

FAC Annual Report

F U R A D V I S O R Y C O U N C I L

Louisiana's Fur Industry

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From the early 1900's through the 1980's, Louisiana led the nation in the production of wild fur pelts. During the early 1900's the Louisiana fur industry involved over 20,000 trappers and 1,000 fur buyers and dealers. Muskrat populations exploded during that period with the harvest peaking at over 9 million pelts worth \$12 million in 1945. This production was more than occurred in all the other states combined.

A much larger rodent, the nutria, was placed in captivity in the state in the late 1930s and escaped and/or was released into the near perfect habitat of coastal Louisiana in the late 1930's. This South American native multiplied quickly and by 1962 surpassed the muskrat in numbers harvested. Between 1962 and 1982 coastal trappers averaged harvesting over 1.3 million nutria each year, representing over 64% of the total catch and 60% of the total value of the industry.

Louisiana produces 11 different species of furbearers (beaver, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, mink, muskrat, nutria, opossum, raccoon, red fox, river otter). During the past 10 years, the state has averaged producing nearly 50,180 pelts annually down from 195,362. The average annual production of nutria during the past 10 years has been, 27,128 and raccoon 12,803. These two species alone provided nearly 86% of the value of an industry worth over \$1.7 million annually to Louisiana trappers, including Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP) incentive payment \$5.00 per tail to participating trapper.

The annual fur harvest of all species has historically been valued as high as \$25 million to the state's trappers.

Washington D.C. Education

The newly reorganized Louisiana Fur Advisory Council (LFAC) continued its presence in Washington, DC during an unusual political period.

Congressional legislative activity in the second half of 2008 was very limited due to the politics surrounding the Presidential and Congressional elections, and in the first half of 2009, Congressional activity was dominated by the transition to the new Administration's priorities including the economic crisis. Further, the Louisiana Congressional Delegation sustained further changes with Congressman Steve Scalise taking office in 2008 and Congressmen Joseph Cao, Bill Cassidy and John Fleming taking office in 2009.



Education on the Hill

Outreach and education has always been a priority activity of the LFAC in Washington, DC and this activity has been even more important due to the dynamics within the LA Delegation. LFAC activities in this arena typically include a variety of member and staff ad hoc meetings and briefings as issues arise. Similar efforts may involve federal agencies such as the US Fish & Wildlife Service which regulates the trade in all CITES species including fur bearers. This activity provides a critical opportunity to ensure that key decision-makers in Washington, DC are kept up to date of the state of the LA fur industry and management programs, and are fully apprised of the range of issues and information important to the LFAC and the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Efforts are also made to keep LFAC apprised of any major legislative developments that may affect the LA fur trapping industry, and to pursue any legislative objectives identified by LFAC. This may also include working in cooperation with other organizations such as working with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in support of their efforts to secure continued funding for the ongoing trap testing program conducted by the USDA/APHIS under the FY10 Agriculture appropriations bill. This program is necessary to ensure US compliance with a crucial international agreement that preserves fur trade.

F u r M a r k e t O v e r v i e w

The fur market has suffered through the poor economy this year. Although sales have begun to develop in the raw wild fur sector, most of last year's raccoons, beavers, gray fox, red fox, and otters did not sell well. Louisiana continued its presence at international fur shows. Louisiana had a large booth at the Beijing Fur Show and attended the Hong Kong fur show as well. The Beijing booth was worked by two contractors, Michael Consiglio and Nick Shao. Several Chinese buyers, who have bought Louisiana skins in the past, continue to show interest in Louisiana's fur market.

Some skins are starting to move. The United States sold 50 million mink this past year. Ranch fox is beginning to sell as well. The main buyers have been the Chinese, funded by the Chinese government. The ranch fox which had not sold well in previous markets has opened up and starting selling at slightly better prices. It turns out that the Chinese have done poorly with their blue fox and now must purchase them internationally.

The Chinese government has been financially backing the Chinese manufactures to buy raw material. Many of the local regional Chinese markets have financial backing and all they need is to get the local mayor's approval for the loan and they get the capital to purchase skins. In this way the Chinese government is supporting the regional territories.

In spite of the depressed economy, Louisiana has sold many skins this past year. Louisiana sold all of its wild mink and some otter and muskrats. The Chinese domestic market is just starting to come alive. Chinese buyers, Peter Li, Liu Haixing, and Mr. Chen, want Louisiana skins and could easily take the full stock when the market opens, but they are still holding back on committing to a price.



*Fur Advisory Council Booth at the Beijing Fur Show,
January 2009.*

General Education

The Fur Advisory Council and Alligator Advisory Council's education program coordinated with other educators around the state, and presented at schools, libraries, and public events. This year, we gave 20 schools presentations, 10 library presentations, and 5 scout presentations. Events included La Fete De L'Ecologie, Ocean Commotion, Earthfest at the Audubon Zoo, National Trappers And Alligator Hunters Convention, Bossier City Earth Day, OC Extravaganza and the Monroe Career Workshop.



