

# **Trapper Questionnaire**

**Statewide Annual Report  
1989–1990**

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Wildlife Conservation**

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## 1989-90 TRAPPER QUESTIONNAIRE STATEWIDE REPORT

The geographic coverage of the trapper questionnaire program is expanding. Eventually we hope to cover the entire state. This report covers most of southcentral and interior Alaska.

We sent out 648 questionnaires and received 242 responses giving us a 37% response rate overall. Although the number of questionnaires sent out the previous year was less (589), the overall rate of response was the same, 37%.

This represents a small sample of those who trap in Alaska. According to data from our licensing section, there were 22,747 residents licensed to trap during calendar year 1989. Of these, 9,173 people purchased the regular \$10.00 trapping license, the rest were eligible to trap because they purchased the \$.25 low income license. In 1990, there were 20,948 residents licensed to trap. Of these, 8,362 bought the \$10.00 license. The number of licensed trappers who actually trapped is not known.

Some areas did better than others in responding to the questionnaire, however. The best response (64%) came from trappers in the Kodiak Archipelago (Kodiak Island group). Second place goes to the trappers on the Alaska Peninsula with a 48% response. Third place goes to the trappers in the Copper River and Upper Susitna River basins with a 42% response. Two trapper groups, the lower Tanana River basin and the general interior group tied for fourth place with a response (37%) equal to the overall average response. The response was less than 37% from the remaining geographic areas covered by this report. No reminder letters were sent.

I'm sure that all of you who responded to trapper questionnaires in past years recognized that we made changes in the format of the questionnaire and the questions that were asked. These changes were made to enable us to improve on the documentation of factors affecting the levels of harvest of furbearers and to make better comparisons from year to year on the status and trends in furbearer populations as seen from your perspective.

This report summarizes the results of responding trappers. All trappers did not respond to all of the questions or fill in all the appropriate spaces in the abundance/trend table. Therefore, percentages given are based on the number of trappers who responded to each question.

The report summarizes the responses to the questions asked of all trappers sent questionnaires. Responses to questions asked by your local area biologist are not included in this report. In addition, trapper's perceptions of the relative abundance and trends in furbearer populations by geographic areas are summarized. Finally, your comments from the questionnaires are included as well.

The comments are presented with minimum editing. By this I mean the comments include what you said with two basic exceptions. The exceptions result when (1) we can't read your handwriting or (2) you include information that identifies specific individuals or locations that could violate someone's privacy or reveal exactly where they trap.

As I did the previous year, I have added editorial comments in response to questions asked. Several responding trappers said that they liked this addition to the report.

#### A PROFILE OF SOUTHCENTRAL AND INTERIOR TRAPPERS

It's possible to build a partial profile of trappers who returned questionnaires based on their responses to the statewide questions. A summary of the responses is presented for each question in the order in which they were asked on the questionnaire.

#### **Did you trap in 1989-90?**

Of the trappers responding to the questionnaire, 76% said they trapped this season. That means nearly 25% chose not to trap even though they have trapped in the past. Low fur prices for many species of furbearers seems to have affected the decision by some trappers not to trap this season. If we assume about 8,500 people bought licenses intending to trap (an arbitrary number about half way between the number of regular licenses bought in 1989 and the number bought in 1990) and we assume that the trappers who responded to this question are representative of trappers statewide, then there could have been about 6,400 residents actively trapping this season.

#### **How many total years trapping experience do you have?**

The mean number of years of experience of the 177 Alaskan trappers responding was 21 years. The range was 1 year to 65 years. Nearly 45% of the respondents had 1 to 5 years of experience. The percent of trappers who responded to this question who had more than 5 years of experience was:

6 to 10 years: 16%	11 to 15 years: 16%
16 to 20 years: 20%	21 to 30 years: 23%
31 to 40 years: 10%	41 to 50 years: 4%
51 to 60 years: 2%	> 60 years: 1%

### How many years have you trapped in Alaska?

The mean number of years of trapping experience in Alaska by the 180 trappers responding was 17.2 years. The range was 1 year to 65 years. Nearly 48% of the respondents had 1 to 5 years experience trapping in Alaska. The percent of trappers who responded to this question who had more than 5 years of Alaskan trapping experience was:

6 to 10 years: 23%	11 to 15 years: 17%
16 to 20 years: 20%	21 to 30 years: 12%
31 to 40 years: 5%	41 to 50 years: 4%
51 to 60 years: 1%	> 60 years: 1%

### What transportation did you use to get to your main trapping area?

For some reason, this question was confusing to some trappers and others (29% of those who returned questionnaires) didn't want to answer it. The intent of asking this question was to get some idea of how trappers get to their trapping areas.

