

RESULTS OF THE 2015-2016 TRAPPING SEASON

Trapping Licenses

The total number of trapping licenses sold dropped this year, which is likely in response to the slow fur market and low pelt prices. Records indicate a total of 2,375 trapping licenses were sold during the 2015-2016 trapping season. This is a decrease from last season's total of 2,559. The resident trappers 15 and older purchased 2,250 licenses. The number of resident trappers 14 and under purchased increased from 78 to 93 licenses and 32 licenses were purchased by non-residents. The increased in number of youth licenses sold may be a result of increased education efforts. Attached is a copy of trapping license sales from the season 1950-1951 – through the 2015-2016 season.

Fur Harvest

The total number of pelts harvested in the 2015-2016 season was 2,447; this was a decrease of 6,626 compared to a total pelt harvest of 9,073 in 2014-2015. Harvest for fur of nearly every species has dropped, which is likely a result of the low fur prices and overall slow fur market. The total pelt value in 2015-2016 was \$16,215.99 compared to \$76,266.58 in the 2014-2015 season. Prices for most species pelts have been decreasing over the past seasons.

Nutria Harvest

The nutria harvest (349,235) increased by 7,527 from the previous season total of 341,708. In 2015-2016, approximately 2,402 nutria carcasses were removed from the marsh to be utilized for meat and or fur. This is an increase from the previous season's total of 284. However, trappers and fur dealers only reported shipping 81 pelts.

The average nutria pelt price paid during this past season was \$2.00. This price stayed roughly the same from the previous year (\$2.19). Also, an additional \$5.00 was paid for all nutria taken during the Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP). The total value of the nutria harvested from the CNCP increased from \$1,708,540 to \$1,746,175.

Coastwide Nutria Control Program

There were 274 active participants in the Coastwide Nutria Control program this year. This is an increase from the previous year's total of 266. Eighty participants (29%) turned in less than 200 tails. Forty-nine participants (18%) turned in between 200-499 tails. Thirty-five participants (13%) turned in between 500-799 tails, and 110 participants (40%) turned in 800 or more tails.

There were 19 parishes represented in the program with harvests ranging from 341 to 93,301 nutria. Terrebonne Parish reported the highest number of tails with 93,301 followed by St. Martin and St. Mary Parish with 50,202 and 46,672 respectively. The method of take for each nutria was identified as: 26% of the nutria harvested were trapped, 65% of the nutria harvested were shot with a rifle, and 8% of the nutria harvested were shot with a shotgun.

February was the most active month for harvesting nutria (116,031) while November (8,729 tails) was the least active month (see CNCP Report, Coastal Wetlands Protection Planning Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Project LA-03b).

Vegetative Damage Caused by Nutria

In the spring of 2016, a coast wide aerial survey was conducted covering the coastal parishes of Louisiana. There were 11 sites included in the 2016 vegetative damage survey. Of the 11 sites, all were previously identified as damaged sites. No new sites were identified and no sites were considered to be recovered.

The 2016 vegetative damage survey yielded a total of 1,732 observed acres of damage, (extrapolated to be 6,496 acres coast wide). When compared to 2015 (1,602 acres or 6,008 acres extrapolated coast wide), the present damage represents approximately an 8.2% increase in the number of damaged acres. Terrebonne and St. Mary, respectively are the parishes that were the most impacted by nutria herbivory. Of the 11 sites currently showing impact, Terrebonne Parish contained the largest number of damaged sites, 10 sites (99%), encompassing a damaged area of 1,1,716 acres. (See CNCP Report, CWPPRA Project LA-03b).

Fur Marketing

During this past year the Coastal and Nongame Division staff worked closely with the Louisiana Fur Advisory Council (LFAC) on education and marketing programs for fur.