We have successfully networked with people in various agencies including the Louisiana Seagrass Program, the Baton Rouge Zoo, the Barataria National Estuary Program, and Wetland Watchers. We also began working with local scout leaders and Garland Scout Ranch is in the process of developing a furbearer merit badge and an alligator merit badge based on criteria that we provided. The furbearer coloring book and educational lessons for grades 6-8 are now complete.

Children are very interested in fur bearing animals and alligators. Many of these children have hunting experience and some even have trapping experience.

Library Presentation

Most formal presentations are about an hour long and involve the following: First, a pelt is displayed to the audience and the audience is provided various biological and/or ecological information about the type of animal from which the pelt was taken. Additionally, some key characteristics of each pelt are pointed out that will help the audience members positively identify the animal if seen in the wild. Various concerns surrounding the animals are discussed, including beneficial and problematic behaviors. Usually, the last thing that is done with the furbearers is to discuss the similarities and differences in the structure of the skull of some of the furbearing animals. Concepts such as occlusion, along with the relationship between dentition and diet and muscle attachment sites are discussed.

An alligator presentation follows. First, in order to grab the audience's attention, a hatchling alligator is shown and the audience is given some brief facts about the hatchling. Next, depending on time



St. Mary's 5th Grade

G e n e r a l E d u c a t i o n C o n t i n u e d

availability and the age group, the discussion continues while holding either the hatchling or an alligator head. Either way, the topics of alligator life habits in the wild and some basics on alligator anatomy are covered.

Concepts such as nest building, maternal care, digestion, thermoregulation and threats to hatchlings are discussed. Finally, as the audience leaves the presentation area, children have the opportunity to pet the hatchling alligator on the tail and ask any question that they may have thought of during the course of the program. When the children are leaving, they are always happy if not inspired by what they saw and experienced during the presentation. We usually receive several, if not several tens of questions.



Marthaville Elementary



Library Presentation

presentations are displayed. When patrons come to the booth, we always show them points of interest about alligators, furbearers, and the issues surrounding them.

Patrons, especially children, seem to be all smiles during their brief visit to the booth. We have created a new exercise whereby people look at a jar of bones and try to identify which furbearer these bones are from by comparing them to the skulls on the plaque. Both children and adults seem to enjoy this activity.

We have even had a number of children say that they wish to enter wildlife related careers and many teachers have told us that these presentations are very relevant to their lesson content.

At events, a booth is set up and the same items that are used in



C h i n a M a r k e t

The Fur Advisory Council contracted with Nick Shao to promote Louisiana furs in China. He works and travels through Mainland China and Hong Kong SAR. He maintains a close relationship with fur buyers in the region. He attended the fur fairs in Beijing and Hong Kong to promote Louisiana fur products. He set up a fur booth with Louisiana fur samples and met potential buyers at these shows.

Mr. Shao has an office in China that does basic client follow-up, while he mainly travels between Beijing and Hong Kong. In September 2008, he and Michael Consiglio visited clients based in Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei and Shandong. Office staff also visited the local fur market in Hebei.

Although the international fur market has been depressed over the past fiscal year, the fur shows in Beijing and Hong Kong drew interest from Chinese fur buyers in Louisiana products.



Hong Kong: 'Asia's World City'

2008 - 2009 Budget

The Fur Advisory Council operates from two funding sources, Rockefeller Trust Funds and Education and Marketing Funds.

Rockefeller Trust Funds	
Budgeted	\$150,000.00
Salaries	\$30,568.67
Related Benefits	\$9,553.71
Travel	\$4,275.84
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, newspaper ads</i>	\$10,207.46
Supplies- <i>i.e. sample furs, sample products</i>	\$5,053.10
Professional Services- <i>i.e. fur promotion contract, D.C. education</i>	\$82,000.00
Capital Outlay- <i>Printer</i>	\$5,599.00
Rockefeller Trust Funds Expended	\$147,257.78
Education and Marketing Fund	
Budgeted	\$100,000.00
Salaries	\$2,758.05
Related Benefits	\$0.00
Travel	\$0.00
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, internet service</i>	\$59.95
Supplies- <i>i.e. printing supplies, office supplies, sample furs</i>	\$1,292.00
Professional Services- <i>education contract</i>	\$0.00
Education and Marketing Funds Expended	\$4,110.00
Total FAC Funds Budgeted	\$250,000.00
Total Expended	\$151,367.78

F A C M e m b e r s

Landowner Representatives

Johnny Price
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Term: 02/24/06 – 02/23/10

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Term: 04/30/06 – 04/29/10

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Term: 3/23/08 – 3/23/12

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Term: 01/05/06 – 01/04/10

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Term: 3/30/07 - 3/29/11

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