

FAC ANNUAL REPORT

FUR ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Louisiana has a strong trapping heritage. From the early 1900s through the 1980s, Louisiana led the continent in the production of wild fur pelts.

During the early 1900s the Louisiana fur market supported over 20,000 trappers and 1,000 fur buyers and dealers. Muskrat populations expanded, and trappers harvested over 9 million pelts worth \$12 million in 1945. Louisiana produced almost 65% of North American fur during this period.

A much larger non-native rodent, the nutria, was farmed in the state in the late 1930s and escaped and/or was released into the near perfect habitat of coastal Louisiana. Nutria multiplied quickly and by 1962 surpassed the muskrat in numbers harvested. Between 1962 and 1982 average harvest by trappers topped 1.3 million nutria annually, representing over 60% of the total fur industry. Today, nutria harvest is an essential part of habitat management due to the nutria's aggressive eating habits.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) manages the state's 12 different species of furbearers (beaver, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, mink, muskrat, nutria, opossum, skunk, raccoon, red fox, river otter). During the past 10 years, the state has averaged producing 22,689 pelts annually. The average annual production of nutria during the past 10 years has been 8,672 and raccoon has been 7,618. These two species alone provided approximately 72% of the value of an industry worth over \$1 million annually to Louisiana trappers, including the \$5.00 per tail Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP) payments to participating trappers.

Although fur harvest has continued to decrease due to a poor market, youth trapping has increased, thus keeping this Louisiana heritage alive.

Nutria feed on vegetation that sustains coastal wetlands.



WASHINGTON D.C. EDUCATION

The Fur Advisory Council contracts with Glenn Delaney to stay abreast of any movement of legislation that might be of interest to the Fur Advisory Council and to advise the Council as needed when political issues arise.

Political campaigns and controversies may have been a distraction to the general public over the past year, but it didn't distract those who would like to put an end to Louisiana's fur and alligator industries and management programs. Animal rights groups and their advocates on Capitol Hill continued their campaigns against science-based wildlife management and the sustainable use of wildlife resources in a series of legislative actions in both the House and Senate during the end of the 114th Congress last year and again into the early months of the 115th Congress this year.

While Council and LDWF efforts to put down these aggressions continue to be successful through an informal but highly-effective coalition of like-minded organizations in Washington DC, including the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), some of these bills gathered as many as 85 sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Assaults on the principles of science based sustainable-use and wildlife management were not limited to legislation in Congress, but also continued within the realm of the multilateral Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES was established over four decades ago for the purpose of monitoring and, as necessary, regulating international trade in protected species to ensure those principles were being respected not just in Louisiana, but in the 183 current member nations worldwide. Those principles are also the foundation on which Louisiana's fur and alligator programs and industries were built.

However, due to the actions of these animal rights groups, the politics of CITES has slowly drifted away from its original mission of ensuring responsible trade in sustainably managed wildlife resources and increasingly towards a forum for advancing the agendas of organizations committed to preventing sustainable industries from putting their products into international trade.

Predictably, the CITES meeting held late last year in South Africa was marked by yet another campaign to advance proposals that would undermine its fundamental sustainable use policies, and the US Delegation was once again poised to resubmit and/or support a proposal to up-list polar bears to Appendix I, an issue that has become a test case for CITES sustainable use policy.

The good news is that the Council and LDWF continue to enjoy a highly constructive partnership with some of the world's foremost experts and leaders in the CITES community that includes Louisiana's Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, AFWA, representatives of a number of pro-sustainable use organizations, and representatives of like-

mindful foreign governments. Thanks to the intense pressure and outstanding work by this informal coalition of states and pro-sustainable use organizations, the US Delegation withdrew the polar bear proposal and such advancement of the animal right agenda was averted. Nevertheless, the drift of CITES mission remains very real and this will continue to be an important focus of efforts in Washington.

With that in mind, the new Administration brings high-hopes for a new and improved Department of Interior that is committed to the principles of sustainable use with the nomination and Senate confirmation of Secretary Ryan Zinke earlier this year. Secretary Zinke, a former Navy Seal, also served as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from the State of Montana. As a Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, his words and actions clearly demonstrated his firm commitment to science-based wildlife management and sustainable use. While a nominee for the next Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has yet to be announced, the expectation is that the nominee will share secretary Zinke's vision and principles – something that bodes well for Louisiana both in the State and at CITES.

Finally, the Louisiana Congressional Delegation has continued to offer steady support. Invariably, members of the Delegation have stepped up to champion any number of ongoing initiatives on the Council's agenda. The importance of educating and maintaining a constructive working relationship with the Louisiana Delegation and key Committee leaders cannot be overstated.



