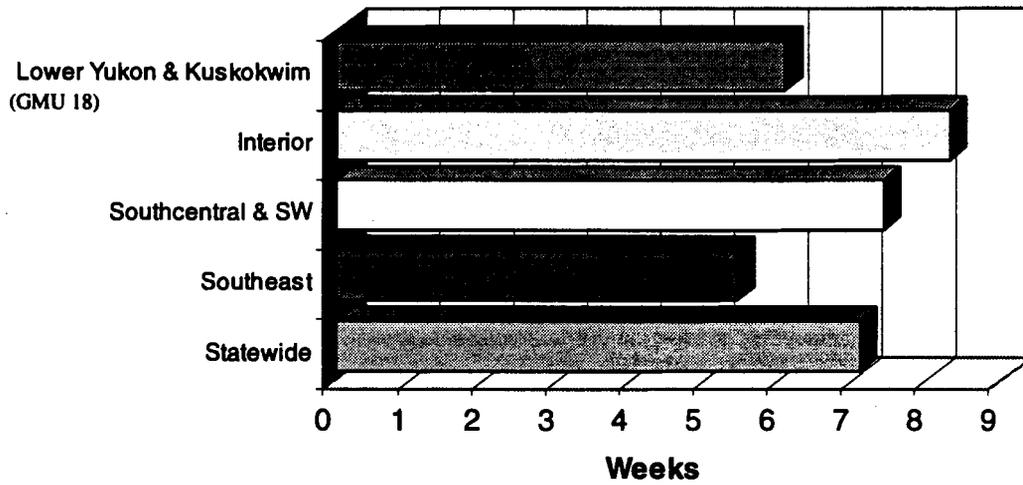
Most Important Species Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim



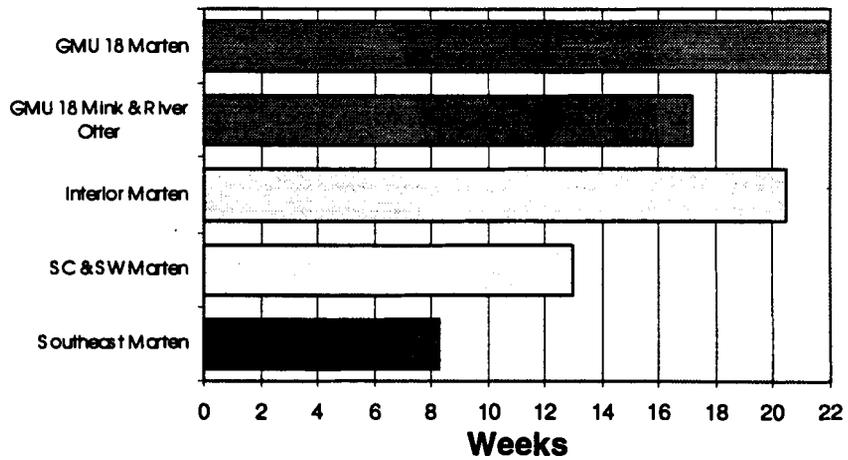
How many weeks did you trap during the 1997-98 season?

The average trapper in Alaska trapped for almost 7 weeks. Compare the graph of average number of weeks trapped with the average season length for marten (mink & river otter included for GMU 18).

1997-98 Average Number of Weeks Trapped

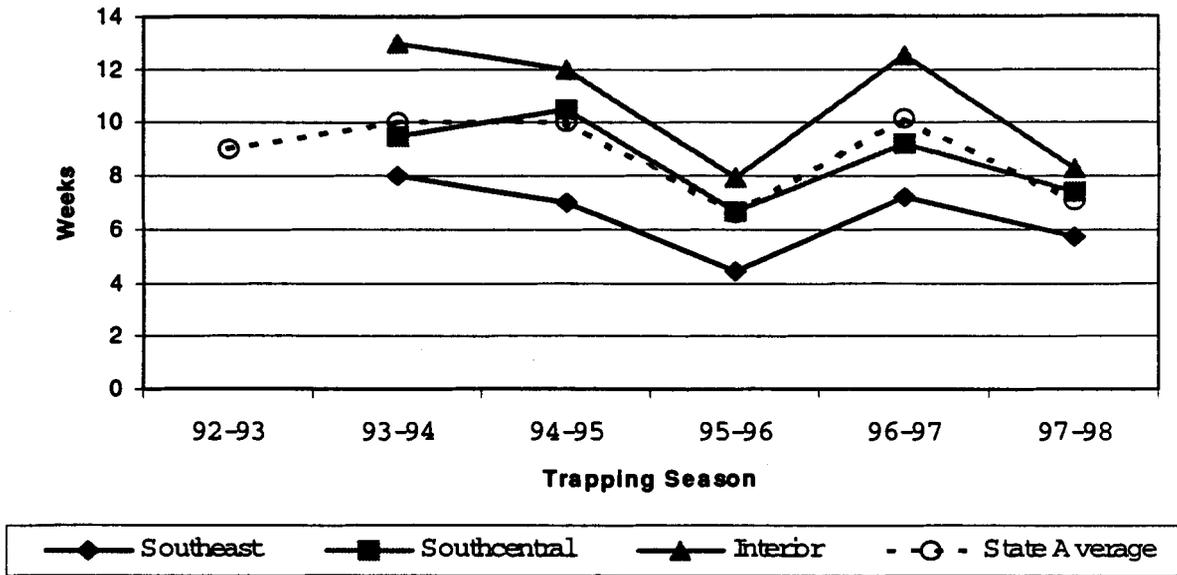


1997-98 Average Season Lengths



Also notice the average number of weeks people trapped has decreased since the 1992-93 season

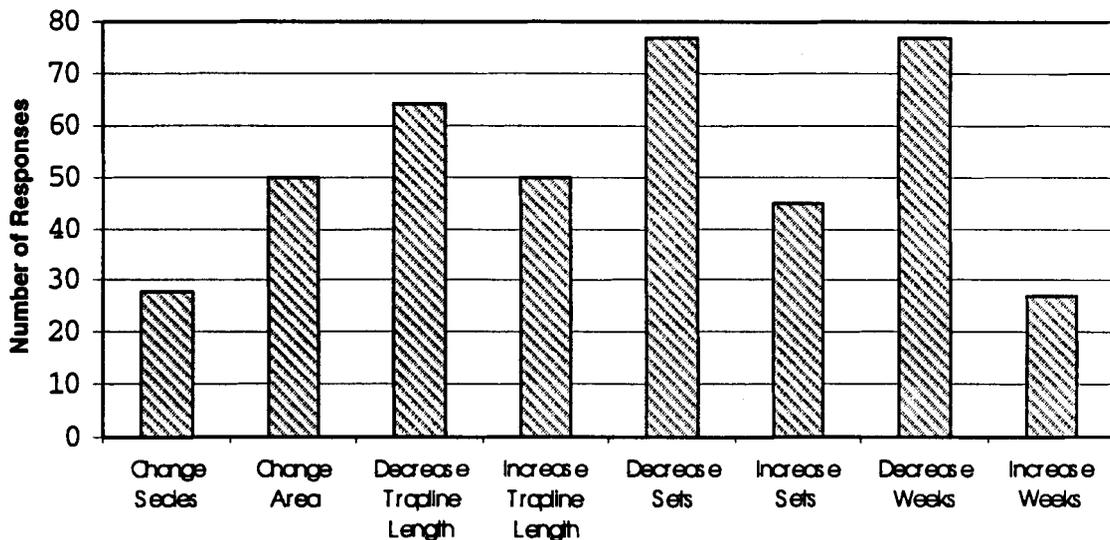
Trend: Average Weeks Trapped



How did you change your trapping effort for the 1997-98 season?

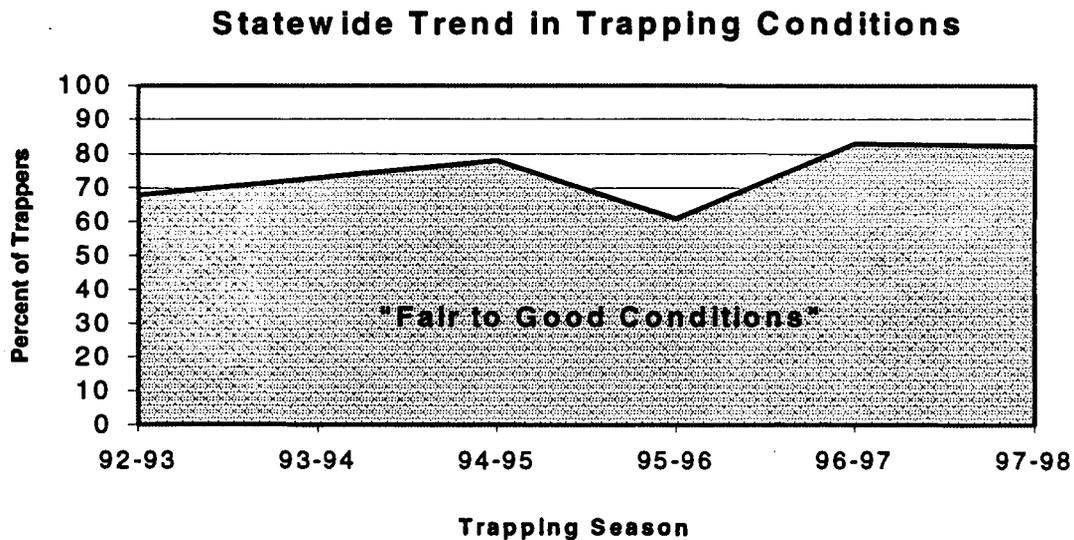
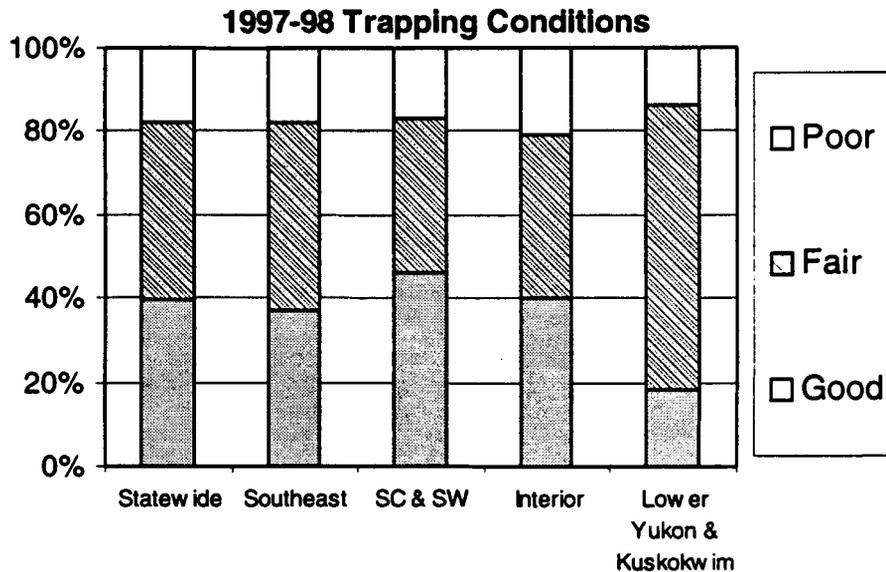
This chart shows which types of changes trappers made.

Types of Changes in Trapping Effort



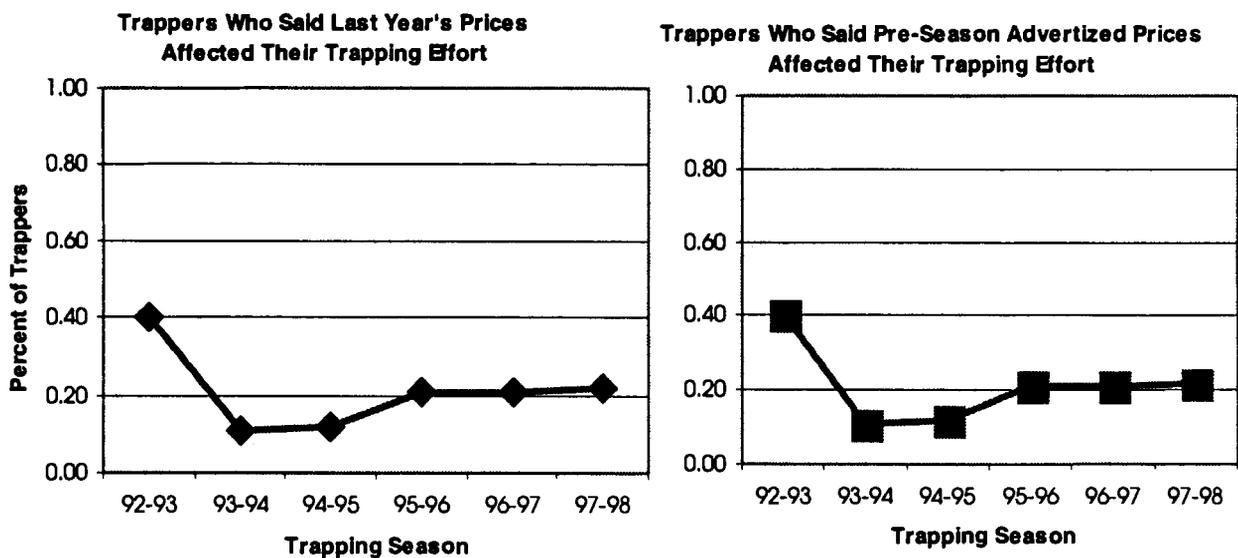
What were trapping conditions like on your trapline?

Statewide, most trappers (82%) said conditions on their traplines were good to fair. The following charts break this down by region and show the 6-year trend.



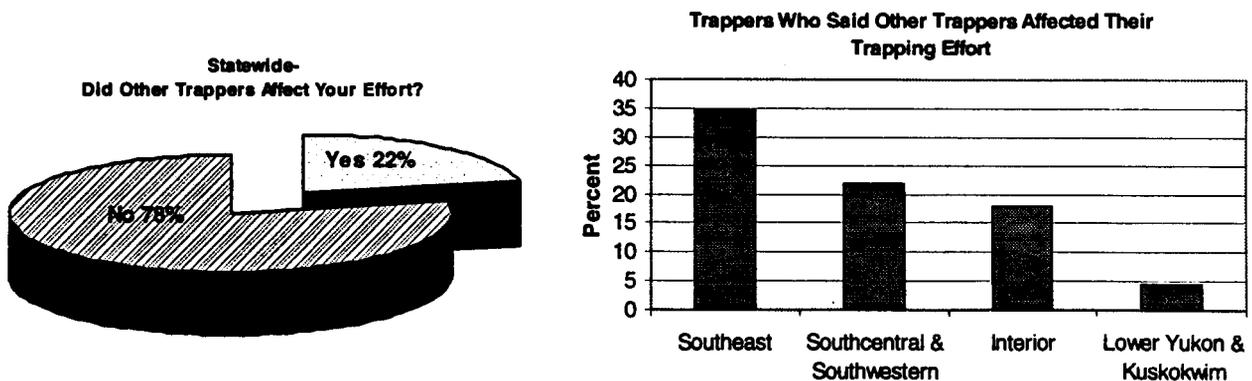
Did last year's fur prices or the pre-season advertised prices affect your trapping effort in 1997-98?

Throughout the state, 78% of the trappers said last year's price did not affect their trapping effort this year. In the Interior, 69% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. In Southeast 88% and Southcentral and Southwestern 87% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. 40% of Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim trappers said last year's prices did not affect their trapping effort. Overall, 81% of trappers said pre-season prices did not affect their effort. In Southeast, 87% said pre-season prices didn't affect their effort, in Southcentral and Southwestern 89% were not affected by pre-season prices, and in the Interior 71% did not change their trapping effort because of pre-season prices. 52% of Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim trappers said pre-season prices did not affect their trapping effort.



Did the presence of other trappers in the area that you trap affect your trapping effort in 1997-98?