This past year the LFAC continued to concentrate on marketing programs built around sales into China. The Council participated in the Beijing Fur Fair in January, 2016, which developed relationships with new Chinese buyers. The Council also contracted with a Chinese translator, specializing in fur sales, who worked the Beijing Fur Fair with Council representatives. The fur market consultant visited fur buyers in other Chinese districts after the close of the fair. At the end of this fiscal year, the Council concluded the contract with this Montreal consultant, which has promoted Louisiana furs primarily in China.

The Chinese market has been reliable for Louisiana dealers, and both China and Eastern Europe remain good potential markets for Louisiana furs. The Council put out a request for proposal to contract with a new consulting company to expand the Louisiana market beyond China. The Council negotiated a successful contract that will promote Louisiana furs in markets worldwide.

The Council contracted with a Louisiana educator to promote a better understanding of the fur industry as it relates to wildlife management and habitat protection. A major component of this contract was conducting trapping workshops to teach trapping and fur handling skills. The Council believes that improving the quality and the volume of the pelts produced in Louisiana is an important step in finding a stable international market. Another aspect of this contract was conducting educational programs public festivals. The fur industry still suffers from public misconceptions, and the Council strives to balance the message through education.

A strong fur market facilitates a healthy marsh and helps control coastal vegetative damage from nutria. It also promotes economic growth within coastal communities. All fur dealers working with these consultants were able to sell a hundred percent of the furs purchased from local trappers during the past season, including nutria pelts brought in as part of the Coast-wide Nutria Control Program.

Raccoon Harvest

The harvest of raccoons by trappers for fur decreased from 3,877 to 876 pelts and the price decreased from \$4.99 to \$2.09. The number of raccoons harvested by hunters for sport was approximately 29,000 as reported by hunters during the annual LDWF hunter harvest survey while Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators reported a take of 1,034 raccoons during the 2015 calendar year.

Coyote and Fox Harvest

Seven coyotes were harvested by trappers for fur during the 2015-2016 season. Pelts sold for an average price of \$8.11. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators took 121 coyotes during the 2015 calendar year. Hunters reported during the LDWF annual hunter harvest survey an approximate take of 41,900 coyotes.

Four red foxes and 30 grey foxes were harvested for fur during the 2015-2016 trapping season. Red foxes and grey foxes commanded an average value of \$12.59 and \$7.47, respectively. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators took a total of 8 foxes during the 2015 calendar year.

There are currently 18 coyote pens, 4 fox pens, and 38 fox and coyote pens, which provide a market for live foxes and coyotes within the state.

River Otter Harvest

The average price for river otter decreased slightly from \$28.36 per pelt last year to \$21.23, for a total value of \$6,157.20. Harvest for fur decreased sharply from 1,138 to 290 this past season. The otter had the second highest average price of all pelts and the highest value. A total of 539 CITES tags were requested for river otter, which is a decrease from the previous season's total of 1,747.

Bobcat

The bobcat harvest by trappers for fur decreased from 350 in the 2014 - 2015 season to 43. The average price paid by dealers and buyers decreased from \$43.46 to \$26.76 this past season. Bobcat had the highest average price of all pelts and continues by some of the most valuable pelts sold at international auctions.

A total of 133 bobcat CITES tags were requested. This was a sharp decrease from the previous season's number of 656. In the 2015-16 season, approximately 3,767 bobcat were reported to have been harvested by big game hunters. This is an increase from the previous season's total of 3,554.

Bobcat Harvest by Big Game Hunters LDWF Hunter Harvest Survey		
Season	Reported harvest from hunter survey	Confidence interval
2005-2006	8383	1476
2006-2007	8132	1416
2007-2008	7926	1344
2008-2009	6711	1303
2009-2010	7205	1338
2010-2011	7132	1435
2011-2012	6427	1120
2012-2013	*4282	*1123
2013-2014	4722	1165
2014-2015	3554	959
2015-2016	3767	971

Beaver Harvest

Beaver harvest decreased from 1,669 to 903 pelts, and the beaver price also decreased from an average of \$7.77 to \$5.70. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators reported to have removed 782 beavers during the 2015 calendar year. Harvest of beaver is beneficial in the control of timber, agricultural and road damage throughout the state. Some parishes have begun offering incentive through the sheriff's office to decrease beaver populations in areas of overpopulation.