Education on the Hill

INTERNATIONAL FUR MARKETING

This year the Council and LDWF contracted with a new fur marketing company, Canchilla Associates Limited. Brent Poley, the president of Canchilla Associates, manages fur promotions for the Council and LDWF.

Rebranding Louisiana Furs

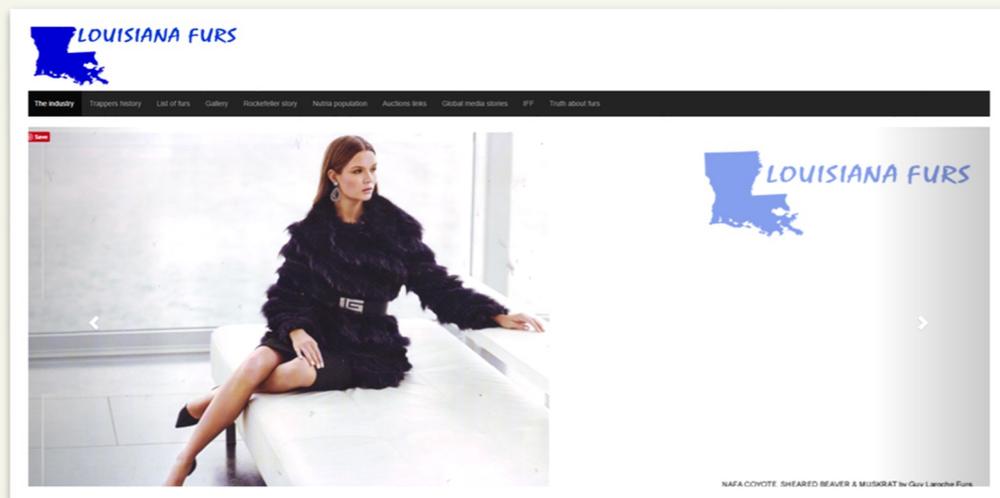
The fur industry is changing and furriers are no longer the only designers working with fur. Retailers and clothing manufacturers are going overseas to create their own designs, incorporating fur trim and accessories into their existing fashion lines. To meet this new breed of furrier, dealers and associations may need to embrace three new business requirements: a strong and recognizable brand, a web presence, and a standardized measuring and grading system.

The council through the contractor has made good progress getting the new LOUISIANA FURS brand displayed at trade shows. It has brought about a renewed vigor of activity within the fur trade. Mr. Poley worked with a graphic artist who had several years' experience in the fur industry and its advertising models to outline options for the new logo.

The Louisiana Furs' logo was approved by the FAC and LDWF at the Council meeting on September 27th. This logo will appear on the new website, signs at trade fairs, and business cards.

The website has been structured as a single portal with two purposes and divisions. All content will be approved by the FAC and LDWF staff. The first part of the site has been drafted. It contains marketing information as well as the history of fur in Louisiana and types of skins produced by Louisiana. It will eventually contain the names and contact information of licensed dealers and available pelts.

Homepage of Louisiana-Furs.com



Fur Fairs

This year Louisiana participated in several new fur fairs and others they haven't visited for a while. This has been an invaluable opportunity for the contractor to talk, at some length, with many of the main buyers in the industry and foster many new connections.

In February, Louisiana participated in two international fur fairs, the Hong Kong Fur Fair and the MiFur in Milan, Italy.

This year's Hong Kong Fur Fair was larger and saw increases in attendance over previous years. It is the largest international fur fair; while the others remain showcases for regional talent targeting furriers and retailers within their geographical area and continent. This year's Hong Kong Fair showed an increase in sales with numbers of buyers and sales up 25% over last year. There were also a greater number of international buyers, including those from Korea, Europe, and North America. More Russians were also in attendance suggesting that their market may be beginning to gain ground once again.

The Milan Fur Fair ran from February 24th to the 27th. Milan's organizers combined their textile fair with their fur fair, creating a secondary show, The One Milano. This brought new faces to both industries. The 2017 MiFur was well attended. Chinese and Korean buyers were very busy, but the top buyers at the fair were from Russia.

From April 23rd to April 25th, Louisiana participated at The International Luxury Outerwear Expo (ILOE) in Chicago. While still a young fair, the ILOE shows the promise of becoming the premier show in North America, demonstrating to American manufacturers and designers the furs that are available in their own country's southern states.

