

FUR ADVISORY COUNCIL 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

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.

Farming of a much larger non-native rodent, the nutria, began in the state in the late 1930s and some animals escaped and/ or were 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, and river otter). During the past 10 years, the state has averaged 15,032 pelts annually. The average annual production of nutria during the past 10 years has been 4,788 and raccoon has been 5,421. These two species alone provided approximately 68% of the value of an industry worth over \$1 million annually to Louisiana trappers, including the \$6.00 per tail Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNCP) payments to participating trappers.

Although fur harvest has continued to decrease due to a poor market, trapping license sales have increased for the past four seasons, thus keeping this Louisiana heritage alive. The increased interest is largely due to interest in nuisance control and the desire of participants for a new activity or challenge.

WASHINGTON D.C. EDUCATION



Photo by TravelScape

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) contracted with Glenn Delaney to stay abreast of any federal administrative or legislative activities that might be of interest to LDWF, the Fur Advisory Council, or the Alligator Advisory Council.

Mr. Delaney maintained his dialogue with key Members of Congress, Committees and their staff to educate them on issues important to Louisiana’s sustainable use wildlife programs including a broad range of funding and policy legislation under consideration in the 117th Congress. In particular, he continued to monitor and provide analyses of legislation advanced by animal

rights groups and their advocates on Capitol Hill so that they could be addressed in a timely and effective manner. This included anti-trapping legislation such as the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act and provisions hidden in various large-scale funding bills. Animal rights groups also sought to exploit the alleged linkage between coronavirus and live animals sold at wet markets in China as their strategy to promote several bills such as the Preventing Future Pandemics Act designed specifically to undermine the principles of sustainable use and impose global bans on legitimate wildlife trade. He also focused on amendments to the Lacey Act included in the “America COMPETES

Act” that had the potential to prohibit interstate commerce and imports of certain species if determined by the Department of Interior to be “injurious”. This included reptiles and their offspring and eggs.

Mr. Delaney sought funding for a variety of programs that benefit Louisiana’s wildlife programs and industries, including working with Senator Kennedy’s office to secure additional FY 22 funding to further develop a CITES ePermitting system to facilitate wildlife trade in Louisiana. With letters of support from the AAC, he also continued to pursue funding for research on infectious diseases affecting Louisiana’s alligator farms and wild population in both the FY 22 and FY 23 appropriations cycles. The FY 22 enacted legislation includes text that continues to stress the need for USDA APHIS to develop “a critical strategy for addressing these threats” to both alligators and human health. The FY23 Senate Appropriations Committee Report (not yet enacted) includes a provision championed by Senator Cassidy that would provide \$500,000 for this research.

Mr. Delaney worked closely with LDWF administration and program managers to address pertinent federal administrative and legislative issues. The funding for the contract was split equally between the Fur Advisory Council and the Alligator Advisory Council’s budgets.

2021-2022 EXPENDITURES

The Fur Advisory Council operates within the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and uses the Louisiana Fur Public Education and Marketing Fund.

LOUISIANA FUR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND MARKETING FUND	
Budgeted	\$64,500
Salaries	\$ 7,717
Related Benefits	\$ 3,564
Travel	\$2,978
Operating Services	\$1,314
Supplies	\$ 10,613
Professional Services (Washington D.C. Education Contract)	\$18,750
Inter-Agency Transfer (Office of Technology Services)	\$ 0
Education and Marketing Funds Expended	\$44,936
Remaining	\$19,564



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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 focuses primarily on this directive. The Council has taken a two-tiered approach to education focusing on both outreach education and trapper education.

This year, staff participated in several large educational events such as the Louisiana Envirothon targeting high school students and 4-H events targeting elementary and middle school children. Staff also presented at numerous schools and libraries state-wide. The Council provided biological facts and educational support to other LDWF staff who presented at schools and at other outreach events. The Council also partnered with a number of educational and outreach organizations such as the Audubon Zoo and Wetland Watchers to reach a broader audience.

LDWF and the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunter's Association hosted two trapper instructor workshops and five trapping workshops around the state. These workshops attracted a wide range of students, including teenagers, biology students, working adults, and retired adults. LDWF also ran three full weekend trapping schools, where students set and ran their own trap-line and skinned their own harvest under the supervision of an instructor. Due in part to this program, trapping license sales have increased the past several years.

LDWF continued the partnership with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) for the Louisiana Level 1 Online 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 workshops and the trapping school.

The Fur Advisory Council funded travel for two council members and a biologist from the department to attend the National Trappers Association annual convention in Spencer, Iowa and the Fur Takers of America Rendezvous in Kansas. The attendees gathered educational advice and educational materials from other states' education departments. Professional presentations were attended by the members who upon returning, shared their experience with Louisiana's trapping instructors. These instructors used this information to modify several of their presentations used in Louisiana's trapper education program.





FUR QUEEN PROMOTION

The FAC and LDWF sponsor the Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival by providing a fur garment to the Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival Fur Queen and alligator or fur accessories to the Fur Queen, Miss Cameron, and Miss Teen Fur as a prize at the end of each pageant. Ms. Gabrielle Guilbeau was crowned the 63rd Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival Queen in January of 2022. She attended twenty-one fairs, festivals, and special events as a representative of Louisiana's fur industry.

The queens wear real fur at these events and explain how supporting the fur industry invests in Louisiana's beautiful, rich habitat. They promote the use of real fur over faux fur, show examples of the different furbearers found in Louisiana, and talk about ecology and habitat management as it relates to trapping.

The queens as well as the pageant coordinators use social media platforms to promote the Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival and all that the festival represents. The queens used their platforms to promote cultural pride in Louisiana and its natural resources.



Cesilee Oliver was crowned Ms. Cameron in 2022 (above), and Gabrielle Guilbeau was crowned Fur Queen (left).



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