

RESULTS OF THE 2016-2017 TRAPPING SEASON

Trapping Licenses

The total number of trapping licenses sold dropped this year, which is likely in response to the overall slow fur market and low pelt prices. Records indicate a total of 2,133 trapping licenses were sold during the 2016-2017 trapping season. This is a decrease from last season's total of 2,375. The resident trappers 15 and older purchased 2,037 licenses. The number of licenses resident trappers 14 and under purchased decreased from 93 to 64 licenses and licenses purchased by non-residents stayed the same at 32. Attached is a copy of trapping license sales from the season 1950-1951 – through the 2016-2017 season.

Fur Harvest

Prices of fur have remained low and the worldwide market has remained depressed; however, the number of fur pelts bought by fur dealers and sold at auction by trappers has increased this past season. The total number of pelts sold in the 2016-2017 season was 6,189; this was an increase of 3,742 compared to a total pelt harvest of 2,447 in 2015-2016. The total pelt value has also increased in 2016-2017 and is estimated to have been approximately \$57,919.19 compared to the estimated total value of \$16,215.99 in the 2015-2016 season.

Nutria Harvest

The nutria harvest (216,052) decreased substantially from the previous season total of 349,235. A mail out survey sent to participants suggested the decrease in harvest was due to the unusually warm winter and lack of a hard freeze which failed to cause the marsh vegetation to die back and make the nutria more visible to hunters. Other factors such as increases in offshore work and the August 2016 flood event were also cited as reasons for the decline in participation and harvest.

In 2016-2017, approximately 7,186 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 2,402. However, trappers and fur dealers only reported shipping 1,093 pelts.

Conservatively, the average nutria pelt price paid during this past season was \$1.08. This price decreased from the previous year (\$2.00). Also, an additional \$5.00 is paid for all nutria taken by registered participants as part of the Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP). The total value of the nutria harvested from the CNCP decreased substantially from \$1,746,175 to \$1,080,260.

Coastwide Nutria Control Program

There were 228 active participants in the Coastwide Nutria Control program this year. This is a sharp decrease from the previous year's total of 274. Eighty-nine participants (39%) turned in less than 200 tails. Thirty-nine participants (17%) turned in between 200-499 tails.

Thirty-three participants (14%) turned in between 500-799 tails, and sixty-seven participants (29%) turned in 800 or more tails.

There were twenty parishes represented in the program with harvests of nutria ranging from 419 to 48,411. Terrebonne Parish reported the highest number of tails with 48,411 followed by Plaquemines and St. Mary Parishes with 33,684 and 32,102 respectively.

The method of take for nutria was identified as: 28% of the nutria harvested were trapped, 58% of the nutria harvested were shot with a rifle, and 14% of the nutria harvested were shot with a shotgun.

February was the most active month for harvesting nutria (78,087) while November (4,811 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 2017, a coast wide aerial survey was conducted covering the coastal parishes of Louisiana. The overall number of damage sites due to nutria herbivory had increased; however, the severity and size decreased. The mild winter and longer growing season may have helped the marsh resist more severe nutria damage.

There were 16 sites included in the 2017 vegetative damage survey. Of the 16 sites, ten were previously identified as damaged sites. Six new sites were identified and one site was considered to be recovered.

The 2017 vegetative damage survey yielded a total of 1,564 observed acres of damage, (extrapolated to be 5,866 acres coast wide). This is a slight decrease from the previous season. When compared to 2016 (1,732 acres or 6,496 acres extrapolated coast wide), the present damage represents approximately an 9.7% decrease in the number of damaged acres. Terrebonne and Jefferson respectively are the parishes that were the most impacted by nutria herbivory. Of the 16 sites currently showing impact, Terrebonne Parish contained the largest number of damaged sites, 13 sites (82%), encompassing a damaged area of 1,282 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 marketing programs for fur and with the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association (LTAHA) on trapper education.

This past year the LFAC expanded the marketing program beyond China's borders. The LFAC contracted with a new fur marketing company, Canchilla Furs. The Council participated in the Hong Kong International Fur and Fashion Fair in February, 2017, which developed relationships with new international buyers. The fur market consultant further represented Louisiana at the Kastoria International Fur Fair in Kastoria, Greece, the International Luxury

Outerwear Expo in Chicago, USA, and the MiFur Fair in Milan, Italy. He also met with the International Fur Federation on several occasions regarding the trend to certify fur origins via the FURMARK label.

The Coastal and Nongame Division staff has worked closely with the LTAHA on trapper education this past year. At the end of the previous year, the Council concluded the contract with the Louisiana educator and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) began a partnership with the LTAHA to manage the educational program. The purpose of the program is to preserve trapping as a management tool, a recreational activity, and an economic benefit to Louisiana citizens and to preserve the culture and heritage of Louisiana. The educational program hosted four hands-on trapper workshops at both beginning and intermediate levels, an online trapper course was developed and launched with the assistance of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and a fur skinning video series was started with the assistance of the LDWF media department.

