

FAC Annual Report

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

From the early 1900's through the 1980's, Louisiana led the nation in the production of wild fur pelts.

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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 38,056 pelts annually down from 195,362. The average annual production of nutria during the past 10 years has been, 23,428 and raccoon 6,663 . These two species alone provided nearly 80% of the value of an industry worth over \$1.8 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 Fur Advisory Council (FAC) has long maintained an active and visible presence in Washington, DC, both on Capitol Hill and with the Administration. It provides a critical voice for the Louisiana fur industry and is a “go-to” source of information for Washington policymakers.



Education on the Hill

Outreach and education activities remained a top priority for the FAC during the year particularly with several freshmen Congressmen on the Louisiana Delegation and the larger need to keep the entire Delegation informed of the dynamics within the industry so heavily impacted by the global economic downturn. FAC activities in this arena typically include a variety of Member and staff ad hoc meetings and briefings as issues arise. Similar efforts 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.

The FAC also had a very busy year on the legislative front. Working in close cooperation with the Louisiana and Maryland Congressional Delegations, legislation was introduced by Louisiana Senators Landrieu and Vitter and Maryland Senators Cardin and Mikulski, to reauthorize and extend authorities of the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003. Companion legislation was introduced in the House by Louisiana Congressman Boustany and Maryland Congressman Kratovil. This statute has been a key component of the authorities underlying the successful Louisiana nutria control program that has been so important to Louisiana trappers and the fur industry for years.

Working in close coordination with the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, the FAC in partnership with the Alligator Advisory Council led an initiative to secure introduction of the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program Act of 2009. The bill was introduced by Louisiana Senators Landrieu and Vitter to establish a program to research and develop control methods for the exploding population of feral swine and to minimize the damage these invasive species are having on some of the most productive coastal wetland habitat in the State that is so important to furbearers and other fish and wildlife species. This is a proactive effort that is in many ways patterned after the successful Louisiana nutria control program. Substantial progress was made in moving both of these bills through the legislative process during the year and the prognosis for final enactment is excellent. Efforts have also begun to secure federal appropriations to fund the feral swine program once it is established.

Finally, the FAC was kept apprised of any major legislative developments that could affect the Louisiana fur trapping industry, and is poised to pursue any legislative objectives identified by FAC. This often includes working in cooperation with other organizations such as the closely-aligned Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Fur Market Overview

The Fur Advisory Council has continued to promote Louisiana fur and Louisiana's fur dealers through a contract with Michael Consiglio and Nick Shao. The fur market has improved a lot over the past year. All mink has sold at 13%-17% price increases. The strength of the ranched fur market is lifting up all the furs in the market. Now Nutria is in more demand. Nutria is still reasonably priced thereby allowing them to make a saleable garment. The increase in demand and strength was too late for Louisiana's dealers to take advantage of this year. Louisiana did not have all the skins needed to cover the big orders. This coming year is going to be strong.

Louisiana's three most active dealers have sold all the skins they had and can expand their business this year. They are making plans to develop Louisiana share of the market.

Two of Louisiana's largest clients (Helmut Rothe from New York who represents many International Buyers and Peter Li, from China who has been buying Louisiana skins for the last two years) had the opportunity to meet all the dealers in the state. The group visited Wildlife and Fisheries in Baton Rouge and even made the newspaper.

Everything in fur is selling – White Polar bear rugs are selling for \$3000 to \$4000 thousand dollars. Timber Wolf rugs are being sold for \$200 to \$3000. A strong market for northern furs means a strong market for lighter, Louisiana furs as well. The International Fur Market is gaining momentum again. The Russians, the Greeks (manufacturing mostly for Russia), the Turks, and the East European countries are all back in the wild fur market.

The Chinese market continues to grow beyond just the trimmings market. Their voracious desire for fur has gone beyond the export market. Local sales have increased as China begins to embrace the consumer's lifestyle.

The international designers are taking furs beyond the fur coat or fur jacket. Handbags made in all kinds of furs are selling in Japan and are starting to be seen in North America. Fur trim on fabric garments is still very strong. Ranch furs are doing well, but long hair wild furs are very popular in the skiwear / sportswear market.



*Fur Advisory Council Booth at the
Beijing Fur Show,
January 2011.*

General Education



School Presentation– Explaining the Anatomy of a Skull

Children consistently expressed interest in the content of the presentations and always wanted to know more. For example, one teacher even wrote that the students were captivated by the subjects of trapping and furbearers and that a presentation held the students' attention completely. "It was very informative and interesting" commented one teacher.

Most formal presentations are about an hour long and involve the following: First, two beaver chewed sticks are shown to the class. The question is then posed to the class "What did this do to these sticks?" After appropriate response time is given, the answer "beavers" is clarified. Then, an explanation is given of how beavers cause extensive damage to timberlands, which, it is explained are a valuable part of the state's economy, as well as important habitat for many other species. The damage that can be done to crops due to beaver induced flooding, as well as levee failure from beaver burrowing is subsequently explained. After several more animals are discussed in the same manner, the traps are presented to the class. These are as follows: two live-restraining double foothold traps, one with rubberized jaws. One of these traps is at times brought to the class set, and then sprung for the students. A coon cuff trap and a cable-type trap are also shown and discussed. Next, the class is walked through the procedure of setting a bobcat trap via demonstration. Finally, lures are discussed, such as the use of ground scent glands of the species being trapped, or even the use of dung in the same manner.