The 2014-2015 Trapping Season

The Trapping Season dates are November 20th to March 31st as set by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. The rule became effective upon the publication of the Louisiana Register on August 20, 2008. Federal approval to export bobcat and river otter from the United States requires that the department insure only Louisiana bobcat and river otter are tagged with Louisiana CITES export tags. This requires that all bobcat and river otter pelts be accompanied by completed State Possession Tags once purchased from a trapper and that these tags be kept with the pelts until they are submitted to the department in exchange for CITES export tags.

It was recommended this year by the Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association to include more information in the trapping pamphlet about the use of snares in areas where bears are common. The use of snares for controlling coyotes and feral hogs is increasing, and there is growing concern from the trapping community about bycatch.

**LOUISIANA
NO. OF TRAPPERS LICENSED BY YEAR**

1950-51	7,732	1977-78	12,069	2004-05	1,597
1951-52	6,120	1978-79	11,106	2005-06	1,504
1952-53	4,328	1979-80	12,239	2006-07	1,690
1953-54	4,986	1980-81	11,801	2007-08	1,616
1954-55	5,202	1981-82	10,867	2008-09	1,704
1955-56	5,520	1982-83	10,668	2009-10	1,623
1956-57	4,211	1983-84	8,793	2010-11	1,957
1957-58	3,868	1984-85	10,935	2011-12	2,054
1958-59	3,932	1985-86	9,458	2012-13	2,140
1959-60	3,743	1986-87	6,947	2013-14	2,848
1960-61	3,613	1987-88	5,038	2014-15	2,559
1961-62	3,004	1988-89	2,888	2015-16	2,375
1962-63	3,666	1989-90	1,877		
1963-64	3,029	1990-91	1,414		
1964-65	3,061	1991-92	1,543		
1965-66	3,088	1992-93	1,189		
1966-67	3,492	1993-94	1,274		
1967-68	2,495	1994-95	1,686		
1968-69	3,601	1995-96	1,700		
1969-70	4,444	1996-97	2,691		
1970-71	3,510	1997-98	2,442		
1971-72	2,761	1998-99	1,578		
1972-73	4,741	1999-00	1,024		
1973-74	6,295	2000-01	987		
1974-75	7,528	2001-02	871		
1975-76	6,404	2002-03	1,589		
1976-77	9,329	2003-04	1,432		

Total Fur Harvest for the 2015-16 Season and Average Price Paid

Species	Totals bought by fur dealers/ Shipped by trappers	Average price paid by dealers/ earned at auction
Muskrat	4	\$2.65
Nutria	81	\$2.00
Opossum	6	\$0.00
Raccoon	876	\$2.09
Mink	201	\$7.09
Skunk	2	\$0.00
Otter	290	\$21.23
Bobcat	43	\$26.76
Coyote	7	\$8.11
Red Fox	4	\$12.59
Gray Fox	30	\$7.47
Beaver	903	\$5.70
Total Harvest and Value	2447	\$16,215.99

**Comparative Take of Fur Animals in LA
10 Year Average (2006-07 - 2015-16)**

Species	No. of Pelts	Approx. price	Value
Nutria	8,906	\$1.89	\$16,831.58
Muskrat	902	\$2.97	\$2,682.55
Raccoon	8,076	\$4.28	\$34,558.06
Mink	740	\$7.76	\$5,743.99
Opossum	202	\$0.72	\$145.17
River Otter	1,774	\$33.59	\$59,593.22
Red Fox	68	\$13.87	\$940.45
Gray Fox	407	\$13.90	\$5,653.88
Bobcat	578	\$34.41	\$19,891.84
Beaver	2,076	\$6.23	\$12,924.55
Coyote	81	\$6.04	\$490.81
Avg. total pelts	23,810	Avg. total value	\$159,456.10