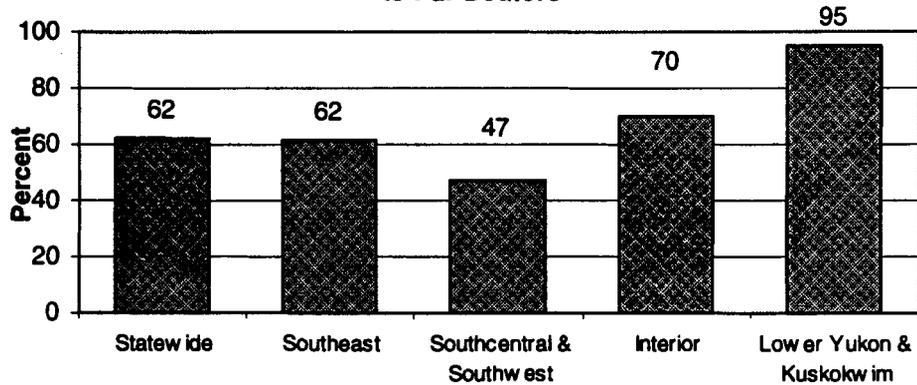
About 78% of trappers in the state said the presence of other trappers did not affect their trapping effort this year.



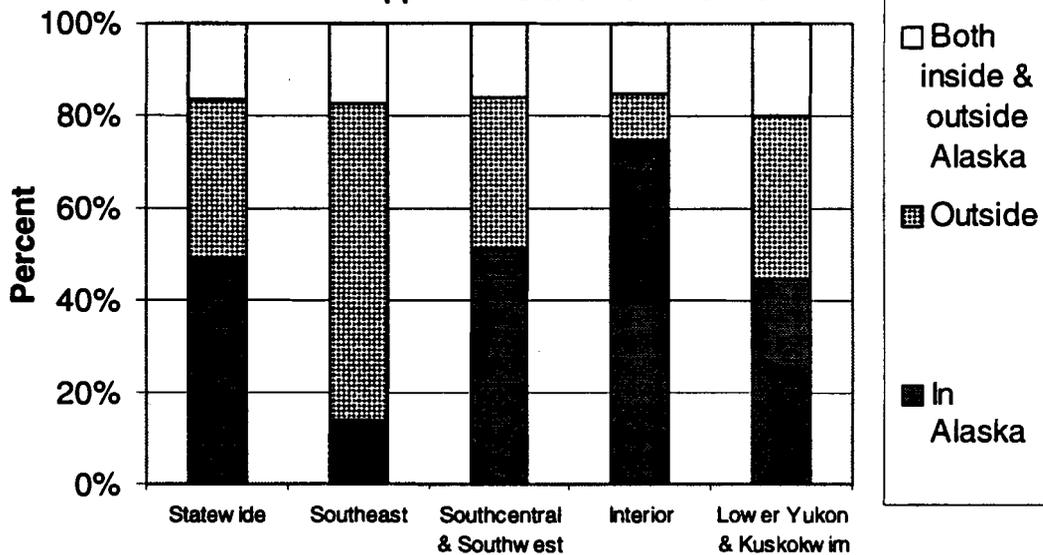
Did you keep or sell most of your furs?

Statewide, most trappers (62%) sold the majority their furs to dealers, rather than keeping them for personal use.

Trappers Who Sold Most of Their Furs to Fur Dealers



Trappers sold to these dealers:



Most trappers from the Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim region, Southcentral and Southwestern, and the Interior sold their furs to Alaskan fur dealers. Trappers in Southeast tended to sell furs to dealers outside the state. This is most likely because Southeast trappers are less likely to have easy access to Alaska fur dealers.

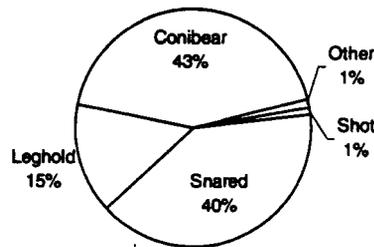
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

Trappers were asked to provide, for each furbearer species taken, the approximate percentage of animals taken by leghold trap, conibear, snare, shooting, or "other" method.

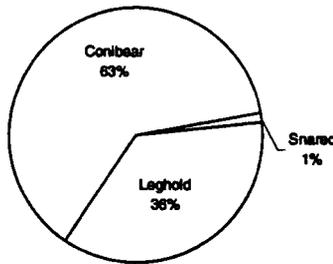
We asked this question because of the increasing pressure from animal rights activists to require more humane trapping methods. We want to document the extent to which Alaskan trappers rely on legholds, conibears, snares, etc. As time goes on, we hope to document what changes in trapping methods trappers initiate on their own.

The following pages show the average percentage of animals taken by leghold trap, conibear, snare, shooting, or "other" methods. There are 5 charts per species. The first is the average of all trappers statewide who reported this information, and the other 4 break the information down by region. You will note regional differences in traps used for some species.

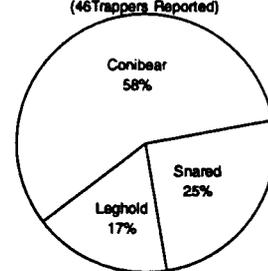
Statewide - Beaver Trapping Methods
(106 Trappers Reported)



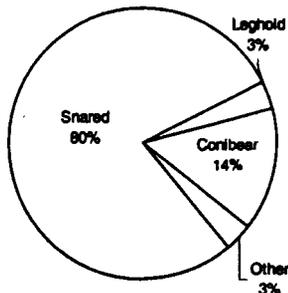
Southeast Beaver
(19 Trappers Reported)



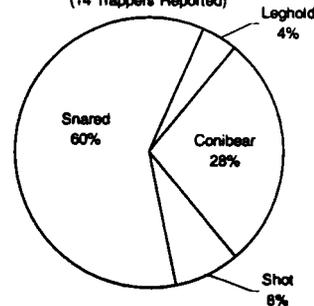
Southcentral & Southwestern Beaver Trapping Methods
(46 Trappers Reported)



Interior Beaver Trapping Methods
(29 Trappers Reported)



Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Beaver Trapping Methods
(14 Trappers Reported)

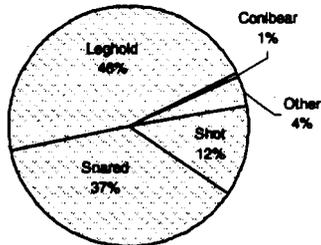


Note the difference in trapping methods in Southeast where much beaver trapping is in open water (drowning leghold sets) and the rest of the state where beavers are trapped primarily under the ice. Also note the percentage of beaver shot on the lower Yukon & Kuskokwim (GMU 18) where beaver may be shot in the late-season open water.

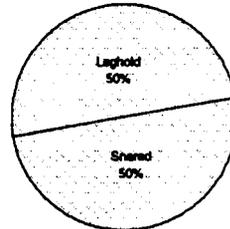
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

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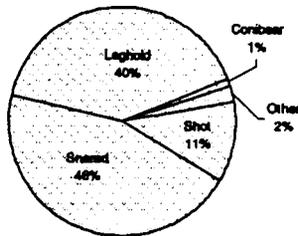
Statewide - Coyote Trapping Methods
(44 Trappers Reported)



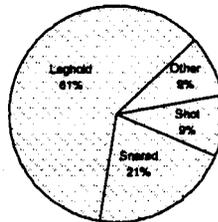
Southeast - Coyote Trapping Methods
(1 Trapper Reported)



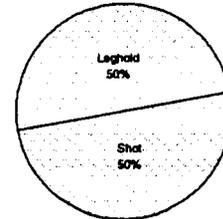
Southcentral & Southwestern Coyote Trapping Methods
(30 Trappers Reported)



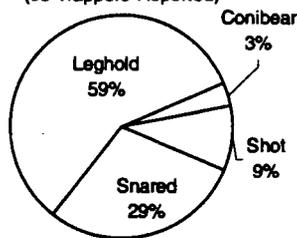
Interior Coyote Trapping Methods
(11 Trappers Reported)



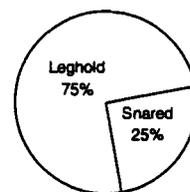
Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Coyote Trapping Methods
(2 Trappers Reported)



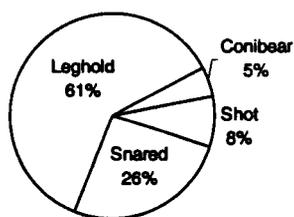
Statewide Fox Trapping Methods
(98 Trappers Reported)



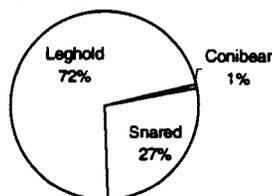
Southeast Fox Trapping Methods
(2 Trappers Reported)



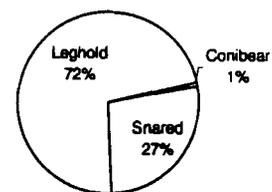
Southcentral & Southwestern Fox Trapping Methods
(34 Trappers Reported)



Interior Fox Trapping Methods
(34 Trappers Reported)



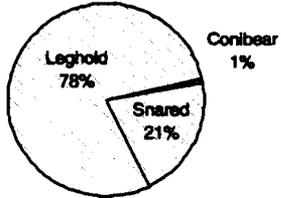
Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Fox Trapping Methods
(12 Trappers Reported)



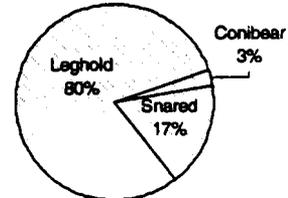
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

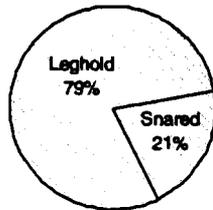
**Statewide
Lynx Trapping Methods**
(57 Trappers Reported)



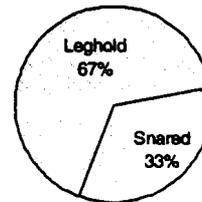
**Southcentral & Southwestern
Lynx Trapping Methods**
(20 Trappers Reported)



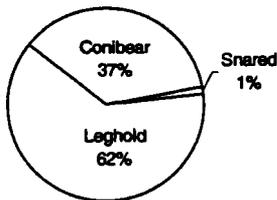
**Interior
Lynx Trapping Methods**
(32 Trappers Reported)



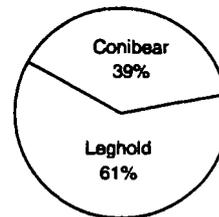
**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Lynx Trapping Methods**
(5 Trappers Reported)



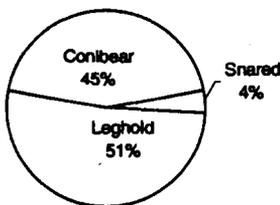
**Statewide
Marten Trapping Methods**
(141 Trappers Reported)



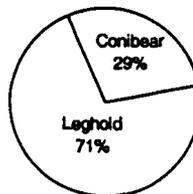
**Southeast
Marten Trapping Methods**
(40 Trappers Reported)



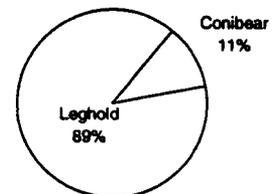
**Southcentral & Southwestern
Marten Trapping Methods**
(48 Trappers Reported)



**Interior
Marten Trapping Methods**
(50 Trappers Reported)



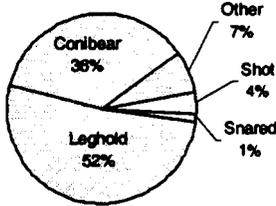
**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Marten Trapping Methods**
(3 Trappers Reported)



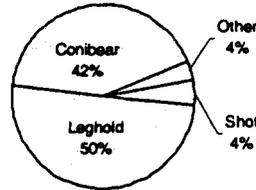
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

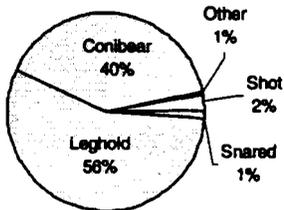
**Statewide
Mink Trapping Methods**
(112 Trappers Reported)



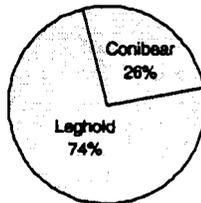
**Southeast
Mink Trapping Methods**
(27 Trappers Reported)



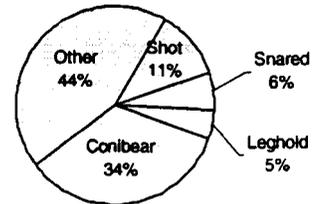
**Southcentral & Southwestern
Mink Trapping Methods**
(41 Trappers Reported)



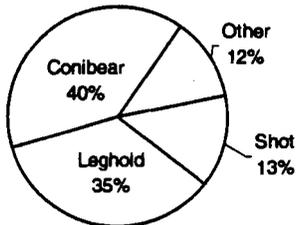
**Interior
Mink Trapping Method:**
(28 Trappers Reported)



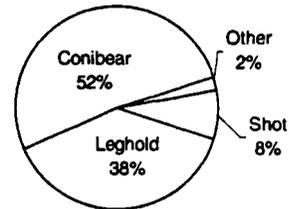
**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Mink Trapping Methods**
(16 Trappers Reported)



**Statewide
Muskrat Trapping Methods**
(26 Trappers Reported)



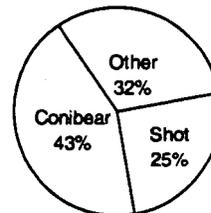
**Southcentral & Southwestern
Muskrat Trapping Methods**
(13 Trappers Reported)



**Interior
Muskrat Trapping Methods**
(6 Trappers Reported)



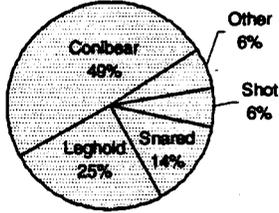
**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Muskrat Trapping Methods**
(6 Trappers Reported)



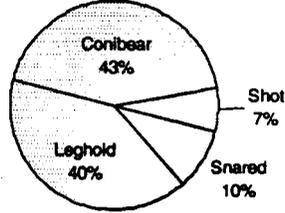
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

continued

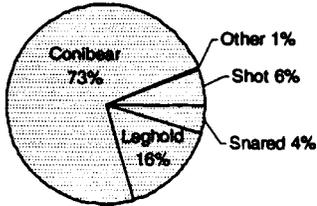
**Statewide
River Otter Trapping Methods**
(94 Trappers Reported)



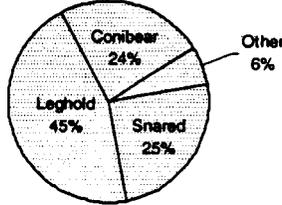
**Southeast
River Otter Trapping Methods**
(26 Trappers Reported)



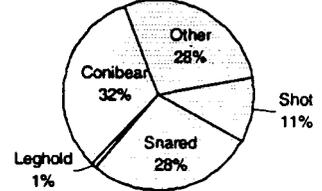
**Southcentral & Southwestern
River Otter Trapping Methods**
(35 Trappers Reported)



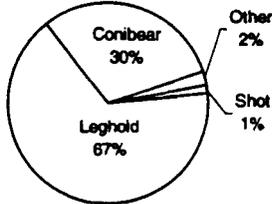
**Interior
River Otter Trapping Methods**
(18 Trappers Reported)



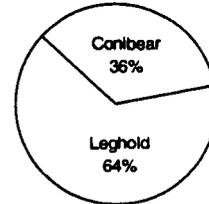
**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
River Otter Trapping Methods**
(17 Trappers Reported)



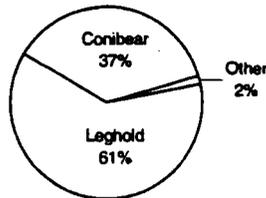
**Statewide
Ermine Trapping Methods**
(67 Trappers Reported)