For example, we might expect many (but not all) trappers who live on a road system to use a pickup truck to haul a snowmachine (or boat in coastal areas) to a place at or near the beginning of their trapping area. At this point they would switch to the snowmachine or boat to run the line. Someone in a village lacking a major road might leave from their house by snowmachine or boat to get to their trapping area and then continue using the same vehicle to run the line.

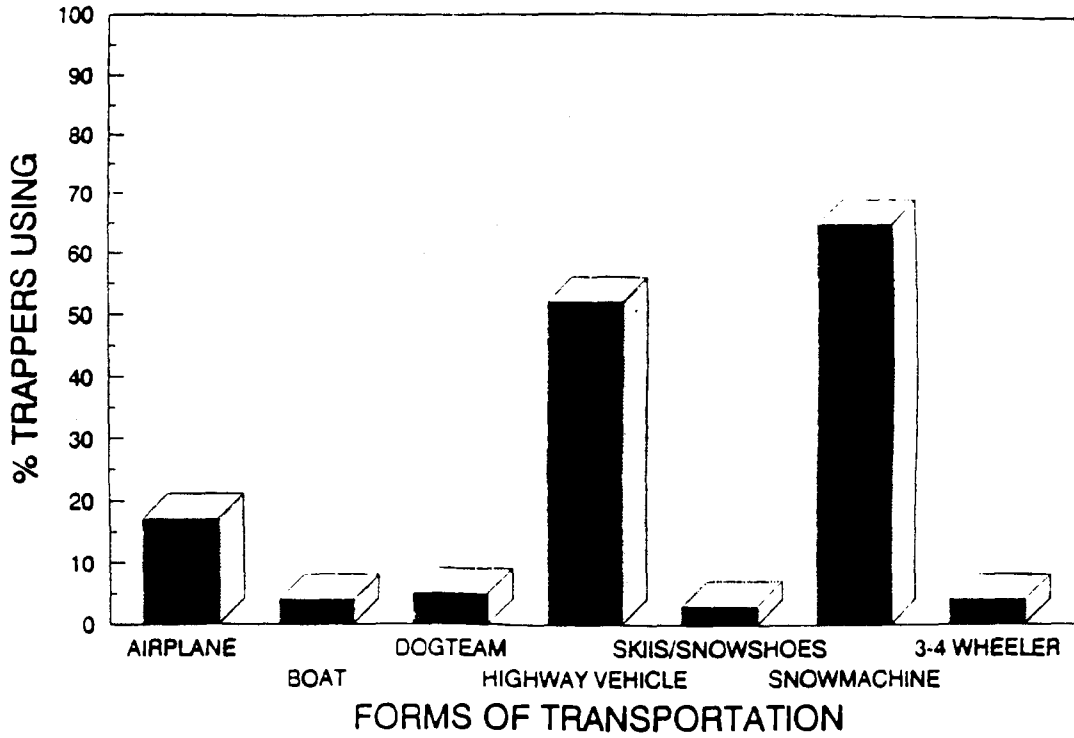
As you can see from Figure 1, given the way trappers interpreted the question, most trappers who answered this question used snowmachines (38%) to get to their traplines. Next most popular was a highway vehicle (30%) followed by use of an airplane (17%).