Education and marketing are valuable tools to enhance the management of Louisiana's fur resources. The fur industry still suffers from public misconceptions, and the Department and Council strive to balance the message through public education. This message of ethical and sustainable use creates an environment where a fur market can be publicly accepted. A strong fur market in turn facilitates a healthy marsh and helps control coastal vegetative damage from nutria. It also promotes economic growth within coastal communities.

Raccoon Harvest

The number of raccoon pelts sold by trappers nearly doubled from 876 to 1624 pelts and the price increased slightly from \$2.09 to \$2.80. The number of raccoons harvested by hunters for sport was approximately 34,200 as reported by hunters during the annual LDWF hunter harvest survey. This is an increase from the previous year's take of 29,000 while Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators reported a take of 691 raccoons during the 2016 calendar year; a decrease of the previous year's take of 1,034.

Coyote and Fox Harvest

Forty-eight coyotes were harvested by trappers for fur during the 2016-2017 season. Pelts sold for an average price of \$10.74, a slight increase from the previous year's average price of \$8.11. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators took 140 coyotes during the 2016 calendar year; an increase from 2015's 21. Hunters reported during the LDWF annual hunter harvest survey an approximate take of 45,500 coyotes. This is an increase from last year's reported take of 41,900.

Twenty-five red foxes and 199 grey foxes were harvested for fur during the 2016-2017 trapping season. Red foxes and grey foxes commanded an average value of \$12.25 and \$7.59, respectively. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators took a total of 22 foxes during the 2016 calendar year.

There are currently 66 fox and coyote pens, which provide a market for live foxes and coyotes within the state. Sixty-three coyotes were reported to have been trapped for the live market.

River Otter Harvest

The average price for river otter increased slightly from \$21.23 per pelt last year to \$24.42, for a total value of \$29,670.30. The otter had the second highest average price of all pelts and the highest value. Harvest for fur increased sharply from 290 to 1,215 this past season. A total of 865 CITES tags were requested for river otter, which is an increase from the previous season's total of 539. A reported 100 otters were trapped by nuisance wildlife operators.

A healthy live market exists for river otter which may have helped increase interest in the trapping of them. Otters are an attractive exhibit for zoos and aquariums around the world and Louisiana trappers with proper state and federal permits have taken advantage of this.

Bobcat

The bobcat harvest by trappers for fur increased from 43 in the 2015 - 2016 season to 349. The average price paid by dealers, buyers and at auction increased from \$26.76 this past season to \$29.59. Bobcat had the highest average price of all pelts and continues to be some of the most valuable pelts sold at international auctions.

A total of 416 bobcat CITES tags were requested. This was a sharp increase from the previous season's number of 133. In the 2016-17 season, approximately 5,700 bobcat were reported to have been harvested by big game hunters. This is an increase from the previous season's total of 3,767.

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
2016-2017	5,700	1,600

Beaver Harvest

The number of beaver sold increased from 903 to 1,256 pelts. The beaver price also increased from an average of \$5.70 to \$6.62. Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators reported to

have removed 866 beavers during the 2016 calendar year. Harvest of beaver is beneficial in the control of timber, agricultural and road damage throughout the state. Some offer incentives through the sheriff's office or contract trappers to decrease beaver populations in areas where they have become overpopulated.

The 2016-2017 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.

**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	2016-17	2,133
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 2016-17 Season and Average Price Paid

<u>Species</u>	<u>Totals bought by fur dealers/ Shipped by trappers</u>	<u>Average price paid by dealers/ earned at auction</u>
Muskrat	127	\$1.88
Nutria	1093	\$1.08
Opossum	82	\$0.76
Raccoon	1624	\$2.80
Mink	171	\$7.29
Skunk	0	\$0.00
Otter	1215	\$24.42
Bobcat	349	\$29.59
Coyote	48	\$10.74
Red Fox	25	\$12.25
Gray Fox	199	\$7.59
Beaver	1256	\$6.62
Total Harvest and Value	6189	\$57,919.19

**Comparative Take of Fur Animals in LA
10 Year Average (2007-08 - 2016-17)**

Species	No. of Pelts	Approx. price	Value
Nutria	8,672	\$1.82	\$15,808.87
Muskrat	691	\$2.85	\$1,970.21
Raccoon	7,618	\$4.19	\$31,943.11
Mink	699	\$7.62	\$5,327.27
Opossum	202	\$0.69	\$139.45
River Otter	1,761	\$33.23	\$58,516.07
Red Fox	69	\$13.79	\$945.86
Gray Fox	396	\$12.95	\$5,132.37
Bobcat	545	\$34.11	\$18,595.68
Beaver	1,954	\$6.24	\$12,185.93
Coyote	81	\$6.39	\$518.31
Avg. total pelts	22,689	Avg. total value	\$151,083.14