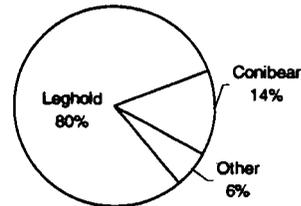
**Southeast
Ermine Trapping Methods**
(16 Trappers Reported)



**Southcentral & Southwestern
Ermine Trapping Methods**
(33 Trappers Reported)



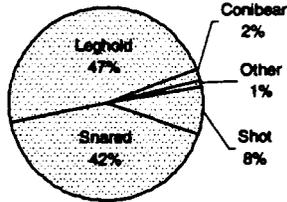
**Interior
Ermine Trapping Methods**
(17 Trappers Reported)



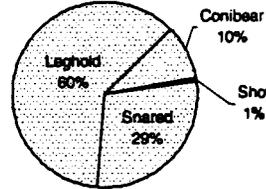
METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

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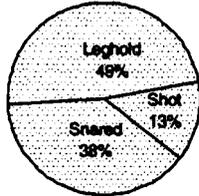
**Statewide
Wolf Trapping Methods**
(90 Trappers Reported)



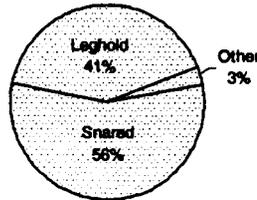
**Southeast
Wolf Trapping Methods**
(19 Trappers Reported)



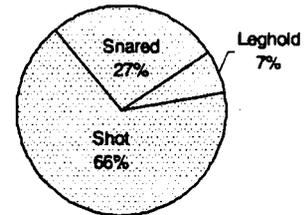
**Southcentral & Southwestern
Wolf Trapping Methods**
(36 Trappers Reported)



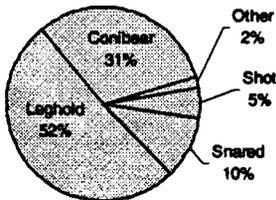
**Interior
Wolf Trapping Methods**
(32 Trappers Reported)



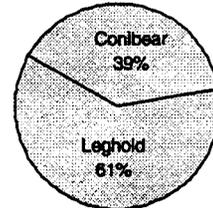
**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Wolf Trapping Methods**
(3 Trappers Reported)



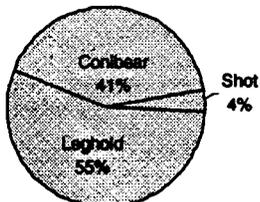
**Statewide
Wolverine Trapping Methods**
(57 Trappers Reported)



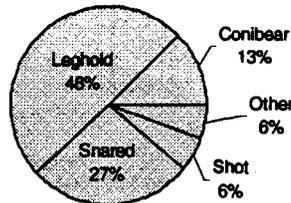
**Southeast
Wolverine Trapping Methods**
(9 Trappers Reported)



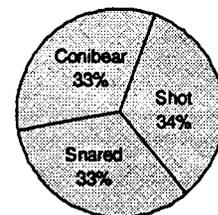
**Southcentral & Southwestern
Wolverine Trapping Methods**
(27 Trappers Reported)



**Interior
Wolverine Trapping Methods**
(18 Trappers Reported)



**Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim
Wolverine Trapping Methods**
(3 Trappers Reported)



ALASKA'S FURBEARER POPULATIONS - TELL US WHAT'S HAPPENING

Only 5 of the 15 species defined as furbearers are required to be sealed throughout Alaska: beaver, lynx, otter, wolf, and wolverine. Marten are required to be sealed in some units, but not statewide. Consequently, information on the numbers, distribution, and utilization of many furbearers is limited. On this year's trapper questionnaire we are asking trappers for harvest information on all Alaska furbearers. Thanks for your help!

SPECIES RELATIVE ABUNDANCE AND POPULATION TRENDS

The species relative abundance index is based on work done with snowshoe hares in Alberta, Canada by Lloyd Keith and Christopher Brand. They compared the results of responses to a trapper questionnaire with their estimates of hare densities based on their own field work and found there was a good relationship between these two measures. They developed an index for the responses received from trappers on the questionnaire. A numerical value was assigned to each of three responses: 1=scarc, 2=common, and 3=abundant. The value of the abundance index then was derived from a mathematical equation that expresses the cumulative response value of trappers in a given region as a percentage of the range of possible values:

$$I = \left[\left(\sum_{i=1}^n R_i - n \right) / 2n \right] \times 100$$

Where **I** = abundance index

R = numerical value (1 = scarce, 2 = common, 3 = abundant)

n = number of trappers reporting

The abundance index (I) ranges from 0% to 100%. Index values of 0-19% indicated animals were scarce, 20-50% indicated animals were common, and values greater than 50% indicated animals were abundant. In the following tables, we converted these values back to the appropriate category: scarce, common, or abundant.

We do not know if the same ranges of percentages are appropriate for animals in Alaska, as they were for snowshoe hares in Alberta. However, this index does provide a way to generally compare trappers' interpretations of species abundance in a given area over time and can be very helpful when used in conjunction with other abundance indicators and sources of information.

Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1997-98

	Statewide Average		Arctic & West Coast Region	
			Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim & the Delta	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:				
Arctic Fox	common	fewer	common	same
Beaver	abundant	same	abundant	same
Coyote	common	fewer	scarce	fewer
Ermine	common	fewer	common	fewer
Lynx	common	same	common	same
Marten	common	fewer	common	same
Mink	common	fewer	common	fewer
Muskrat	common	same	abundant	same
Red Fox	abundant	same	abundant	fewer
Red Squirrel	abundant	same	scarce	fewer
River Otter	common	fewer	abundant	same
Wolf	common	same	common	same
Wolverine	scarce	same	common	same
Prey				
Grouse	common	same	common	same
Hare	abundant	same	abundant	same
Ptarmigan	common	same	abundant	same
Mice/Rodents	abundant	same	abundant	fewer

x means no data available or species does not occur in the area



Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1997-98, continued

	Interior Region									
	Lower Tanana Basin		Upper Tanana Basin		Upper Kuskokwim, Innoko, & Nowitna		Middle Yukon & Koyukuk		Upper Yukon Basin	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:										
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	scarce	fewer
Beaver	abundant	same	common	fewer	common	same	abundant	same	common	same
Coyote	common	more	common	same	x	x	scarce	fewer	scarce	fewer
Ermine	common	same	common	same	common	same	common	same	common	same
Lynx	common	same	abundant	more	scarce	more	scarce	same	common	same
Marten	common	fewer	common	fewer	common	fewer	common	same	common	fewer
Mink	common	fewer	scarce	fewer	common	same	common	fewer	common	fewer
Muskrat	common	same	scarce	fewer	common	more	scarce	same	scarce	fewer
Red Fox	common	fewer	common	fewer	scarce	fewer	common	same	common	fewer
Red Squirrel	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same	abundant	same	common	fewer
River Otter	common	fewer	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	scarce	fewer
Wolf	abundant	same	common	same	common	same	abundant	more	abundant	same
Wolverine	scarce	same	scarce	same	scarce	fewer	common	same	scarce	fewer
Prey										
Grouse	abundant	same	abundant	same	common	same	common	same	common	fewer
Hare	abundant	more	abundant	same	common	more	abundant	more	abundant	same
Ptarmigan	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	more	abundant	same	common	same
Mice/Rodents	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	more	abundant	same

x means no data available or species does not occur in the area

Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1997-98, continued

	Southcentral Region									
	Copper R. & Upper Susitna R. Basins		Lower Susitna Basin		Prince William Sound & North Gulf Coast		Kenai Peninsula		Kodiak Archipelago	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:										
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Beaver	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	abundant	more
Coyote	common	fewer	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	x	x
Ermine	common	same	common	same	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	scarce	fewer
Lynx	common	same	scarce	same	scarce	same	abundant	same	x	x
Marten	common	fewer	common	more	common	same	scarce	fewer	abundant	fewer
Mink	common	same	common	same	common	same	common	fewer	x	x
Muskrat	scarce	same	scarce	same	scarce	same	scarce	fewer	abundant	same
Red Fox	abundant	same	common	same	x	x	scarce	fewer	abundant	same
Red Squirrel	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	common	fewer
River Otter	scarce	fewer	common	same	abundant	same	common	fewer	abundant	fewer
Wolf	common	same	common	more	scarce	same	abundant	fewer	x	x
Wolverine	scarce	same	scarce	same	common	same	scarce	fewer	x	x
Prey										
Grouse	common	same	abundant	same	common	same	common	fewer	x	x
Hare	abundant	same	common	more	abundant	more	common	fewer	abundant	same
Ptarmigan	common	fewer	common	same	common	fewer	common	fewer	common	fewer
Mice/Rodents	abundant	fewer	abundant	same	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	abundant	same

x means no data available or species does not occur in the area

Relative abundance and trend of furbearer populations, 1997-98, continued

	Southwestern Region				Southeastern Region							
	Bristol Bay Area		Alaska Peninsula		Ketchikan, Prince of Wales & vicinity		Petersburg, Wrangell, Kupreanof & vicinity		Juneau, Douglas, Haines, Yakutat		Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof	
	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend	Relative Abundance	Trend
Furbearers:												
Arctic Fox	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Beaver	common	fewer	abundant	fewer	common	fewer	abundant	fewer	abundant	more	common	more
Coyote	common	fewer	common	same	x	x	x	x	common	same	x	x
Ermine	common	same	common	fewer	scarce	fewer	common	fewer	common	fewer	scarce	fewer
Lynx	scarce	fewer	scarce	fewer	x	x	x	x	scarce	same	x	x
Marten	abundant	fewer	scarce	fewer	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	common	same	common	fewer
Mink	common	fewer	common	fewer	abundant	fewer	abundant	fewer	abundant	same	common	fewer
Muskrat	scarce	fewer	scarce	same	x	x	scarce	same	scarce	same	x	x
Red Fox	abundant	same	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Red Squirrel	common	fewer	common	more	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	abundant	more	x	x
River Otter	common	fewer	abundant	fewer	abundant	fewer	common	fewer	common	same	abundant	fewer
Wolf	abundant	fewer	common	same	abundant	fewer	abundant	fewer	common	same	x	x
Wolverine	common	fewer	common	fewer	scarce	more	scarce	fewer	common	same	x	x
Prey												
Grouse	common	fewer	common	same	scarce	fewer	common	fewer	abundant	same	common	same
Hare	common	fewer	common	more	x	x	x	x	scarce	same	x	x
Ptarmigan	common	fewer	common	same	scarce	fewer	scarce	fewer	common	same	common	fewer
Mice/Rodents	common	fewer	abundant	same	abundant	fewer	abundant	fewer	abundant	same	common	same

x means no data available or species does not occur in the area

WOLF HARVEST METHODS

The following tables are compiled from mandatory wolf sealing certificates from 1993 through 1998.

1993-94 Trapping Season	Total		
Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	229	26	11
Southcentral	382	58	15
Interior	841	346	41
Arctic	148	11	7
Total	1600	441	28

1994-95 Trapping Season	Total		
Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	208	47	23
Southcentral	438	58	13
Interior	697	241	35
Arctic	140	2	1
Total	1483	348	23

1995-96 Trapping Season	Total		
Region	Wolves sealed	Wolves snared	% snared
Southeast	200	64	32
Southcentral	301	72	24
Interior	624	277	44
Arctic	126	7	6
Total	1251	420	34

1996-97 Trapping Season	shot	trapped	snared	other	unknown	Total Wolves Sealed
Southeast	57	110	77	0	1	245
Southcentral/ Southwestern	147	104	60	4	18	333
Interior	139	139	297	2	16	593
Arctic/ Western	72	28	1	1	7	109
Total Wolves Sealed	415	381	435	7	42	1280

1997-98 Trapping Season (Preliminary Data)	shot	trapped	snared	other	unknown	Total Wolves Sealed
Southeast	33	95	38	0	3	169
Southcentral/ Southwestern	175	124	70	2	3	374
Interior	101	156	181	4	8	450
Arctic/ Western	26	37	0	0	5	68
Total Wolves Sealed	335	412	289	6	19	1061

ALASKA'S FURBEARER HARVEST

Beaver, lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine require sealing statewide, whereas marten are required to be sealed only in Game Management Units 1-5, 7, 13E, and 14-16. Harvest estimates below are determined from sealing records.

Reported furbearer harvest in Alaska.

Species	Region	Reported Harvest 1993-94	Reported Harvest 1994-95	Reported Harvest 1995-96	Reported Harvest 1996-97	Reported Harvest 1997-98**
Beaver	Southeast	324	225	385	420	430
	Southcentral/Southwestern	1720	1892	1450	2027	1291
	Interior	1886	1720	1114	2290	1988
	Arctic/Western	685	520	665	1039	1081
	Total Beaver	4615	4357	3614	5776	4790
Lynx	Southeast	22	6	5	6	0
	Southcentral/Southwestern	188	172	113	330	618
	Interior	999	587	439	1338	2043
	Arctic/Western	11	13	17	45	41
	Total Lynx	1220	778	574	1719	2702
Otter	Southeast	409	557	496	410	643
	Southcentral/Southwestern	449	488	586	728	510
	Interior	139	97	126	168	100
	Arctic/Western	118	220	298	436	415
	Total Otter	1115	1362	1506	1742	1668
Wolf	Southeast	226	219	209	245	169
	Southcentral/Southwestern	368	413	292	333	374
	Interior	840	668	624	593	450
	Arctic/Western	149	143	126	109	68
	Total Wolf	1583	1443	1251	1280	1061
Wolverine	Southeast	25	35	29	39	25
	Southcentral/Southwestern	186	246	165	222	219
	Interior	242	293	133	195	166
	Arctic/Western	61	48	62	75	79
	Total Wolverine	514	622	389	531	489
Marten*	Southeast	1560	2170	2787	3703	3036
	Southcentral/Southwestern	159	277	416	781	587
	Total Marten	1719	2447	3204	4485	3623

* Marten are sealed only in Game Management Units 1-5, 7, 13E, and 14-16.

** Preliminary data. Totals for the 1997-98 season may change slightly when data entry is completed.

COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING FURS

AVERAGE PRICES PAID FOR RAW FURS BY DEALERS IN ALASKA

Several fur buyers in Alaska were asked for the average and top prices they paid for furs. The values they gave were averaged to produce the table below.

Species	1993-94 Average \$	1995-96 Average \$	1996-97 Average \$	1997-98 Average \$	1998-99 Average \$	1998-99 Top \$
Beaver	26.00	31.50	35.00	32.50	25.75	50.00
Coyote	25.00	27.50	27.50	25.00	21.67	28.33
Fox	17.50	22.00	24.00	15.00	16.13	51.00
Lynx	85.00	77.50	77.50	61.00	42.50	88.75
Marten	42.50	38.50	42.50	27.00	24.00	36.25
Mink(wild)	17.00	12.00	18.50	12.25	10.25	18.00
Muskrat	1.25	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.31	2.67
River otter	60.00	60.00	45.00	50.00	38.75	53.33
Squirrel	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.50	1.00
Weasel	1.75	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.75	4.33
Wolf	235.00	250.00	237.00	137.50	231.25	437.50
Wolverine	235.00	275.00	250.00	185.00	281.25	400.00



FUR VALUE

The following table summarizes the total estimated value of furs trapped during the 1996-97 trapping season. The estimated average price paid by Alaska fur dealers was used in this calculation.

1996-97 fur value in Alaska (1997-98 data not yet available)

Species	Total Number	Average Price Paid in AK	Total Estimated Value
Beaver*	5776	35.00	\$202,160
Coyote**	150	27.50	4,125
Fox, Arctic**	135	24.00	3,240
Fox, Red**	1729	24.00	41,496
Lynx*	1719	77.50	133,223
Marten**	21156	42.50	899,130
Mink**	5977	18.50	110,575
Muskrat**	1233	2.00	2,466
Otter*	1749	45.00	78,705
Squirrel, red**	651	1.00	651
Weasel (ermine)**	409	2.00	818
Wolf*	1280	237.00	303,360
Wolverine*	531	250.00	132,750
Total:	42495		\$1,912,698

* Compiled from mandatory fur sealing records

** Compiled from fur export records



FUR ACQUISITION AND EXPORT

The following table summarizes data from the Report of Acquisition of Furs and Hides filled out by fur buyers (dealers) and the Raw Fur Skin Export Permit (the blue card everyone must fill out when sending untanned furs out of state.) These reports are a general indicator of harvest trends, but are not actual records of the number of furbearers harvested in a trapping season. Both reports may include furs harvested in previous years, and many trappers keep their furs for tanning and use at home. In addition, some people may not fill out the required forms. If you want more information about fur harvest trends, contact your regional or statewide furbearer biologist.