In May, Louisiana Furs was exhibited at the 42nd Kastoria International Fur Fair in Greece. The 115 exhibitors (80% Greek and 20% from other countries) filled 140,000 square foot space. Interest was shown by the buyers and a sample of Louisiana furs was left behind to allow buyers to continue to view and handle the product after the show ended. Kastoria has a long history of fur production and the fair included a wide variety of products, everything from coats and garments to shoes and accessories.

Over 1,100 visitors from 32 countries attended the four-day event in Kastoria. Fair organizers arranged for two plane-loads of buyers: one from Moscow containing 240 Rus-



One Milano Fair

FUR MARKETING CONTINUED

sian buyers and the other from Kiev with 170 Ukrainian buyers.

Future efforts will be put into the Kastorian market and fostering connections there. Price competition there is strong and, with Louisiana's reasonable price structure, it could develop into a new market. The contractor has already established connections to most of the manufacturers in Kastoria through other business avenues, and intends to advise and assist local fur dealers to make those connections as well.

Unfortunately, people in the fur industry have long memories. There were many people interested in Louisiana's products, but they have concerns based on previous deals that had not worked out to their expectations. In the past, Louisiana had a reputation for not delivering properly graded goods, and that was what remained foremost in

Kastoria Fur Fair in Greece



their minds. All who asked were reassured that this was a thing of the past, explaining that there has been a lot of time and effort put into new education programs offered by

LDWF and the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association in order to ensure a better product in the future.

In addition to the fur fairs, the contractor attended two meetings in Argentina on the

1st of June. The first was with Charles Calfun, one of the largest retailers in Buenos Aires. His garments have been highlighted in several Argentinian magazines, including Harper's Bazaar.

The second was with the Argentinian Fur Association. The conversations began with discussions of the international fur market, and then focused on the nutria industry. Argentina, like Louisiana, is experiencing the same difficult market, and sales have decreased as a result. This brought the discussion to wildlife management, how they work with biologists and the national government to maintain this resource while studying the effects on the environment. Argentina is currently experiencing a nation-wide decrease in the number of nutria as the land use is changed from grazing land for cattle to the farming of soy. However, in the south of the country they experience many of the same over-population problems Louisiana faces.

The last topic discussed was their strategies for the future. They are currently working with their country's design schools to both create interest in fur and to help educate the upcoming generation about the use and sustainability of all fur. It is hoped that some of their ideas can be brought to Louisiana and implemented in the years ahead to replicate some of their home-grown successes.

The contractor traveled to Brazil after the meetings concluded in Argentina. Canchilla has been doing business in Brazil since 1990, and Mr. Poley has many contacts in Brazil, including a connection with the representative of the Brazilian Fur & Leather Association.

This has been a previously untapped market that Mr. Poley intends to explore. Brazil has grown to become the 6th largest economy in the world at the high point of the oil boom. It has recently experienced difficult times like many economies around the world that are oil dependant. However, in a country of 220 million, there is a very large upper-class ready and interested in fur, as was evident at the mall in Porto Alegre where fur garments were on display to shoppers.

The Brazilian Fur & Leather Association hosts two annual fur and leather fairs. IN-SPIRAMAIS has both a summer and a winter show. The winter show takes place in the beginning of July, to correspond with the Winter Fashion Weeks held across Brazil. The IN-SPIRAMAIS has previously been a closed show with only Brazilian companies allowed to participate. However, the Brazilian Fur & Leather Association has agreed to allow Louisiana Furs to participate in the Winter Fair. The contractor recommends that Louisiana's representatives visit the fair in 2018/2019 to research this untapped and underappreciated market.

Education

In October, the contractor along with LDWF hosted a trappers' seminar to discuss the current international market and what customers expect when buying furs. Jason White, fur marketing director of *The North West Company*, gave a Power-Point presentation, guiding the attendees through 300-years of wild fur market history. The main subject of this presentation was the markets expectations and what buyers expected from Louisiana skins. The talk

FUR MARKETING CONTINUED

touched on preparation, drying, and the handling techniques that all trappers should be using.

Conclusion

While some problems arose this year, new opportunities for growth also presented themselves, including an invitation to visit a fair closed to the rest of the world.

With wild fur in the midst of a challenging period, trappers and dealers in Louisiana should continue to find alternative uses for trapped species beyond fur to supplement their income. For example, with the price of beaver pelts falling, trapper activity has decreased. This means that there is less castor, a product used in the making of perfume, available, which drives up the price.