The Fur Advisory Council's education program coordinated with other educators around the state, and they presented at schools, libraries, and public events. This year they gave 32 school presentations, 18 library presentations, two scout presentations, one school-based FFA meeting and two school based 4-H meetings, two teacher conferences, and had a booth at three sporting goods stores. Events included National Hunting and Fishing Day, Black Bear Fest, "AgMagic" at the Sate Fair, Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association Convention, and a school-wide event sponsored by Wetland Watchers. Quentin Morris, the main educational outreach person, went with James Gallaspy, a member of the Fur Advisory Council and owner of R&P Trapping Supplies store in Mansfield, on a trip in order to check traps for bobcats. Quentin has incorporated trapping methods that he observed into his presentations.

General Education Continued



School Presentation

as alligators and ground-nesting birds live.

Throughout the presentation, four important trapping points are discussed, one of which is that trapping is a highly regulated activity that has licensing requirements that are overseen by LDWF biologists. Pelts are displayed to the audience and the audience is provided with various biological and/or ecological information about the type of animals from which the pelts were taken. Various concerns surrounding the animals are discussed, including beneficial and problematic behaviors. Examples are as follows: By their scavenging habits, coyotes clean up carcasses and thereby reduce fly populations; on the other hand, coyotes are problematic for livestock farmers. Foxes can control rodent populations, but they will take advantage of chicken coops. The point is emphasized that a trapper never seeks to decimate a species, but to aid in the control of its population for its own good, such as in the case of disease, and for the good of other species, such as in controlling the numbers of raccoons in areas where species such

The Council provided free educational materials to teachers state-wide. DVDs with lesson plans, worksheets, and hands-on activity guides are distributed at each event. These materials are also available on the Council website. The Council has received positive feedback regarding these materials.

The Council has also collaborated with the Louisiana Alligator Hunters and Trappers Association to support trapping workshops. These workshops draw both children and adults and cover topics such as humane treatment of animals and technical skills of setting traps and cleaning pelts.

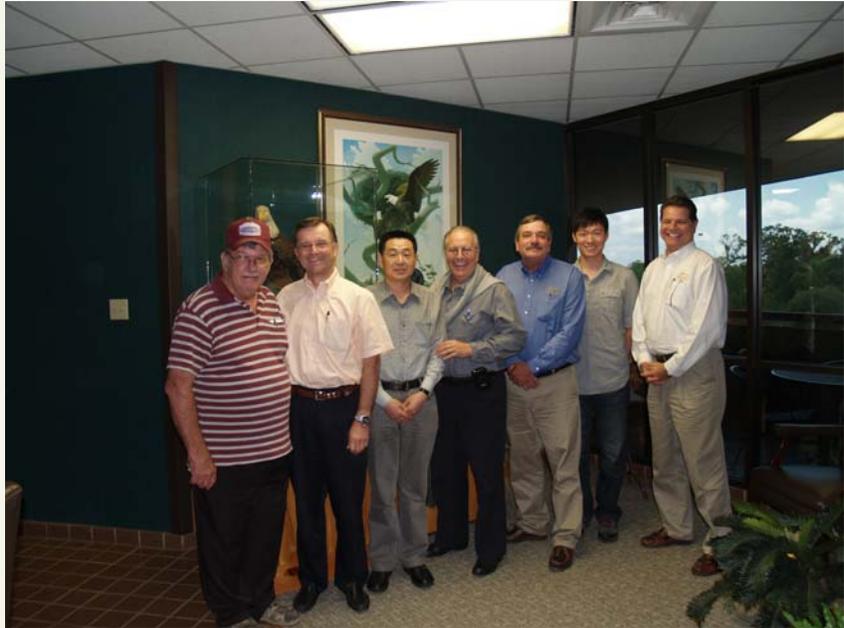


Nutria Pelts

China Market

Chinese buyers on a buying expedition in Louisiana. Photo taken at LDWF, Baton Rouge.

The Fur Advisory Council contracted with Nick Shao to promote Louisiana furs in China Mainland and Hong Kong SAR. He attended the China Fur & Leather Product Fair in Beijing, and the Hong Kong International Fur & Fashion Fair in Hong Kong to promote Louisiana fur products and meet potential buyers.



He kept tabs on the market, stayed in touch with the Louisiana dealers and offered skins available to Chinese buyers. He also worked on enhancing the relationship between the Council and the existing Chinese clients.

In May 2011, he traveled with Peter Li, a big buyer and friend, to Louisiana to meet the Council members as well as several local skin suppliers including Mr. Danny Perry, Mr. James Gallaspy, Mr. Tab Petrie and Mr. Archie Domangue. This trip was productive for Louisiana fur dealers.



Hong Kong: 'Asia's World City'

2010 - 2011 Expenditures

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	\$111.20
Related Benefits	\$34.24
Travel	\$0
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, newspaper ads</i>	\$1,552.23
Supplies- <i>i.e. sample furs, sample products</i>	\$9,755.53
Professional Services- <i>i.e. fur promotion contract, D.C. education</i>	\$115,000.00
Capital Outlay	\$0
Rockefeller Trust Funds Expended	\$126,453.20
Education and Marketing Fund	
Budgeted	\$95,000.00
Salaries	\$28,912.00
Related Benefits	\$9,498.65
Travel	\$0
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, internet service</i>	\$6,816.96
Supplies- <i>i.e. printing supplies, office supplies, sample furs</i>	\$200.98
Professional Services	\$0
Education and Marketing Funds Expended	\$45,428.59
Total FAC Funds Budgeted	\$245,000.00
Total Expended	\$171,881.59

F A C M e m b e r s

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