1996-97 Fur Acquisition and Export (1997-98 data not yet available)

Species	Acquisition of	Furs Exported
	Furs By Alaskan Fur Buyers	out of Alaska
	Number of Furs	Number of Furs
Beaver	1,724	3,124
Coyote	96	150
Fox, Blue (Arctic)	0	29
Fox, White (Arctic)	25	106
Fox, Red (Cross color)	206	289
Fox, Red (Red color)	827	1,411
Fox, Red (Silver color)	30	29
Lynx	730	1,122
Marten	13,632	21,156
Mink	3,707	5,977
Muskrat	975	1,233
Otter, land (river)	516	1,091
Squirrel, red	102	651
Weasel (ermine)	249	409
Wolf	113	495
Wolverine	97	261
Other	22	45
Total Furs	23,051	37,578



FUR SEALING REQUIREMENTS

All beaver, lynx, otter, wolf, wolverine, and marten sealed in Game Management Units 1-5, 7, 13E, 14, 15, and 16 must be sealed by an authorized department representative. If you ship furs to a buyer or auction house out of the state they must be sealed **before** you ship them.

All raw skins of wild furbearers shipped from Alaska must have a Fur Export Permit (blue shipping tag) attached to the shipment. Also, a Fur Export Report (a postage-paid postcard attached to the permit) must also be completed and mailed to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The U.S. Post Office Domestic Mail Manual Regulation 124.65 also requires compliance with this regulation. This 2-part form is free from any Alaska Department of Fish and Game office or authorized fur sealer.

If there is no authorized fur sealer near you, contact the nearest office of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. A list of area biologist is on the next page. We can help you make arrangements to seal your furs. If you or someone you know wants to become a fur sealer contact one of the following Regional Fur Sealing Officers:

Interior Region

Bob Hunter
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 459-7211

Southcentral/Southwestern Region

Vacant (Contact Mike McDonald)
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518
(907) 267-2198

Arctic/Western Region

Peter Bente
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 1148
Nome, AK 99762
(907) 443-2271

Southeast Region

Chris Bedegrew
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 20
Douglas, AK 99824
(907) 465-4265

AREA BIOLOGISTS AND GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS

<p>GMU 1 (A), 2 Boyd Porter Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2030 Sealevel Drive, Suite 205 KETCHIKAN, AK 99901 Phone: (907) 225-2475 Fax: (907) 225-2771</p>	<p>GMU 9, 10 Richard Sellers Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 37 KING SALMON, AK 99613 Phone: (907) 246-3340 Fax: (907) 246-3309</p>	<p>GMU 19, 21(A),(E) Toby Boudeau Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 230 MCGRATH, AK 99627 Phone: (907) 524-3323 Fax: (907) 524-3323</p>
<p>GMU 1(B), 3 Ed Crain Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 667 PETERSBURG, AK 99833 Phone: (907) 772-3801 Fax: (907) 772-9336</p>	<p>GMU 11, 13 Bob Tobey Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 47 GLENNALLEN, AK 99588 Phone: (907) 822-3461 Fax: (907) 822-3811</p>	<p>GMU 20(A),(B),(C),(F), 25(C) Bruce Dale Alaska Department of Fish & Game 1300 College Road FAIRBANKS, AK 99701 Phone: (907) 459-7233 Fax: (907) 452-6410</p>
<p>GMU 4 Jack Whitman Alaska Department of Fish & Game 304 Lake Street Room 103 SITKA, AK 99835-7563 Phone: (907) 747-5449 Fax: (907) 747-6239</p>	<p>GMU 12, 20(E) Craig Gardner Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 355 TOK, AK 99780-0355 Phone: (907) 883-2971 Fax: (907) 883-2970</p>	<p>GMU 20(D) Steve DuBois Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 605 DELTA JUNCTION, AK 99737 Phone: (907) 895-4484 Fax: (907) 895-4833</p>
<p>GMU 1(C), 1(D), 5 Matt Robus Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 20 DOUGLAS, Alaska 99824 Phone: (907) 465-4359 Fax: (907) 465-4272</p>	<p>GMU 14(A),(B), 16(A) Herman Griese Alaska Department of Fish & Game 1800 Glenn Hwy Suite 4 PALMER, Alaska 99645-6736 Phone: (907) 746-6327 Fax: (907) 746-6305</p>	<p>GMU 21(B),(C),(D), 24 Glenn Stout Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 209 GALENA, Alaska 99741 Phone: (907) 656-1345 Fax: (907) 656-1345</p>
<p>GMU 6 Dave Crowley Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 669 CORDOVA, Alaska 99574 Phone: (907) 424-3215 Fax: (907) 424-3235</p>	<p>GMU 14(C), 16(B) Rick Sinnott Alaska Department of Fish & Game 333 Raspberry Road ANCHORAGE, Alaska 99518 Phone: (907) 267-2185 Fax: (907) 267-2433</p>	<p>GMU 22 Kate Persons Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 1148 NOME, Alaska 99762 Phone: (907) 443-2271 Fax: (907) 443-5893</p>
<p>GMU 7, 15 Ted Spraker Alaska Department of Fish & Game 34828 Kallifornsky Beach Rd Ste B SOLDOTNA, Alaska 99669-8367 Phone: (907) 280-2905 Fax: (907) 262-4709</p>	<p>GMU 17 Jim Woolington Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 1030 DILLINGHAM, Alaska 99576 Phone: (907) 842-2334 Fax: (907) 842-5514</p>	<p>GMU 23 Jim Dau Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 689 KOTZEBUE, Alaska 99752 Phone: (907) 442-3420 Fax: (907) 442-2420</p>
<p>GMU 8 Larry Van Daele Alaska Department of Fish & Game 211 Mission Road KODIAK, Alaska 99615 Phone: (907) 486-1876 Fax: (907) 486-1869</p>	<p>GMU 18 Roger Seavoy, Assistant Area Biologist Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 1467 BETHEL, Alaska 99559 Phone: (907) 543-2979 Fax: (907) 543-2021</p>	<p>GMU 25(A),(B),(D), 26(B),(C) Bob Stephenson Alaska Department of Fish & Game 1300 College Road FAIRBANKS, Alaska 99701 Phone: (907) 459-7236 Fax: (907) 459-6410</p>
<p>GMU 26(A) Geoff Carroll Alaska Department of Fish & Game P.O. Box 1284 BARROW, Alaska 99723-1284 Phone: (907) 852-3464 Fax: (907) 852-3485</p>		

FISH AND GAME FURBEARER BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS

STATE, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

FUR ISSUES FACING ALASKA

Steve Peterson

Statewide Furbearer Coordinator

During the past year I continued to represent Alaskan trappers on issues that directly affect your lifestyle. These efforts have primarily involved membership on the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAF&WA) Fur Resources Technical Subcommittee. This year's work focused on testing traps as part of the process to make recommendations for Best Management Practices (BMPs) as our dispute with the European Union fur ban continued to fade into the background.

Ballot Initiative on Snaring

At this time last year, we were not sure if the wolf snaring initiative was going to be on the fall 1998 ballot or not. Even though we all know the results of that initiative process, I would like to reflect briefly on what happened. I stated in last year's report that: "If trappers get involved, they can not only win this one, but they can win it decisively." That is exactly what happened and everyone (trappers, their families, friends and associations) should be commended for pulling together to defeat a real threat to their lifestyle. However, you should bear in mind two things regarding the results of that ballot process:

- 1) You spent an awful lot of time and money to stay exactly where you were before the election. Granted, you didn't lose anything in the process, but the sad thing is, the people who put that initiative on the ballot will be back with another issue affecting your lifestyle and they probably will be willing to put up a lot more money in the hopes of eventually promoting their view on trapping into law. This will force you to do what you did last year all over again, unless the general public can be convinced ahead of time that these types of issues are not worth supporting; and
- 2) Even though 39 of 40 election districts voted against the initiative (downtown Juneau was the only district that voted to support the ban), the results of the unofficial "kids vote" was quite different than the official adult vote. Fifty-three percent of the 10,000+ kids who "voted", voted in favor of the ban. Many of these kids were from rural areas and within a few years, these kids will be voting for real. I suspect many individuals of this age have already formed their basic feelings on issues such as this one. This vote should be viewed as a "red flag" wakeup call that trappers should be concerned about in the future.

The European Fur Ban

The one thing still of interest to us in this arena is that the agreements between Europe, Canada and Russia have still not been given final approval by whomever needs to do these things. In Russia, they are still not sure just who is supposed to approve it. Our interest here is the fact that the humane trap standards in their agreements are referenced in our "Understanding" with the European Union. However, any time frames associated with these standards do not begin until the Canadian and Russian Agreements are approved by the respective countries. Therefore, our clock has not started to tick yet and at this point, I'm not sure when it will start.

Best Management Practices (BMPs)

We conducted two BMP workshops in Alaska this summer: one in Anchorage and one in Fairbanks. These two meetings were attended by 25-30 individuals, primarily officers in local trapping organizations. In general, Alaskans are very skeptical about the value of BMPs as they feel ultimately the process will lead to more regulatory restrictions on trapping and possibly to the elimination of suitable traps still being used to take fur in Alaska. Trappers in Maine also have voiced similar concerns. However, for the most part trappers and trapping organizations throughout the United States, have spoken in favor of developing and implementing BMPs. My personal opinion is that, in the long run, BMPs will help protect trapping in this country.

During this past trapping season a lot of traps were tested in the BMP project, primarily on fox, coyote and raccoon in the eastern states. In Alaska, we did a small comparison of efficiency and selectivity between No. 1 Longsprings and 120 Conibears for taking marten in the Interior. I have not summarized the data yet but hopefully it will be available in a few weeks. Next year we will probably compare the efficiency and selectivity of pan vs. forked triggers in 120 Conibears for taking marten in Interior Alaska.

Statewide Trapper Group

Over the past year several of us have been working to develop a trapping/furbearer workgroup to be composed of a mixture of state biologists with a strong interest in furbearer management and representative trappers from around the state. The purpose of the group would be to get individuals together to work on issues and problems of common interest regarding furbearer management in Alaska. This winter I talked to trapping groups in Anchorage and Fairbanks to solicit their ideas on this concept. I detected enough positive interest in the idea to move forward with putting the group together. In the near future I will be soliciting interested participants.

I think this "trapper committee" could work on a variety of projects such as developing a publication on the "Role of Regulated Trapping and the Management of Furbearers in Alaska," or perhaps a statewide review of beaver regulations. I believe the group could be a good forum to air differences in opinion on how furbearers in Alaska should be managed and to develop draft regulatory proposals on trapping for the Board of Game and Federal Subsistence Board processes. Stay tuned on what develops over the next year.

Good Hunting, and
Good Trapping

Steve Peterson

INTERIOR REGION

By

Interior Furbearer Biologist, Mark McNay

With the exception of lynx, harvest of the sealed furbearing species declined in interior Alaska during 1997-98. Beaver harvests dropped by 29% compared to the previous year, yet the harvest of 1,982 beaver was similar to the previous 5-year average of 1,845. Otter harvests were down by 40%, wolf by 24% and wolverine by 16%.

No doubt part of the reason for the reduced harvest was price. Beaver averaged only \$22 in the February 1998 North American sale compared to a 1997 average of \$31. Other furs including marten, mink, and wolves suffered a similar loss of value. Marten prices average \$28, down 35% from February 1997 values. Mink averaged \$18, down 30% and wolves averaged only \$75, down 67% from the 1997 average of \$176.

Lynx harvests were the exception to the rule. Despite a 27% decline in average pelt value from \$84 to \$61, lynx harvests increased almost 50%. The 1997-98 harvest of 2,037 lynx from interior units was the highest lynx harvest interior trappers have produced since 1983 and 75% of the entire statewide harvest was taken from the interior in 1997-98. That result was predictable given the widespread increase in interior hare and lynx numbers, and the harvest of lynx should be even higher in 1998-99. Data from lynx carcasses purchased from trappers by the Department of Fish and Game showed that lynx reproduction remained high with 32% kittens in the 1997-98 interior lynx harvest. Pregnancy rates were also high at 60%, suggesting another good crop of kittens should be recruited into the population in 1998. However, I expect the lynx and hare cycle will peak within the next two years and harvests should decline dramatically by 2001.

In addition to our ongoing research of the interior lynx and hare cycle, Department biologists are also monitoring the effects of intensive harvest on wolf populations, and have recently started a project investigating the effects of coyote predation on Dall Sheep. The fieldwork on the wolf project will end in 1999 and results will be available for inclusion in next year's trapper questionnaire. Fieldwork on the coyote/sheep project will intensify in the spring of 1999 and that study will continue for several more years.

Trappers have traditionally been a significant part of the various research and management projects conducted by the Department. Not only do you supply animal carcasses from your traplines, but also you relate valuable observations regarding local changes in furbearer abundance or condition. One example is the recent report by Southcentral trappers of wolves that were infested with lice. The lice problem first showed itself in Alaska in the early 1980's on the Kenai Peninsula when wolves contracted the parasite from dogs. Until recently the problem has been confined to the Kenai, but in the fall of 1998 louse infested wolves suddenly appeared in 3 packs near Palmer. Again the most likely source of the infection was from dogs. Department biologists were able to catch all of the wolves in the known infested packs and treat them with drugs that kill the parasite, but the extent to which the lice have spread to other packs

is unknown. Lice have also been found on coyotes in the area suggesting the problem may reappear in wolves.

The louse causes massive hair loss in wolves and is most often associated with a particularly foul smell. I encourage trappers to report to the Department any sightings or catches they have of wolves or coyotes that may exhibit those symptoms. Poor pelts and hair loss can result from a variety of causes, and to date we have not found any wolves in the interior that contain lice. In fact many trappers in interior Alaska have reported wolves that had significant hair loss in recent years, but none of those had lice. However, the long dispersal distances of wolves create the potential for lice to gain access to our interior wolf population and the trappers will no doubt be the first ones to know if this nasty parasite arrives. Your past contributions to our research and management efforts are greatly appreciated and we need your help to keep an eye open for this new threat to our traditionally high quality furbearer populations.

SOUTHCENTRAL/SOUTHWESTERN REGION

By

Howard Golden, Southcentral Furbearer Biologist

The 1997-98 trapping season in Southcentral Alaska resulted in increased harvests of lynx and wolves from last year. However, harvests of beavers, river otters, and marten declined, while the number of wolverines taken stayed about the same. Poor snow conditions in some areas and relatively low pelt prices did not provide much incentive for trappers.

Of the species that were sealed, beaver harvest was highest at 1,291. This was the lowest beaver harvest in 5 years in Southcentral where the average take is 1,676. Trappers took the most beavers in Units 13, 14, and 17 with harvests of 191, 244, and 363, respectively. River otter harvest was 510 and was highest in Unit 8 where 147 were taken. The wolf harvest in Southcentral was 374 with about a third of those taken in Unit 13. Of the 219 wolverines harvested in the region, 52 were taken in Unit 9, 34 in Unit 13, and 49 in Unit 17. Most of the 571 marten sealed in the region were taken in Units 14 and 16, where 138 and 297 were harvested, respectively.