When asked, Brent Poley said, *“Our objective for the coming years is to replace the outdated views the fur industry has of Louisiana Furs. We must work to position Louisiana Furs as an industry insider, with progressive ideas and a consistent product instead of an industry outsider. My plan is to position Louisiana and its diverse range of furs, so that when the market turns around, we will be prepared to take advantage of the upturn, with a good selection of offerings for the industry to choose from.”*

There are many opportunities for expansion into countries like Brazil and new fur fairs like Harbin, China, that are just starting to appear on our industries horizon but that most of the world has left alone. Attending a fur show in Brazil next season is already in the planning stages.

Mark Oaten, CEO of International Fur Federation (IFF), said: *“It’s incredibly heartening to see the amount of fur on the runways holding firm. In fact, designers are using fur in ever more creative ways and giving consumers gorgeous, versatile pieces to wear on every sort of occasion, and across the seasons. And all of this comes at a time when the animal rights groups are promoting their agenda like never before. It just goes to show how resilient our industry is and how consumers are exercising their right to choose what they want to wear, not what they are told to wear.”*

Brent Poley continued, *“I optimistically look forward to year two, and all the possibilities that lay before us. It’s time to show the International Fur Industry that we are progressive and proactive. It’s time to show that we are creating and maintaining new norms for our products. And it’s time to show that we are actively teaching these new standards to future generations.”*

FUR QUEEN PROMOTION

The Fur Advisory Council and LDWF provide a fur garment to the Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival Fur Queen and fur accessories to the Fur Queen and Ms. Cameron. The winning queens promote the fur industry throughout the year as they participate in festivals and pageants across the state.

The queens wear real fur at these events and explain the benefits of supporting the fur industry and Louisiana’s beautiful, rich habitat. Ms. Kristal Breaux was crowned Fur Queen this year, and she proudly wears her fur coat at events across the state. Ms. Savanna Boudreaux was crowned Miss Cameron and carries a fur purse as a talking point about the ethical and sustainable wild fur market. Julian Devillier, last year’s Fur Queen, was crowned Queen of Queens this year and has continued promoting fur to an even larger, national audience, and at venues such as a Mardi Gras ball in Washington DC.



Kristal Breaux: Louisiana Fur Queen 2017

The queens attended over a dozen festivals and balls throughout the state, participated in parades, and used their platforms to promote cultural pride in Louisiana and its natural resources.



Savanna Boudreaux
Miss Cameron 2017

Julian Devillier
Festival Queen of Queens



EDUCATION PROGRAM

The first goal specified in the legislation that created the Fur Advisory Council identifies the need for education, and the Council and LDWF take this directive seriously. The Council participated in National Hunting and Fishing Day and a couple of JAKES (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics and Sportsmanship) days.



National Hunting and Fishing Day



Beginners Trappers Workshop

The Council also supported a trapper education program that developed as a partnership between LDWF and the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunter's Association. Four trapping workshops were conducted around the state. Two workshops were beginning level programs that attracted a wide range of students, including teenagers, a university biology class, working adults, and retired

adults. The two advanced workshops consisted of students who had completed the beginning workshop and covered fur handling.

LDWF also partnered with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) to develop an online trappers' course modeled after the national AFWA trappers' course. The online course covers Louisiana trapping regulations, ethics, safety, and habitat management as well as practical trapping skills. Although all trapper education is voluntary in Louisiana, trapping students are encouraged to take the online course as a prerequisite to the hands-on workshop.



Advanced Trappers Workshop

2016-2017 EXPENDITURES

The Fur Advisory Council operates within the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and uses two funding sources, Rockefeller Trust Funds and the Education and Marketing Funds.

Rockefeller Trust Funds	
Budgeted	\$120,638.00
Operating Services- <i>i.e. mobile hotspot</i>	\$62.76
Professional Services- <i>fur promotion contract</i>	\$104,083.26
Rockefeller Trust Funds Expended	\$104,146.02
Remaining	\$16,491.98
Education and Marketing Fund	
Budgeted	\$73,400.00
Salaries	\$31,395.08
Related Benefits	\$13,080.73
Travel	\$6,773.54
Operating Services- <i>i.e. postage, educational supplies</i>	\$1,768.63
Supplies- <i>i.e. printing supplies, sample furs</i>	\$8,616.80
Professional Services- <i>DC education contract</i>	\$24,500.00
Interagency Transfer- <i>i.e. computer</i>	\$801.50
Education and Marketing Funds Expended	\$86,936.28
Remaining	(\$13,536.28)
Education and Marketing Overages coded to	Conservation Funds
Total FAC Funds Budgeted	\$194,038.00
Total Expended	\$191,082.30

F A C M E M B E R S

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