Lynx continued to increase in number in several areas of Southcentral. The greatest increases were seen in Units 11 and 13, which had a combined harvest of 386 lynx in 1997-98. This was the highest harvest reported from this area since 335 lynx were taken in 1982. Lynx and hare populations are still patchy in distribution but their relative abundance is high compared with past years. Kittens made up 35% of the lynx taken, which is another indication the population is growing. Lynx harvests peaked in Units 11 and 13 in 1982-83 and 1991-92, suggesting an approximate 9-year cycle. If this pattern continues, we expect the lynx population to peak again

in approximately 3 years in 2000-01, with the hare population peaking about 1 year earlier. Because of the record-high harvest in 1997-98 and that the population should still be in the early phase of its increase in the cycle, we chose to maintain the current trapping season of 2½ months for 1998-99 under the department's tracking harvest strategy. We hope to be able to increase the season for the 1999-00 season.

In contrast, lynx and hare populations on the Kenai Peninsula may be at or near their peak. The last hare population high was 13 years ago in 1984. Hare numbers are still high but seem to be declining in some areas. The harvest of 141 lynx in 1997-98 was the highest reported for the Kenai Peninsula. The proportion of kittens was also high at 32%. Lynx and hare populations in Units 6, 14, and 16 seem to be increasing, but, while hares are relatively high for those areas, lynx numbers remain moderate to low. Under the tracking harvest strategy, we chose to maintain season lengths in these areas.

We had an unpleasant surprise in December 1998. A trapper in the Mat-Su Valley caught a couple of wolves that were infested with lice. This is the same species of biting dog louse that has affected the wolves on the Kenai Peninsula for the last 18 years. Department staff conducted an intensive and extensive effort to find out how many wolf packs were infested and found that 3 of 13 packs had lice. We successfully treated the wolves in those packs in an effort to limit the spread of the parasite. Coyotes in the area have also been found with lice. They are more difficult to find and treat than wolves are, but our program of trapping and treating them and spreading out treated baits may be effective in slowing the spread of lice among coyotes. We believe domestic dogs are the most likely source of the problem. Dogs should be treated for lice and not allowed to run free. Local trappers have helped the department greatly in dealing with this new outbreak of lice. We hope they can continue to help by encouraging owners of dog lots and those who do not keep their animals tied up to do the right thing.

Furbearer research is continuing on the development of techniques to monitor furbearer abundance and to understand more about river otter and wolverine populations in Southcentral. Please feel free to contact me at the address below about furbearer issues in the region or if you would like a copy of the annual furbearer research report for Southcentral.

Good luck on your traplines.

Howard Golden, 333 Raspberry Rd., Anchorage, AK 99518 (907) 267-2177.

SOUTHEAST REGION

By

Southeast Furbearer Biologist, Rod Flynn

In Southeast Alaska, the furbearers taken in the largest numbers by trappers was the American marten. Since marten pelts were first sealed after the 1984-85 trapping season, the annual marten catch in southeast Alaska has averaged 2,754 animals. During the 1997-98 trapping season, 3,036 martens were sealed by trappers in Southeast. The catch dropped 21% from last year (3,825), but was 282 more than the 13-year average. By Unit, the greatest number of martens were taken in Unit 2 (1,076) followed by Unit 4 (679), Unit 1B (318), Unit 3 (274), Unit 1A (236), and Unit 1C (202). Based on the long-term average, the greatest numbers of martens were usually taken from Units 4 (35%), 2 (30%), and 1A (9%). The remainder of the Units (1B, 1C, 1D, 3, and 5) provided less than 10% of the average regional catch.

The greatest change from 1996-1997 was recorded in Unit 4; the marten catch decreased by 56% from 1,559 to 679. The reduced catch followed the large harvest in 1996 (1,559; 41% above average) and the 2nd year of reduced rodent numbers, especially long-tailed voles (82% decrease from 1996). We have monitored the abundance of rodents along transects on northeast Chichagof Island since 1990. Another low in rodent abundance was recorded during 1991-93. If few alternative foods are available during a rodent decline, martens can be highly vulnerable to trapping because they will travel more in search of food. In addition, reproduction and natural survival may be reduced.

During 1997-1998, the fieldwork for marten studies, begun in 1990 on northeast Chichagof Island, was completed. This year we captured 73 martens (47 males and 26 females). We have tried to locate marten dens since spring 1994. In the first 2 years, we found 5 natal and 5 maternal marten dens. During 1996 and 1997, we monitored all adult radiocollared females (5 and 6 respectively) and found only 1 denning female each year. We located 2 additional natal dens and 1 maternal den. Neither of the litters survived to independence. Several other females may have initiated dens, but these apparently failed. Apparently, a decrease in the availability of prey, particularly long-tailed voles, may have led to the failure to produce young during these years. Diet data from previous years have showed voles are the principal prey of martens on northeastern Chichagof Island during spring and early summer. Of the 15 natal dens located since 1994, 4 were in cavities in live trees, 3 were in snag cavities, 5 were in hollow logs, and 3 were in root cavities. Diameters of these structures ranged from 60 to 148 cm. Of the 14 maternal dens located, 8 were in root cavities beneath live trees or snags, 4 were in hollow logs, and 2 were in logging slash. Diameters of used structures ranged from 50 to 150 cm.

We located 19 winter and 17 summer resting sites used by male and female martens. The structures used for resting were usually cavities in live trees or snags; some were in down logs. All the structures were characteristic of old-growth forest. For 36 resting sites associated with

trees or snags, the mean diameter at breast height (DBH) was 66.9 cm (SD = 30). The mean DBH of the 3 resting sites in down logs was 87.3 cm (SD= 33).

Currently, we are involved in cooperative research with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum on the distribution of terrestrial mammals in Southeast Alaska. For this project, we have been collecting specimens of several furbearers, including martens, minks, and ermines.



WESTERN AND NORTHWESTERN REGION

by

Peter Bente, Regional Biologist, Nome

Fur harvests in this region range from relatively high catches in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to relatively low numbers on the western North Slope. This report will give summary statistics for the fur harvests during the 1997-98 trapping season and some additional observations from the area biologists in Barrow, Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome. If you have additional information or more observations that you are willing to share, I encourage you to contact your local area biologists (telephone numbers listed at end of report).

Unit 18 Yukon – Kuskokwim Delta. Assistant Area Biologist Roger Seavoy in Bethel reports furbearers are very abundant in the Yukon- Kuskokwim Delta region, but trapper numbers are declining. With low numbers of trappers, furbearers are an under-utilized resource throughout much of Unit 18. To help increase interest in trapping, a local radio show in Bethel has featured essays on trapping, provided information about fur species, and explained the sealing requirements for all harvests of beaver, lynx, river otter, wolves, and wolverines. In some areas beavers are considered a nuisance because they build dams that interfere with boat traffic and this issue has been discussed at public meetings. Foxes are being found close to villages and in towns and information about rabies and keeping dog vaccinations current are important issues in the region.

Abundance of all species of furbearers has remained high, especially beaver, fox, marten, and otter. The preliminary harvest of furbearers in Unit 18 during the 1997–1998 trapping season is estimated to be approximately 1000 beaver, 500 foxes (red and white combined), 40 lynx, 100 marten, 2000 mink, 1000 muskrats, 500 river otters, and 43 wolves. These harvest records indicate there is very little interest in the sale of pelts except beaver, red fox, mink, river otter and wolf. Observations by trappers and staff indicate that all furbearer species are abundant throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Lynx and wolverine numbers continue to increase steadily and all three species have been trapped in close proximity to villages where they were rarely seen in previous years. With the continued increased use of Unit 18 by the Mulchatna Caribou Herd, wolverine sightings and harvest are likely to grow.

This wolf harvest increased nearly four-fold compared to the previous year. Trappers and hunters have seen increasing numbers of wolves in the Kilbuck and Kuskokwim Mountains, as well as the river corridor between Marshall and Paimiut. Reports by the department and from the general public show that wolf packs occupy the entire length of the Yukon River in Unit 18, portions of the Kilbuck Mountains, the Kuskokwim River near the Unit 19A boundary. The overall Unit 18 population is estimated to range from 100–125 wolves in 8–12 different packs. The recent migrations of several thousand Western Arctic herd caribou into the lower Yukon and Andreafsky River area, expansion of the Mulchatna caribou herd into the Kilbuck Mountains, and increased numbers of moose along the lower Yukon River, has allowed the wolf population to grow in Unit 18.

The department responded to nuisance beaver complaints and trapped a small number of them. However, trapping of beavers during the open season is usually the best solution to the problem.

For more information contact: Roger Seavoy at 1-800-425-2979

Unit 22 Seward Peninsula. Assistant Area Biologist Kate Persons reports that trapping harvests are relatively low compared to other parts of the State. The preliminary harvest of furbearers in Unit 22 during the 1997–1998 trapping season is estimated to be 39 beaver, 2 lynx, 7 river otter, 26 wolverine, and 20 wolves. All but 2 beaver were taken with the aid of a snowmachine. The wolverine harvest was divided between hunting season and trapping season harvest. Trapping accounted for 57% of the harvest, 38% were shot and 5% unknown.

Wolves are becoming more abundant in many parts of Unit 22, likely resulting from the large number of Western Arctic caribou that have wintered on the Seward Peninsula in the last two years. Accounts of larger packs than previously reported have come from Unit 22A. In western Unit 22B and Unit 22C, where previously wolves were reported only during winter months, there are observations of small resident wolf packs and harvest during the

summer months. A pack of 4 wolves was reported last winter at the western end of the Lava Beds and individual animals were noted along the north slopes of the Bendelebens in Unit 22D. There are few reports of wolves in the western portion of Units 22D or 22E. Local reindeer herders are making attempts at reducing wolf/reindeer interactions by spending more time with the reindeer, particularly at fawning time, and keeping reindeer in areas where wolf densities appear to be lower.

Beaver continued to expand their range westward and now are present in all the subunits of Unit 22. Densities are increasing dramatically in Units 22C and 22D and beaver are well established in the Serpentine River drainage in Unit 22E. In October 1997, the Board of Game extended the beaver trapping season in Units 22C, 22D and 22E, creating a uniform season throughout Unit 22 from 1 November through 10 June, effective with the 1998-1999 regulatory year. Lynx are reported to be scarce throughout the Unit as they have been since the mid-1980s. Hares, their primary food source, are currently not very abundant, but reports of lynx through the unit suggest the number of hares is probably increasing.

Information from trappers who sealed furs at the Nome Fish and Game office show the following status of furbearer populations in Unit 22C and western Unit 22B: beaver numbers were high and increasing, river otters were stable at a medium density, red fox were fairly common [but greatly reduced in number from the previous year], and wolverine were scarce and decreasing in Unit 22C and increasing and fairly common in western Unit 22B.

As beaver become more abundant, complaints are increasing from unit residents, particularly in the Nome area. Recreational boaters complain about the blockage of waterways, there are increased reports of giardia, and there is concern that beaver dams are preventing salmon from returning to their spawning grounds. Sentiment against beavers could perhaps be eased if the public realized the benefits they provide, such as creating prime silver salmon rearing habitat in beaver ponds.

For more information contact: Kate Persons at 1-800-560-2271

Unit 23 Kotzebue Sound [Goodhope River to Cape Lisburne]. Area Biologist Jim Dau and Assistant Area Biologist Lee Anne Ayres report that trapping efforts and results in this region are similar to previous years. Reported harvests are quite low and the preliminary harvest of furbearers in Unit 23 during the 1997-1998 trapping season is estimated to be 5 beaver, 10 river otter, 18 wolverine, and 18 wolves [15 sealed and 3 unsealed]. We have no estimate on the take of fox, marten and mink. Due to noncompliance with sealing requirements, actual harvests are undoubtedly much higher than the number sealed. We want all trappers to seal their furs so we can get better information on the abundance of fur species and their importance in the lives and economy of local residents.

Healthy populations of wolves and liberal trapping regulations continue in Unit 23. Winter weather contributed to very poor travel and hunting conditions which we attribute the lower than normal number of wolves sealed. Snow and weather conditions also made population assessment difficult. We believe only hides that are sold outside the region or tanned commercially are sealed. The majority of hides are processed locally and remain within the region.

Beavers are expanding their range in the lower Noatak River, continue to be present on in the Squirrel River drainage and Baldwin Peninsula, and are considered at 'medium' levels in the Kobuk River drainage. Selawik beaver populations remain high with numerous animals in marginal habitat suggesting prime habitat is fully occupied. Lynx numbers have remained low throughout the unit. Lynx were regularly sighted in the Selawik and Lower Kobuk River drainages, so the population is recovering, but at a very slow rate. Snowshoe hares are increasing in the Selawik River drainage where the highest number of lynx sightings have occurred. Arctic hares are re-establishing local populations in the Kiwalik, Buckland, Inmachuk and lower Kobuk River drainages. Trappers in the Kobuk area report locally abundant populations of marten. As in past years most marten trapping occurs in the upper Kobuk River drainage. No information is available on the abundance of mink. Based on observations during other wildlife surveys, river otters were at high levels in the Noatak and Kobuk drainages and wolverine populations were high in the Upper Kobuk area.

The public requested rabies tests on 6 red foxes received from the Kotzebue, Noatak, upper and lower Kobuk River drainages and 5 animals tested positive for rabies. We issued public service announcements describing the behavior of rabid animals and ways to prevent exposure to rabies. A rabies and distemper clinic was held in Kotzebue. Public

health employees traveled to some villages to administer rabies vaccinations. Several domestic dogs had to be destroyed due to fox bites and poor vaccination histories. There were no incidents of human exposure to rabies.

For more information contact: Jim Dau or Lee Anne Ayres at 1-800-478-3420

Unit 26A Western North Slope. Area Biologist Geoff Carroll reports that trapping harvests for most species on the North Slope are very low. The preliminary reported harvest in Unit 26A during the 1997–1998 trapping season is estimated to be 10 wolverine and 3 wolves. Arctic foxes were fairly abundant in Unit 26A. Because hunters and trappers are not required to seal foxes, harvest data are not available for arctic foxes. Low fur prices resulted in relatively few foxes being trapped. Coyotes are very rare in Unit 26A. No population or harvest data are available. Lynx population density is currently very low in Unit 26A. No lynx were reported harvested in the unit. No population data are available for red foxes in Unit 26A. No red foxes were reported harvested. Although river otters are found in Unit 26A, their densities are very low. No river otters were reported harvested during 1996–1997. The wolverine population was estimated to be 821 animals in 1984 and we do not have more recent estimates of the population. We believe many more wolverines were harvested and not reported; however, reliable data for the unreported harvest are not available. Hunters and trappers reported seeing more wolverines than normal so the population may be increasing.

A Sample Unit Probability Estimator (SUPE) sample design was used to census wolves in a 10,343 km² area bordered by the Colville, Killik, and Itkillik Rivers and Gunsight Mountain on 15 and 16 April 1998. Lack of fresh snow and wind blown snow conditions resulted in poor tracking conditions in the southern half of the study area. We concentrated our efforts on the northern 5000 km². Only 7 wolves were seen in 2 packs, resulting in an estimate of 8 wolves, with a confidence range of 5–11 at the 90% level. A density estimate was calculated at 1.6 wolves/1000 km². This compares to a density estimate of 4.2 wolves/1000 km² in 1992 and 4.1 wolves/1000 km² in 1994.

The number of wolves sealed in Unit 26A has declined from 47 in 1994–1995, to 19 in both 1995–1996 and 1996–1997, to 3 in 1997–1998. The department sealing program does not always effectively measure harvests in villages, but this is a strong indication that the number of wolves has declined throughout the unit.

Rabid furbearers, particularly arctic foxes, continue to be a problem around human settlements. We worked with the North Slope Borough to educate people about rabid animals and having their pets immunized. Rabid arctic foxes were destroyed when they were reported near villages.

For more information contact: Geoff Carroll at 1-907-852-3464

TRAPPER COMMENTS

HOW DID TRAPPING CONDITIONS AFFECT YOUR TRAPPING EFFORT?

Southeast

- Very Little.
- Not At All
- No Change.
- Easier beaver trapping – no ice. Less marten trapping – no snow.
- Little snow so the deer stayed high and the wolves with them.
- Mild winter – wolves stayed high.
- When we had snow, marten catches went up.
- Did not affect my effort, but made it more enjoyable.
- Helped – good weather.
- No snow, kept the wolves up high with deer. Gave marten a rest, didn't trap them.
- Warm weather – fur not as prime – so I trapped less.
- We had warm temps and very little snow. The wolves, wolverine and marten stayed up on the mountains.
- Very warm weather, fur poor, had an order for 10 otter skins that was all I went after.
- Lack of snow made it hard to find where animals were moving.
- No affect.
- It didn't.
- Open winter – roads stayed open. Caught more beaver and marten.
- The fact that no one had trapped my area for a year, I figured it would be a good year.
- Too much rain early and too cold midseason.
- No effect.
- Good.
- No snow, late start – many of the younger trappers start early & have the area hammered before the furs are good.
- Warm weather, lack of snow decreased my trapping effort.
- The weather wasn't cold enough so the marten didn't cross the creek on the ice.
- Conditions poor, prices poor, made very little effort.
- High winds made boating difficult. Too much rain.
- Ugly weather i.e., wind-rain can make boating unpleasant.
- Heavy rain and high water.
- Changing water levels made drowning sets difficult to maintain.
- Couldn't find many marten so effort was changed to mink and wolves.
- Warm weather seemed to decrease number of available species.
- The weather. If the weather were good I would check my traps constantly but, If the weather were poor, I would check the traps every 24 hours.
- Very little.
- Did not affect.
- Fewer marten, more otter, mink same, fisher same (caught #2).
- Mild winter with little snow which is good and bad. Gotta roll with Mother Nature.

- Warm weather – had to check traps daily due to spoilage. Wind kept me from using skiff as often as I would have liked.
- Had to quit early, not enough snow to keep people away from our sets. Too easy for them to get around Did not affect them any other way.
- Trapped all season for first time in five years. Catch up due to extra effort.
- Made trapping more difficult i.e., no snow.
- Snow and difficult trails forced me to stop trapping.

Southcentral/Southwest

- Beaver trapping was easy in the early part of the season.
- I would make good fox sets & the snow would melt & freeze over my traps. Beaver sets through the ice would either thaw & make the hole too big or freeze several feet thick & make it very hard to check.
- Good until February thaw.
- Conditions affected my trapping effort very much. Couldn't get more than 40 miles up it & no further.
- Positively.
- More land sets for otter. Less use of snares.
- Poor snow cover.
- Freezing/Thawing
- Good snow cover = higher catch.
- Didn't
- Favorable
- Weather. Northeast storms & cold westerlies "freeze-downs". My work schedule 52 hours a weeks. My time at work tends to be the bad weather...oh well. Checking traps after work, resorting to conibears instead of legholds. If I had more time I could put up #5.
- Wasn't as much otter sign as I wanted to see so didn't harvest any.
- Not too much.
- The mild winter (later) made beaver trapping easy. Early freeze affected a couple of otter locations.
- Less snow made trail sets easier to maintain.
- Made trapping a little easier.
- Conditions were good, but I suffered an injury the first part of the season and was only able to trap for the last 10 days.
- River didn't freeze soon enough to cross for all of marten season, which is longer on other side.
- None.
- The warm November didn't allow the river and creeks to freeze, made for hard travel.
- The late season snow prevented me from reaching my main trapline cabin.
- Poor snow depth in Tazlina area.
- No snow hard to travel and animals can travel everywhere.
- Lack of snow made it difficult to travel.
- It was great – the weather was fine – a little too warm though – could have stood a lot colder winter.
- Nice winter, easy to trap.
- They were the best for me in years.
- To much snow.
- Late freeze up, unable to get across major rivers. Low snow, harder on transportation equipment.
- Just snow conditions for wolf sets. Still put out same effort, just harder to make nice looking sets.
- Trapping conditions were generally okay. Snow was a little short but temperatures were mild enough. Fox was rubbed because of warm spells so quit on them.

- No effect.
- Because of snow conditions, I was able to set my traps and check them regularly.
- Lack of snow and high winds made it difficult to keep traps covered; had to decrease time between checks.
- Cold and little snow. Started trapping late in season.
- Increased recreational snow machines on trail – can't make any trail sets.
- Weather was better so could set and check trap well until the end of season when the weather got too warm and melted the traps out.
- Creek trapping was poor to impossible, too warm.
- Little snow, good ice early.
- Marten seemed to be scarce so it wasn't worth while staying around. Oh well, prices were lousy anyway.
- Could have had more snow – reading sign was very hard – no new snow – for many weeks.
- The lack of snow for the last three years in the lake Louise area makes you spend spare time fixing equipment and has started to be hard on my body.
- Thin snow first month of season, rivers late to freeze up.
- Not much until March when a potential early breaking and deterioration of trails prompted us to end the season.
- The rivers didn't freeze until late and I need the rivers frozen to access my line. Snow was deep and so I didn't try my marten lines in the steep, higher country.
- Stable weather patterns increased working time of many set locations, especially wolf sets, making for an increase in the ratio of sets made to animals caught.
- The river froze over good so I could get out of it.
- Conditions are always tough when you're talking out of doors every day all winter in Alaska, but it was better running conditions with more snow than previous 2 years, so I was happy for it. Maybe it will actually be a good season next year.
- It was good.
- Weather
- It didn't
- Good snow (moderate) conditions allowed me to run some seismographic trails I hadn't been on before. The Indy Sport is a great trail machine, but not much of a trail breaker in deep snow.
- Earlier season let me use open water methods for beaver with some under-ice sets later. Caught more beaver quicker than usual.
- Warmer weather & less fur sign in my area.
- Early on- too much snow. Later on – warm temps/no ice. Late – early spring, had to pull out.
- Freeze/thaw/freeze/thaw. Snow/melt/snow/melt. Hard to keep sets working or hard to get to sets at times.

Interior

- Conditions were above average for marten trapping fair to poor for wolf trapping.
- Late freezeup.
- Fur prices.
- It was too warm.
- No snow during November. Then 2 weeks -60°, then 2 months -35°. Tough on the arthritis!
- The late season snow prevented me from reaching my main trapline cabin.
- The warm November didn't allow the river or creeks to freeze. Made for hard travel.
- No effect.
- Early spring made set maintenance more difficult.
- Warm weather and frequent snow kept it hard to keep traps working.
- Very good conditions.

- The river froze up poorly and slowly so I got started a little late; had to cross at different places, I put in a short El Nino line on my side of rivers while waiting.
- Light snow falls during the second half of season. Sets stayed in working condition.
- Warm wet shallow snow made it harder to get started; also some of the creeks were open water -- couldn't cross.
- High winds knocked out sets, had to remake most sets two times a week.
- Too warm to start – couldn't cross-rivers and streams. Moved north to our second line after two weeks to take advantage of colder weather and better running conditions.
- No bad problems.
- Milder winter in general seemed to make animals more dispersed, harder to find sign and thus determine good trap set locations.
- Conditions didn't affect my efforts; my work schedule kept me too busy. Can't wait till next season!
- I figure access is primary, so good snow cover allows that. Conditions are always variable and you just have to deal with them accordingly – different cures for different problems, some conditions help some don't.
- Low snowfall made snowshoeing easier.
- Poor snow conditions and poor fur populations caused me to decrease my efforts.
- Had to pull wolf sets early – because of very warm weather (bad ice conditions for travel).
- Standard problem - equipment failure, etc.
- Lack of snow caused hardship getting around in most of my area. Animals didn't follow regular trails.
- Low snow and warm weather made for a late start and never made access to some areas.
- Excellent trapping conditions.
- Excellent conditions – just enough snow early to travel and not too much to make trail breaking necessary later on.
- No money in trapping.
- Low prices – less effort.
- Adversely affected by lack of snow. Could not travel far – too hard on snow machine. Too warm – some places did not freeze till late.
- No noticeable change.
- Surgery to me – too many airplanes in this area – snow machines using my trails.
- Very good conditions for dog team. Putting out trapline was easier. No snow to slow up dogs.
- An average year with average results. More wolverine around than normal, fair amount of marten around too.
- Good conditions allowed more effort to improve/expand trails instead of just keeping trails open.
- Made it easier due to low snow and made effort more effective.
- Price was down and snow conditions were poor, too warm at first.
- Lack of snow for 75% of season made trails exceedingly difficult for a bad back. Therefore I greatly reduced effort, especially for marten.
- Not enough snow.
- Lots of overflow and minimal snow made it difficult to make good wolf sets, and overflow caused some travel inconveniences.
- Poor marten prices, beaver fair.
- Weather too warm to trap beaver.
- We had low snowfall conditions which allowed us to access our line and make our line work more efficiently.
- I never went out because the weather was bad sometimes. Too cold.
- Trappings was little hard this year due to not enough snow.
- Didn't catch many beavers – because I didn't trap long.
- Very poor. I didn't trap much this year.
- Low snow made travel difficult early, but allowed for lest set service time due to low snow buildup over traps.
- The early breakup cut my spring season a month short because most of my line is on water.
- None, low snow made it easier for me but animals never really followed same patters cause of low snow.
- No rabbits, no mice.

- We had light snow early but not much snow depth till January, hard to travel in some areas unless snow is deep.
- Conditions were great, but I got a late start this year.
- Lack of freeze up on creeks and river until later so I did not go where I normally go. Also broken down a lot this year. Wanted to trap more but couldn't get any where.
- Lack of enough snow in the early part limited our activity.
- Was a warm winter so made it much easier on the old body.
- It didn't.
- No snow.
- Weather was good until the end of the season when the traps melted out and I had to pull them. Lack of snow the rest of the time made it hard to trap wolves.
- Warmer weather seemed to make the animals more active, and easier to find.
- Poor snow year.
- No fur – no money.
- Too little snow – more than normal SE & SSE winds made catching canines more difficult.
- I was letting the trapline recover from my best catch ever last year, so my effort was less, and with the moderate snow levels and mild weather conditions, the effort I did put out was considerably less. Overflow was much more than normal and entire wolf sets were put out of commission. These areas had never overflowed before and deactivating these sets took a lot of effort to chisel the traps and snares out of the ice.
- A Japanese/Canadian Corporation used our established trapline to access their gold claim, destroying over 1 dozen traps and their activities drove all animals off the trail, causing a major loss of income to my family. Totally inappropriate. They told us they would reimburse us, but then they reneged. Now we have to file a lawsuit.
- Low snow year in lots of ways helps me get around easier, plus sets stay working.
- Low late snowfall left rough trails. Early warm temps so beaver trapping started & ended early. Pogo Mine project tore up Goodpasture trail & it thawed to mud early.

Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Rivers

- Weather – too warm.
- Had bad luck, fox numbers down, wet weather, not much snow, early melt off.
- Hard to get to, spent too much money, past 5 years in a row.
- Not much in trapping area.
- Warm and not enough snow.
- Not so much.
- Weather.
- Condition were good.
- Lack of luck.
- Not enough snow.
- Less snow this year meant – earlier freeze-over of certain creeks. A little more effort put in due to mink festival pelt judging delay.
- It didn't affect my trapping for the last two years.
- Didn't trap very long.
- Whenever the weather is warm it's hard and dangerous to trap.
- On bad weather days, I wasn't able to go out to my trapline. Sometimes I was forced take out my snares on my trapline because of the trail conditions.
- Although my effort was less, conditions were excellent. Steady freezing temperatures without the usual thaws helped.
- Changing weather from snow to rain over and over again.
- Poor weather conditions (rough) traveling.

- This year we hardly had snow and had snow machine problem. , Bad weather during November and December.
- The weather was good all winter in my area.

DID OTHER TRAPPERS IN YOUR AREA AFFECT YOUR TRAPPING EFFORT?

Southeast

- ♦ Open roads allowed more trappers to enter area from further away.
- ♦ I have purposely not trapped marten for 2 years in the area to build them up. Then another trapper came in and trapped marten so I tried to out-trap him. The results are now the marten are wiped out in this area.
- ♦ I don't trap Mitkof much any more because of the large number of other trappers.
- ♦ They moved in on my line. I try not to trap same ridges every year – came in started trapping in the areas I wanted to rest.
- ♦ A few new guys trying to find a place to trap.
- ♦ Many spots I usually trapped were overrun with traps, so I didn't set there.
- ♦ I would expand my area if other trappers weren't already there.
- ♦ More traps in the area.
- ♦ Not trappers but people bothering sets and taking animals.
- ♦ Lots of trappers on Mitkof Island. Decreased effort.
- ♦ There seem to be an increase in number of trappers, so I had to move sets to different locations.
- ♦ There were too many.
- ♦ No respect for traditional trapping areas. Sets made just a few feet from mine.
- ♦ 6-8 other trappers use the same area, theft of furs, trap, are a chronic problem as well as competition for fur.
- ♦ I had at least six marten removed from my traps in one of my areas.
- ♦ Limited area to trap with several other trappers in the inlet.
- ♦ Couldn't use same trails as they were using them.
- ♦ Had trap stolen but was planning on pulling sets anyway.

Southcentral/Southwest

- ♦ Did not set some of my old locations because someone else (marten trapper) beat me to them. They pulled totally out after marten season closed.
- ♦ Limited areas.
- ♦ Too much traffic on river – hard to hide sets more than usual.
- ♦ My friend who lives right by me traps, so that made me work harder at catching stuff and skinning it, stretching it. I had to do a better job.
- ♦ I stay away from other trappers' areas. I get a little more remote. I see a lot of gear & go about my business, elsewhere of course.
- ♦ Careful not to overharvest and communicate catches when possible.
- ♦ When I try to make a loop on my lines for marten there is other marten trappers on both sides. If I wait until after marten season they are gone, and then I can make the loop for fox, coyotes, beaver, otter. Everybody and their brothers trap marten.
- ♦ Thieves had to pull out of some spots.

- ◆ Snow machines wiped out my snares and trail sets four weekends in a row, which hurt since I trapped only a few weeks this year. Spent November and most of December finishing our new house.
- ◆ Lost no equipment and didn't see too many others in the areas.
- ◆ One morning I found one of my beaver sets moved and a couple of traps that I didn't put there.
- ◆ Other trappers in area always have an effect on where I put out traps. Also has to affect furbearer numbers if they catch anything in the area.
- ◆ No others.
- ◆ Made trapping a little easier.
- ◆ Encroached on my line.
- ◆ Had a weekend trapper with marten sets out until March 15, 1996, right beside my sets, also this season.
- ◆ I keep people off of my line – otherwise it would get over trapped! (Damn city folk)
- ◆ Only one time did I notice another trapper setting traps in my area – but I resolved the problem immediately.
- ◆ No sign of other trappers – in 14A numerous snow machines, in 16A dog sleds – no conflict.
- ◆ Other trappers without respect for established lines and overwhelming ignorance were running rampant.
- ◆ No, but other trail user (recreational) did. Enough so I ended the season early.
- ◆ In Unit 14A area where I have worked for years had other trappers working it – so I went looking for new areas.
- ◆ A few new trappers moved in the outside fringes. Most were ok. One trap thief.
- ◆ In the last couple years I've met two other trappers in my area. I don't ride their trails, they stay off mine. They go upstream, I go down. Actually I enjoy bumping into them, they seem like Alaskan trappers. I am still an Alaskan tryer.
- ◆ Not trappers, but weekend warriors on snowmachines and skis. There seems to be a lot more skiing activity up in the high country. Planes, helicopters, and track rigs are transporting any & every skier up in the high country. It's a big money item here in Valdez now. I don't like it.
- ◆ More trappers this year created a lot of competition for some areas.

Interior

- ◆ I made fewer sets, because I can't hide some very well.
- ◆ Other trappers moved in on an area I previously trapped.
- ◆ To many weekend trappers trying to move in and around established lines.
- ◆ New trappers.
- ◆ Too many too close together – newcomers still have no code of trapline conduct.
- ◆ The trappers up there work very well together and our disputes are minimal, we all know each other personally, and leave buffer zones between our lines.
- ◆ No, because the price was too low – I didn't do that good.
- ◆ Airplane – same as forever.
- ◆ Other trappers are moving into the edge of my lines and trapping lynx after the season closed.
- ◆ An old timer just to the west of me was getting edgy as I expanded my line. I set less due to his influence or presence.
- ◆ People exploring the area assume it is untrapped. In fact, my cabins have been used extensively by hunters, with food, fuel, traps & supplies missing. Also another trapper has registered a cabin within the area I trap. Although I protested, the cabin permit will be granted. Another trapper started trapping my creek. I met with the person and he won't trap there next year. His catch reduced my catch significantly. In an area I usually catch 4-6 marten (about 8 miles of trail) I caught only 1 mink. So his activity nearby suggests he intercepted my normal catch.
- ◆ Must set first part of trails very early & with "obvious" sets & signs to keep tourists out – still only works some of the time.
- ◆ It wasn't trappers, it was gold exploration activities by a company that used our trapline to access their proposed mine site. They basically ran us off a trapline we've used since 1949 without any consideration or compensation.

Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Rivers

- ♦ My partner out-trapped me. School teachers moving in on my line.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS TO ADF&G?

Southeast

Department of Fish and Game is doing extremely well on managing hunting and trapping in the state of Alaska.

Unfortunately, my present life-style does not give me the opportunity to enjoy the trapping experience Alaska has to offer.

I am not trapping at this time, when I start again I would like to receive questionnaire Please.

When the time comes for the department to determine the fate of the leg-hold trap for holding and harvesting marten – I hope they do a region by region study pertaining to climate and style of trapping methods. I've experimented with several sizes of conibear traps for marten since the early to mid 70's, and found that, even though they catch, they don't catch the numbers I can catch using the 1-½ longspring. If the European Union's goal is to turn us all into hobby trappers then using the conibear is the ticket. I believe the size of the 1 ½ longspring is also important to holding the large mature males and the weight of the trap aids in the downing process of all my leg-hold sets for marten and this spells humane dispatch. There's many methods to taking marten, what works well in one region might not be the best somewhere else. Keep an open mind. Thank you.

Beaver should require drowning sets or killer traps. They are heavy and can tear out when alive.

Wolf and marten should have reduced trapping time on Price of Wales Island. They have had severe pressure for 5 years consecutively.

We are still fighting to keep the Cleveland Peninsula from being logged. Deer populations seem to be on a downward trend and the wolves are following suit.

Help us try to convince the Feds to drop their inspection and export fees. These total over \$100.00 which is forcing me to find other outlets for selling my fur instead of the large Canadian auction houses where I have always sold. Also, the Forest Service still plans on clearcut logging near my trapline and this will be devastating to my trapping efforts because without the habitat there will be no wildlife.

I trapped with another person, so the number of animals I recorded is equal to half of our total trapline catch.

I would like to see a November 1st opening for beaver here in Southeast. They are prime at that time (generally) – also, I'd like to see an earlier closure, same time as otter, mink, etc. Too many people are trapping too long here on POW.

The beaver population is on the decline here, I feel a shorter season would help.

I would really like to see registered traplines.

More effort needs to be made to keep the snaring of wolves legal. Use good publicity, promote laws that will reduce the number of moose and caribou taken.

On page 22 of the report, where did you get the information on Petersburg Wrangell and vicinity. Since when are coyotes abundant? I haven't seen or heard of a coyote here in 30 years of hunting and trapping. Red fox aren't abundant I have caught one in this area and have seen the tracks of 4 or 5 more. I haven't seen a hare or the track of one in the Wrangell and unit 1B area where I trap and hunt. With statistics like these it is a wonder that you do as good a job as you do. I would like to know where all these coyotes and red fox are.

(ed. note: Trappers reported it, we recorded it. Looks pretty odd to us too.)

I think the Fish and Game Biologist we have now is doing a real good job hope we can keep him around for a long time.

Didn't trap much this year, weather was too warm, and my partner had wrestling and basket ball practice and games all winter. My best partner on my trap line is my 11-year-old son. Trap and hunt with your kids, not for them. So soon they are grown up and gone.

I just thank you for the opportunity to trap in the state. I have not trapped for a couple of years but want to get back into it.

I have trapped in the same area for four years and this year was my best year ever. To my astonishment and to the astonishment of other I caught some amazing critters. I trapped in the Sound and this year, I caught 2 wolverines which were my first, and one cross fox also a first and probably a last. This year was a great success for me.

Because of leghold traps I was able to release a radiocollared pine marten uninjured. If that same marten had been in a conibear set it would have been killed and release impossible. Tell that to the EEC. Properly used leghold traps of the correct size do little if any damage to the target animal. Why would a trapper damage pelt value?

I'm 71 now. Have glaucoma in right eye. Lost 50% vision there and missed a big buck last fall. Girlfriend #2 passed away in March, so I intended to not reduce either trapline, but girlfriend #1 brought over a hot dish right after the funeral – so I may end up cutting out that fur pocket a mile off the logging road. Medicare will not cover viagra. You would think Bill Clinton, of all people, would understand and do something about this.

Hi Pal: I did not get a trapper questionnaire. Please put me on your mailing list. I trap with the "70" year old and his #1 and #2 girl friend so our answer on the report would be the same. He needs a little help once in a while so I go along just in case! Next Christmas I'm going to give him some new long john's.

Thank You

The question on species abundance, due to the lack of snow it was hard to tell how much traffic there was in any given area. I believe the weather had a large impact on the trapping success down low, compared to the number of animals that were trapped up higher on the mountains. I concluded, that this question is not totally valid, due to lack of tracking snow and what would be an abundance of food available to the marten I was after. That the decrease from last year numbers was due to this lack of snow, as the animals had an easier time moving around between lower and higher elevations. That most had stayed in higher elevations where I was not trapping in due to working time.

It hasn't been getting cold early, enough which really cuts the number of marten down.

Both mink and marten seem to be in long-range decline. I've caught as many as 45 mink and 20+ marten on my line in years past. Most marten caught last 2-3 years have been adult males. Few to no pregnant adult female marten were caught 97-98 season. I autopsied 110 trapper-caught marten, 75 male and 35 female. Only 2 young-of-year males, 10 females. Only 1 of 10 adult females contained blastocysts or *corpra lutea*.

Due to the unseasonably warm temperatures during the trapping season I chose not to trap. It was just too warm out! I hope to resume trapping next year.

Wolf population seems to be doing well on Revillagigedo Island. There seems to be a real low marten population in some areas of this island. I caught a lot of smaller mink and few large mink. The otter population seems good. I had 1 mink and 1 otter stolen along with a leghold and a snare.

Thank you for the trapper questionnaire program. The report is full of interesting data that shows trends in trapping and how other trappers in the state work. It shows that trapping is an important management tool and will probably be in the future. Thanks again.

Time was limited this year for trapping. Did not get out as often as I wanted. Beaver in my area are on the increase. If I were able to have more time to concentrate on beaver trapping my catch would dramatically increase.

Good walking little snow. Nothing like having to mountain climb on snowshoes. 2 more fisher this year. Fortunately no trap thieves yet. Must be the hike to my line. Both my boys 10 and 12 went with me a lot and made their own sets. Was a good season. May consider opening fisher in southeast. Have a feeling I'm not the only one catching them, I'm just turning them in.

I only wish this type of management had started nationwide years ago. Don't give up, trapping is as much of our heritage as politics.

Please don't register traplines in Southeast. It would leave newcomers with no place to go. Also, others would lay "claim" to prime areas just to keep others out. Limits should be set on "Big Game" animals in southeast. There aren't enough wolves and wolverine to go around in 1C. A small percentage of trappers take the majority of them leaving the areas vacant for years to come.

Open trails in Juneau area north of Eagle Beach. Should be re-opened, at least for small traps (#1's, 110's). This will help spread out the recreational trappers (especially youngsters).

If the statewide report is accurate ADF&G is spending more on furbearers than the commercial value of all furs! I would eliminate all expenditures on fur by ADF&G.

Southcentral/Southwest

Put a bounty on trap thieves (pref. Dead). Close fox in 14A&B on January 30th. Too many Butt Rub Fox of little value are taken.

Would like to see better enforcement of illegal use of snowmobiles & airplanes. Take all steps possible to manage furbearers by biological need and not politics.

My main line was recently posted & closed to me so I have to establish a new line if I am to continue trapping.

Legholds are very important to me in harvesting shy furbearers and with daily trap checking, they have been very humane for me also.

Why does the river otter season in Unit 8 close January 31? We still have sufficient cold dark weather to keep it open Nov 10 - Feb 28. I don't think the increased daylight, if that causes any fur damage at all. No singeing of hair.

Populations look a little low along the roads, but ok. Appreciate all your work & efforts. Keep it up. Am looking forward to next season in the bush.

Kodiak has little or no furbearers besides beaver, fox & otter. We lack in furbearers. We should do something. We need something to trap. Few muskrat, no marten (excludes Afognak). It would be beneficial to lower the fur buyer license prices to locals because there is no market for fur here. I can't sell it. No one here buys and no one comes here to buy and I don't blame them. It's not worth it for the price of a permit because of the lack of fur.

A lot of my fox traps are offsets. Superb holding power & low leg damage. And they will even hold a 25-30 lb. Kodiak river otter. I caught 2 dogs in a double set for fox & released. Two to three days later I drove by the lodge & you would never know they were caught & pinched!

The questionnaire is getting too long. Question #19 appears useless. What you going to do with this type of info? Question 16 & 12 are similar. Wouldn't # of sets in #12 be adequate, then you could compare actual sums to compare increased & decreased effort?

Ed note: We agree it's too long, but can't agree on which questions to delete. #19 is useful on a local basis & makes interesting reading for other trappers. As for 16 & 12, we don't keep track of individuals' answers from year to year. We try to keep the information as anonymous as possible.

Unit 14A needs another couple of years to determine the big lake fire effects on both hunting and fishing species.

I think we need to make it a felony offense to tamper with someone else's trapline. Fish and Wildlife protection was sympathetic and offered some help but I had already pulled my line due to thieves. I wish there was a stronger penalty and it was publicized so people would be afraid of messing around with other trapper's animals and traps. I don't think a trapper was at fault. I think it was snowmachiners. We had an enjoyable season on our other line though. We are part time trappers doing it for the enjoyment and the extra income. My wife is my partner.

The wolf population is exploding out here and the moose are having a hard time of it in the deep snow. Every moose I see has fresh wolf tracks nearby.

GMU 16A and 16B should be the same. I cannot trap both sides of river same length of time.

Rabbit populations are coming up hope it brings us some lynx.

Beavers are over-running us, but my wife's fur chest is full, and they are too much work for the market prices.

Also the small snowfall has affected the animals normal habits.

Too many people, and a lot of anti-trapping. You have to hide your traps from people, as well as the animals. Having beaver snares stolen this year, times have changed since I started trapping on the Montana border. When I was 11 years old, that was the only spending money kids got, and a lot of the adults trapped, also as there was no other income in the winter. I remember we shipped 5 coyotes to Sears Roebuck and Company and got \$100.00 check for them in 1928. Sears Roebuck and Company was a great fur buyer.

I didn't put out marten sets this year. As there was little marten sign.

We need more - 50 - 60 temperatures to get rid of people.

I would like to see ADF&G pay the trapper for loss of fur value to wolves with radio collars on and also pay for the return of said collars. I also would like not to see so many wolves collared, especially in units 20D and 20E. Thank you.

Lots of week end warriors on snow machines up in the high country earlier than usual this season. Lots of early and heavy snow made this possible. Wonder how many wolverines they chased out of the state. I certainly know if I was a wolverine - I'd leave with all that noise and people.

The Department of Fish and Game - you group need to suck up and forget about politics and make good sound solid, management decisions. If you don't get tougher with the "greenies," we could be in for some real tough times.

You have a real tough job ahead. Times are changing - don't let those greenies wear you down. Keep up the good work.

Thanks, for extending "marten season" in 13E. Great job on "statewide report."

Held on to most of my furs and hope that prices will be better next year. Will tan fox for sale locally.

Been seeing a lot more wolf activity on my trap line. I've been trapping the same line for 9 year's now. Also, the marten sign has increased. I really enjoy the early October beaver season. Gives me a chance to make open water sets.

Due to lack of snow and easy vehicle access, tried calling this year when weather permitted. Called in 2 wolves and a lynx. Wolves came from pack of seven that came to call.

Please continue working with the Alaska trappers.

I do believe that a mandatory trapline check would be a good idea although 24 hours is a little quick, It would reduce suffering a lot and weed out a lot of irresponsible lazy trappers.

Enjoy the reports. Keep up the good work.

I am sorry to see Fish and Game policy made at the ballet box (i.e.) wolf snaring proposition. What will be next? How can we feel secure in what we do if are run by the ballet box and a bunch of city people?

ADF&G must be more persuasive with the commissioner and governor. Trappers in general do not perceive them as pro trapping. Their non-involvement on this effort to manage by initiative threatens professional wildlife management.

Trappers other citizens are carrying the departments "water" and wondering why ADF&G is not doing their part.

USFWS did not attempt to end trapping on refuges as implied in Doreen's cover letter. The effort to collect input was initiated by the congressman who was no longer in office by that time. The report was finished and therefore nothing happened as a result.

I would like to see later seasons, because I need the rivers frozen to access. I cannot believe the NPS subsistence regulations on trapping are shorter seasons than state! I am told at least 6 bison died on Upper Chitna. Maybe they ought to have a limited hunt.

I did not get to take advantage of the earlier beaver season this year but was real happy to see it.

There are too many wolves. Need some kind of program to decrease, knock them down. They're killing too many moose.

Fur price is dropping each year. Prices in stores are rising especially gas. Not much to say about trapping 98-99. Waste of money. License more expensive than ever.

In some years here, when there is snow on the ground then we do a little better. Keep the hunting season open all year long.

Lots of mice, lynx very fat, and in good shape. Should be more lynx next winter. Found marten sign in my area for the first time in 35 plus years of trapping there.

I have 3 sons. And they each have had many experiences with wildlife and have a good knowledge of habits and habitat for target species. I feel ADF&G on the Kenai peninsula and the wildlife refuge have done an excellent job insuring that my children have the privilege to the art of furbearer trapping. Thank you. Great Job.

Wildlife should be managed by wildlife biologists – not the Governor or the ballot box. A banker ain't a doctor, an auto mechanic ain't a dentist. Let the biologists do their jobs – screw public opinion. I would love to have beautiful lice-free wolves here in the Kenai, but what a waste of time and money this relocation fiasco is. I applaud the efforts of our biologists, they are honest, knowledgeable and sincere in their efforts to support both hunting & trapping. Thank you.

I trap because I love the outdoors. Money has nothing to do with it. I use all my furs for personal use and give many away. I am a public school teacher and have been able to share my experiences, furs, skulls, etc. with my school children. I agree that young people might not continue this traditional activity. I plan on continuing my effort to educate my students as well as staff on the important part that we all take in the preservation of the nature all around us.

Plane, helicopters, track rigs, you name it, are transporting skiers & snowboarders & photographers up in the high country now more than ever. If you wear a furbearer & something like that invaded your home what would you do??? This is a big money item now and it's here to stay so how about the state doing something about it.

These are only my observations & there is no biology involved. This is only what I observed on my line.

More trappers this year. Seems like everywhere you looked you could see sets from other trappers. For those who had the time to get off the road they were able to get away from others. For those who did not have the time or equipment competition was strong for areas. Weather raised heck for everyone this year. Most of us do it because we love it. We would be pretty hungry if we had to depend on it.

Did not trap due to lack of animals! Rabbits finally coming on hard! As fur populations increase I'll get back at it.

The deer season should be closed by Dec 15. The boat hunters are killing too many deer when there is too much snow and it drives the deer to the beaches. Especially on some of the smaller islands. Lucky this past season wasn't too much snow. Enjoy the trappers comments.

Thank you for sending me the trapper questionnaire. It's interesting. I did a lil trapping for weasels when I was in grade school. I did a lot of otter hunting with dogs 40 to 50 years ago. That was our only income during the winter months. The dogs went in the otter burrows & chased them out and we shot them. So I guess I'm not a trapper altho one of these winters I would like to trap. Thank you.

A few more marten in our area. Also the presence of a few wolves for the first time of note.

Still having problems with recreational snow machines – they don't respect trappers or traplines. Local residents who recreational snow machine do but "out-of-towners" don't.

Keep up the good work. I like getting the trapping report. I sure miss trapping, but I have to work for a while right now! Hope to start trapping again soon. Thanks.

Sorry I returned this so late. Keep up the good work. See you this fall.

I spent some time near Ureka gathering diamond willow. I saw more snowshoes than at any other time. When I started trapping in Alaska, the Nelchina glacier area was the area of choice. Not many snowshoe back in those days.

The only problem I had was snowmobilers following my trail sets. Cost me several wolves and a wolverine. After the first snare they knew they were on a trapline, went past a line cabin and could see where 2 wolves had been caught. This happened four times. The new trapper questionnaire is great and should help both the F&G and trappers. Marten are still increasing and the season should open the 20th of October like it used to be. Rabbits had also increased considerably and I saw a couple of lynx tracks. The marten were chasing rabbits and refused to climb so had to use ground cubbies. Very few trappers operating in this area this season. Those that sold their marten were disappointed in prices.

Observations for Unit 14C. Saw many rabbits this past winter and early spring. Noted lynx in the area. Also noted a few wolves in this river drainage. Some of the coyotes appear to be going down I numbers, possibly due to the wolf population. Noted fewer moose over the winter, early spring.

Interior

Div of forestry is affecting my area. For 5 years I've lost more timber around my area. On top of that they aren't requiring loggers to clean up area. Good for firewood. Bad for beetles. Which is why they are supposedly cutting trees. But left over tops increase population of beetles, lower marten numbers, create NO new habitat. Confused? They are the professionals of management practices? I think they took too much economic classes not enough Natural Resource Management classes.

Try to keep us informed on any new BMP through the season.

An ADF&G biologist at Seward was giving a bear baiting lesson to prospective black bear hunters. He said in 7 years there will be no more bear hunting or trapping of any animal. This attitude must change!

Why is the ADF&G imposing all the fees on exporting furs? It's bad enough that the price of furs are so low that they put all the fees on.

(Ed note: We're not. The feds are and we're pressuring them to drop those fees. You can help by writing to Thomas L. Striegler, Division of Law Enforcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240 and telling him what a hardship those fees are.)

Good job on the annual report.

Saw more marten tracks and caught more marten than anytime during the past 28 years in this area. No sign of lynx for 3 or 4 years now (not unusual for this area, I only see tracks and catch lynx when they peak in cycle). A definite lack of muskrat which is unusual. More hare sign than normal expect to see some lynx sign in the next year or so.

I gave up trapping because I felt that the martens and wolverines that I used to trap had enough problems without me adding to them – but there is an element of trapping that is still in my blood.

Was building a house so I sat last year out. Will be trapping this coming year.

I brought my first and last brand new snow machine. The performance was good but I blew my axle seal on the chaincase and drained all the oil and ate up the chaincase. I was back on my reliable Elan for two months waiting for parts from the selling dealer, who took three weeks to order the parts from Ski-Doo. I want to warn all trappers about expecting good service from _____. These people have cranial rectitus.

Although I did not trap last season, I still support trapping and enjoy reading about the information ADF&G gathers each year. Keep up the good work!

Alaska needs to continue the use of biologist, not ballot box or political methods, to manage Alaska resources. Public opinion needs to be considered in management, but the last and best opinions are from biologists.

We need to get better control of our salt-water fisheries. These fish must get to the rivers or we will have a disaster as the Washington/Oregon fisheries! All uses must be considered – personal use, sport, commercial, and subsistence!

Thanks for the efforts to maintain our trapping privileges. I'll continue to be active in anyway possible to maintain this opportunity, including participating in ADFG surveys.

I want to thank ADF&G for the opportunity to trap. I didn't get to trap near as much as I would have loved to. Next year will be better!

I do not plan to trap this year, so I will have no information for your questionnaire, but I do enjoy reading the statewide report. Thanks.

I think the biggest threat to trapping is low fur prices – lack of demand. The trapper needs to at least break even and although some will trap anyway not many will stick with it. I love wolf trapping, but I have a wall full of tanned pelts and no decent market for them. Last fur auction they were down around a \$75.00 average for raw pelts.

Increased recreational snow machines are an increasing problem (of course) and have more effect on my traplines than other trappers. Some are morons.

All furbearer season should open on the same date & close on the same date.

Make lynx season longer

You're doing a good job, I hope the feds (non local outsiders) don't take over. I'm glad that so many of you are trappers yourselves.

Snares for wolves should never be outlawed. Ballot box management has to end.

Thanks for including information on the Alaska Trappers Manual – it's a very useful publication. Why not leave out all the pie charts and graphs (cheap filler) and publish numbers and percentages only? How about including some figures and #'s and licensed trappers? Also – thank you for including the "fur issue" section. Hopefully – by the time we read this in published form – we will have won the battle and the "snare ban initiative" because ADFG biologists were allowed to speak out.

So warm had lots of snow machine traffic all winter. I hardly set for wolves, because I didn't want my big traps stolen. Very warm weather, with rain early on froze in sets. Let's beat the snare ban on wolves.

If the anti wolf snare issue comes to a vote of the people of Alaska it is the duty of ADFG to support trappers and trapping with a positive showing of facts i.e., more wolves killed by other wolves than by man.

Life in nature is beautiful, but it is far crueler than man could ever be. Man is not separate from nature, man is nature, and humans are predators and have been since time began!

Possibly the low prices for marten came at a good time as the marten populations are declining in some areas; this could be due to heavy pressure from over trapping. The resource could use much more research in that area. Maybe it's just a normal cycle, but it would be nice to know for sure before it is too late. I find trapping for 45 days at the most each season has kept the marten population at the same level each year on my line.

Still no lynx, but more rabbits, less marten sign than last year and less snow. Saw more wolf sign early, but they pulled out of our area early.

Seems to be quite a few fox and coyotes in the area.

Help fight for trapper's right and snaring wolves – maybe educate people.

A hip replacement kept me from walking as usual – expect to do better this year, has been a lifetime endeavor.

Fur prices failed from what they were projected – also the federal government made it impossible to sell fur at the Canadian auction with all their permits and inspection fees. I've got the fur I caught and will try to sell it but it is a very hard market to sell in now.

Any effort to put down the wolf-snaring ban would sure be good. On the state biology experts' part – the numbers show trappers are not upsetting the balance by any means.

I will only give up my leghold traps when the liberals can give me some thing twice as fast and effective to replace them, i.e., they pay for 2 dozen 330 conibears for 1 dozen #4's and then only for wolverine, fox and wolf are taken only for the most part by me with 114s and #4s L.S.

Again on the wolf snaring issue it sets a dangerous house of cards in place, it is I feel just the very beginning of more and more restrictions and eventually loss of all trapping rights. This cannot occur in America.

We are opposed to the leghold trap ban. We are also opposed to the wolf snare ban. These would both cause considerable hardships and would seriously decrease our income. The bans are pushed through by emotional uninformed people and are not based on science and biology or rational thought.

I did trap 97-98, however, the trapping was so inconsequential to the serious real trapping that I historically have done, that I feel that trapping comments from me for the 97-98 season may not be a good representation of the trappers in Alaska.

I didn't trap last season but always "keep an eye" on fur populations on my project. Fox were down last year from a high the previous year. (Possibly due to trapping pressure?) Mink seemed to be more numerous. Every time a beaver makes a food catch three people are trying to catch it – (these are easy access beavers). Rabbits are more plentiful but grouse were scarce last fall, which surprised me because it seemed like an ideal spring and summer for nesting success. Thanks for the good work you guys do for the trappers, we appreciate it

I still believe that this snare issue belongs in game management not at the voters whim of a pen. The average voters hasn't any idea on what the matter consists of when it comes to trapping and its methods.

Help us to defend our right to use snares on wolf.

The larger prey species have been doing very well as (wolves, wolverines) the past 3 seasons. The central arctic caribou migrated and winterized in portions of my trap line. Also, the rabbits are on a strong comeback from their cycle drop, which bottomed out the winter of 94. I have seen lynx sign and prey birds (hawks, owls and eagles) also the fox are numerous. The fur market prices do not affect my trapping efforts. Most of my furs are sold to taxidermists in the lower 48 or sold to tourists, the rest we use for personals, to make my own wolf traps (leghold coil springs). I hope that we will be able to continue using leg holds as snares or any other methods are very unsuccessful in the treeless and brush less areas of the north side. Thanks.

Need sealers in Nulato.

The meat eaters should be hunted or snared or trap every season like it has been for years. Just like the pikes should be fished every year. Years ago people used to fish for pike in the spring camp every year. That will keep them down to a certain level. Now there are too many pike & they're eating up all ducks and beavers and all the other animals. Just like the wolverines there are too many and killing off our mouse and caribou and beavers.

Increase efforts to support trapping. Fight the antis and the EU issues.

Why just try to stop us from snaring wolf!

I've been going after wolf by snare with no success, mainly because I've not really pursued, I respect these animals a lot because of their intelligence and at the same time like the challenge of trying to snare them. Wolverine the same. I've gotten them by other means also. Always in mind that it's them or me concerning moose. Not much in other furbearers,

simply because of prices. Beaver snaring I enjoy always. I like to reminisce about how hard life must have been for other trappers before modern methods (sno-goes) came about and how they did it with ease for their families. There was no other way except with dogs and snowshoes.

Both lynx and hare seem to be abundant even to the end of season – might consider longer lynx season next year. Marten are definitely scarce. I don't think registered traplines are a good idea and have been trapping in the same area over 10 years and some people who seldom ever get into the woods still think they own the area because they went through there in the 70's and 80's on a snow machine. Trappers just have to be respectful of others and use good judgment where and how they trap.

Too many people running my trapline and chasing wolves away from my sets. They pulled a drag and made my trail 12 feet wide. Thanks for turning a dozen or so wolves loose on my trapline to kill off what few moose there are around here. There were already too many wolves there.

Close the late moose season. To many hunters using my trapline. Let them start using you guys' traplines for hunting and see how you like it!

Please help us keep the snaring of wolves. If we lost that right I don't know if I will continue trapping for very long. The antis are putting the squeeze on us more and more and it seems pretty soon we are going to have to ask permission to hunt, fish, trap or crap.

There were some wolves that traveled through our trapline, but caribou destroyed any sets for them. Lynx seemed plentiful in adjoining areas. Our trapline is on high ground so we have no muskrats, etc.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment. Winter was a very nice one, and made it enjoyable trapping. Caribou were abundant, so made it difficult to keep a wolf set working. Very few wolves on my line this year. Marten population about the same. Lynx are growing in numbers, and the ones I caught were all small.

Have all seasons start November 1st and end February 29th.

Keep supporting trapping education in our youth.

I haven't trapped the last two seasons, but I plan on trapping in the future. Trapping is something I really enjoy!

This year's trapping was mainly an effort to improve trails & cabins, & to patrol for encroachment by several parties. I would not have trapped at all since I had my best catch ever & marten numbers fell off drastically. But pressure from a few people forced me to trap even though the area would have been better left untouched. I am trapping from the big river to the little river & have been affected by recreational snowmachiners travelling areas I've been trapping 7 years. This year no traps were intentionally disturbed. Thanks. In the past it appears that whenever someone stumbled on my line traps & supplies from tent camps & cabins were stolen or used. My trails are narrow & not down the center of drainages, but are in the woods. This gives the recreational trapper & snowmachiner on the river the impression no one is there. Also, after every windstorm, trees come down & I have to cut my way thru on every trip. This leaves the impression to hunters that trails are abandoned when it is not the case. I have lost many traps to hunter thieves. I have registered cabins in the area competition is most intense & will continue to trap this area in conjunction with the person that developed most of the trails I am using. It is unfortunate that the trapper that put 30 years work in the trails & cabins & myself, who has put 7 more years in the partnership have no more right to an area and can't even lock the door on the cabin. Because of this the heart of our area is intensively trapped to prove a presence. And then there's the military locking up 3 major drainages for bombing. If they'd bomb only in areas that burn every year anyway, everybody could access these drainages.

Large foreign corporations exploiting and destroying our area and pushing lifelong Alaskan out of a lifestyle.

Most of our trapping areas & trapping cabin were burned in fires in recent years.

Lynx season in 20D ok. Most of us will stop when we have taken about as many as the area can yield and still have a good population next year.

Lower Yukon & Kuskokwim Rivers

As a matter of fact I do...I used to make a living trapping in the winter, but can no longer do that because of fur prices. If our fur market would have been the fishing or beef industry the politicians would have been fighting each other to get in front of the news cameras and the podium, no help came from anyone. I do not know of one person in our village under the age of 21 that can properly skin and put up fur, and there is no other means to make any money in the winter, so I hope our governor who has claimed to protect the livelihood of all Alaskans, has put away plenty of extra money for future welfare programs, because we're sure gonna need it around here. And, I also think this ballet box biology is absolutely absurd, but in the end that what will shut us down, just like Colorado and California the city masses are so far detached from real world they know not what they do. I don't know how I am going to look my seven-year-old boy in the eye and tell him that within a few short years we are no longer going to be able do to this. Well, all I can hope is that ADFG don't sell us out like our governor has, I am sure there are a lot of good people fighting hard for our cause and livelihood and I commend you, but I also know the anti fur movement is planting seeds in your department. I hope you have the foresight to weed 'em out before their roots get too deep. Well there is some good that's going to come out of this November ballet its that my job is not the only one getting voted on and I know how I am going to vote. Well you asked. P.S. fax this to the governor's office.

No, cause there's no money in trapping these days and its hard to live here in Alaska with no income!

Trapping is an important part of my life, mink especially. The older people in the village are very happy when I bring them the meat – also known as carcass. But I prefer to use "meat". The mink festival has brought a new meaning to "quality" fur. 80% of the trappers I know are trying to be contenders. If the only reward I got from trapping was cash, (its to laugh) I would be an average Joe trying to make ends meet in a city. Muskrats used to be very abundant around the village before we stopped hunting them. When we stopped spring hunting – due to no buyers – they became more scarce. Opposite of what I thought would happen. To this day, I have not seen that much muskrats in the spring. This happened in the late 70's, early 80's.

I will be trapping in the near future. A trapping get together would be a very good idea for Unit 18 trappers. Please organize a get together before the 98-99 trapping season. Thank you.

I will quit trapping next season and I would appreciate it if you quit sending me these questionnaires.

Fur prices were discouraging, but the weather was some of the finest, steadiest weather, I've seen in years. This allowed my leghold trap to actually produce animals. The years I've had to rely a lot more on snares only. Please understand, a great injustice would be dealt to us rural trappers if our snares were ever limited or taken away. I really depend on them for wolves and fox.

Increase trapping season, fur buyers competing prices.

I will probably trap next year. Due to my moving to Valdez and working I did not have a chance to do any trapping last year. Thanks.

A long time has passed since our ancestors trapped. There were abundant furs, they weren't expensive. They traded for food and other traps and amenities. Now that fish and game are watching trapping situation, to me all of the species I've marked are getting scarce. Like our ancestors said, when there was abundant of species, and when they're interfering, it all goes to scarce. God made every living thing in this world, so that all kinds of people will use it equally. Hope to have better season this year.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

If you have questions about your specific area, please let your local area biologist know that you would like to hear from him or her regarding your concerns. Thank you for your comments. We appreciate hearing from you and I am sure other trappers enjoy reading about what's going on in areas outside their own trapping grounds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doreen Parker McNeill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

**Doreen Parker McNeill
Trapper Questionnaire Coordinator**

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