### What transportation did you use to run your trapline?

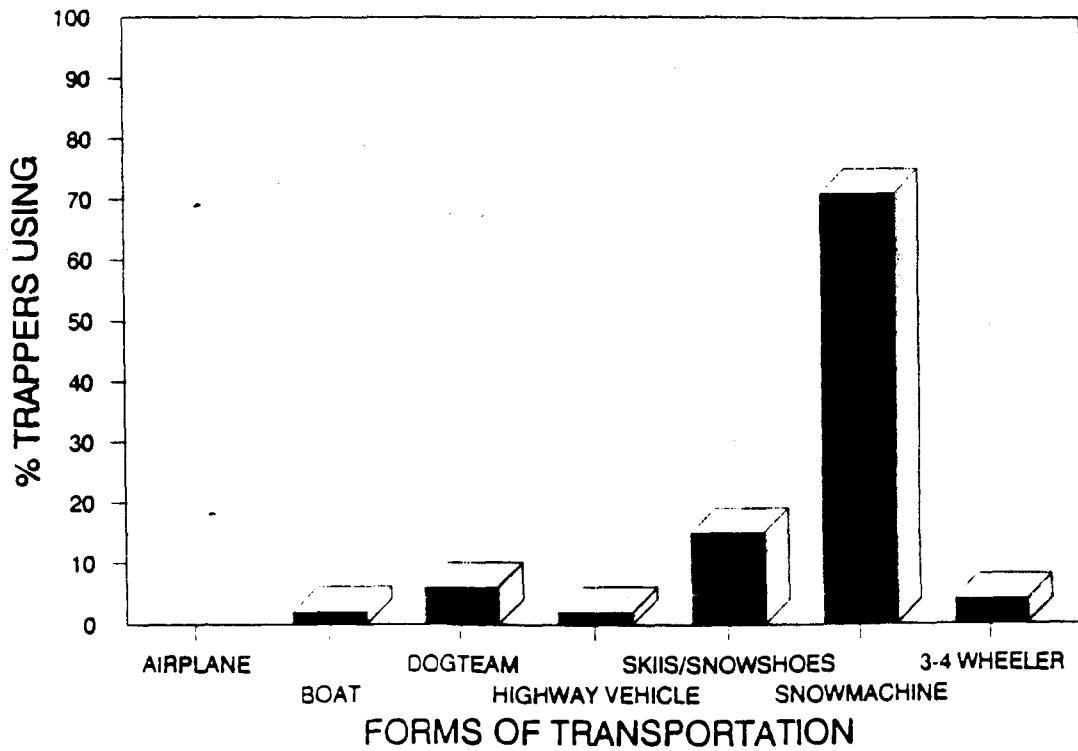
Although the intent of this question should have been clearer, there were some trappers who found it difficult to pick a single answer, instead they circled more than one of the choices. As with the previous question, 29% of those who returned questionnaires did not answer this question.

Figure 2 shows that within the geographic area covered by the questionnaire, snowmachines are most often used to run traplines. As the geographic area covered by the questionnaire expands to include more areas lacking good winter snow cover, we can expect some shift in the proportion of trappers using any one of the forms of transportation listed.

### TRANSPORTATION TO TRAPLINE AREA



### TRANSPORTATION USED ON TRAPLINE



### How many miles long was your main trapline in 1989-90?

There were 175 trappers who responded to this question. The mean length of line was 51.2 miles (mean = the sum of all trapline miles divided by the number of trappers responding). These trappers together, ran nearly 9,000 miles of line. Can you image what the figure would be if we had information from all the active trappers in Alaska?

The two most frequently mentioned lengths were 15 miles and 20 miles. Another way of evaluating the answer to this question is to determine the median value, that is the trapline length where 50% of the trapline lengths are shorter and 50% are longer. That value is 40 miles. Figure 3 shows the number of trappers who reported having a trapline of a length that fell within one of the 16 categories shown.

### How many years have you been trapping there?

In this question the "there" refers to the area trapped in 1989-90. The mean length of time trappers had trapped the same area as they did in 1989-90 was 12 years for the 177 trappers responding to this question. The median value (50% of answer less, 50% more) was 10 years. These numbers reflect, I think, the kind of investment in time that trappers make in establishing and maintaining their traplines. Figure 4 shows the frequency distribution of the answers to this question in increments of 5 years.

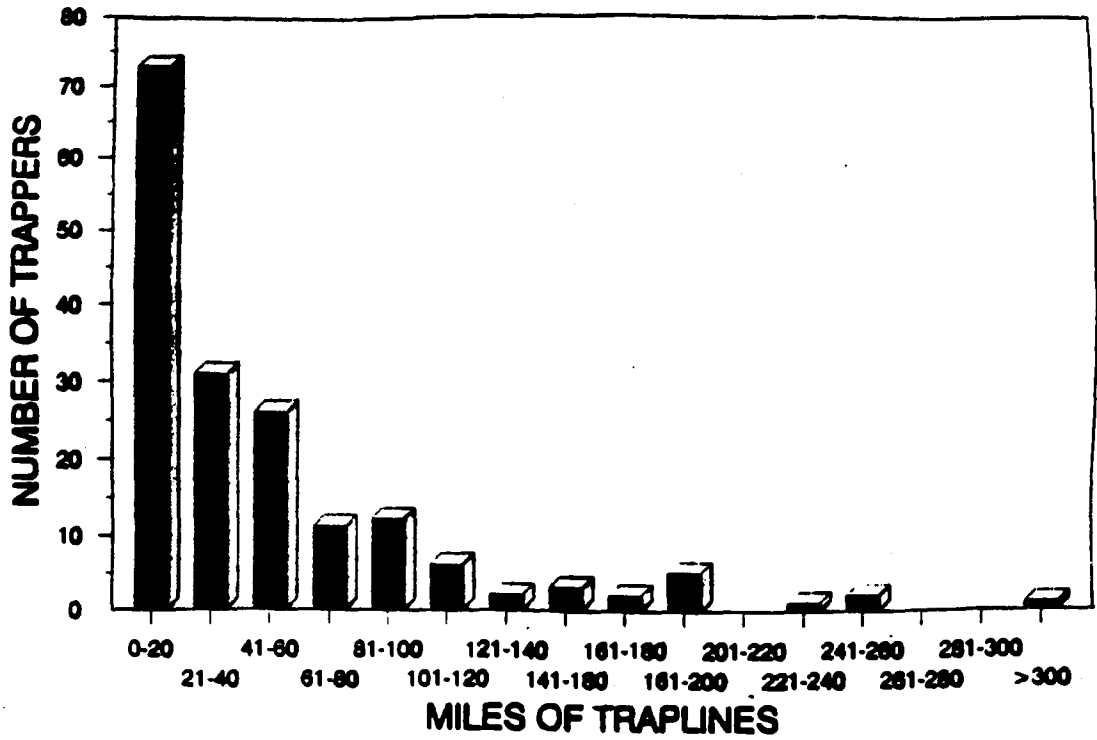
The approximate number of sets I averaged on my line this season was:

Somewhat fewer trappers (160) answered this question than answered the other questions. Perhaps some trappers don't keep track of the number of sets they make or they have some reason for not wanting to answer this question. The answers to this question along with answers to the question on whether or not you trapped and the question on length of trapline provide an index to the amount of effort expended in trapping. By comparing the information between years, which we can do in future years, we can get some idea if trappers are increasing or decreasing their effort to catch fur.

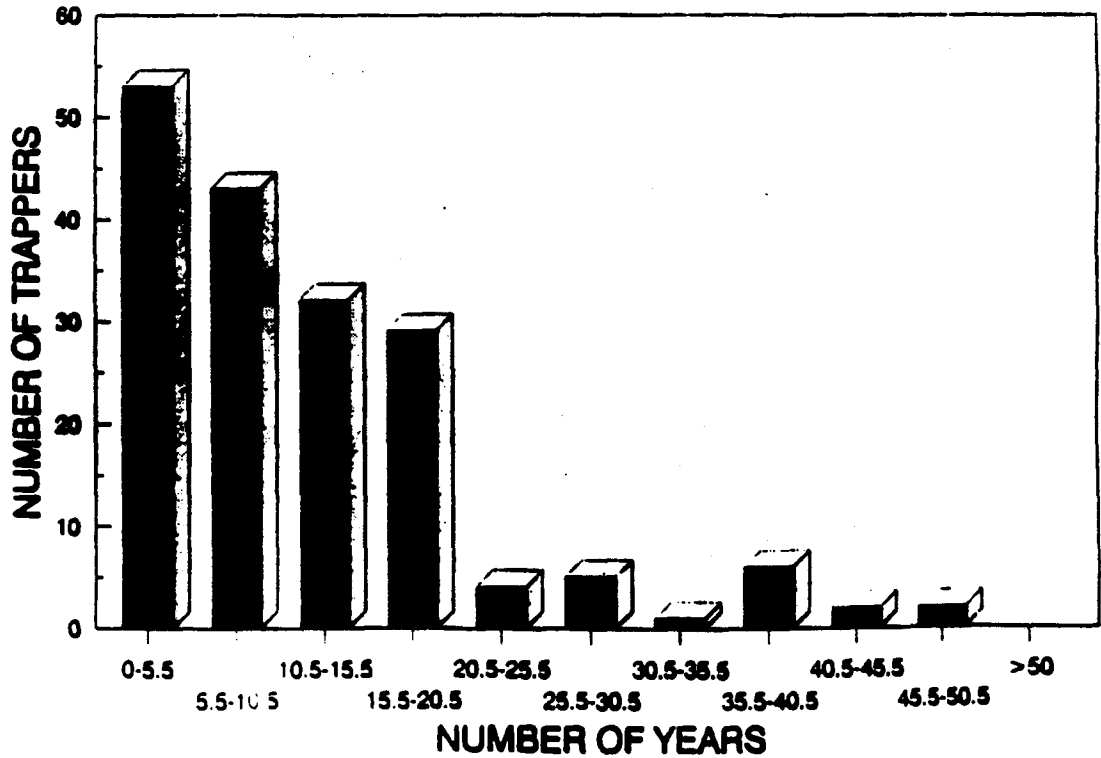
The frequency distribution of answers to this question are shown in figure 5. The median value fell in category 2, which means that half the trappers responding used between 25 and 50 sets or less and half the trappers responding used more sets.

If fur prices improve over the next few years, it will be interesting to see which, if any, of the three index values increase: the percent of trappers trapping, the length of line trapped or the number of sets made.

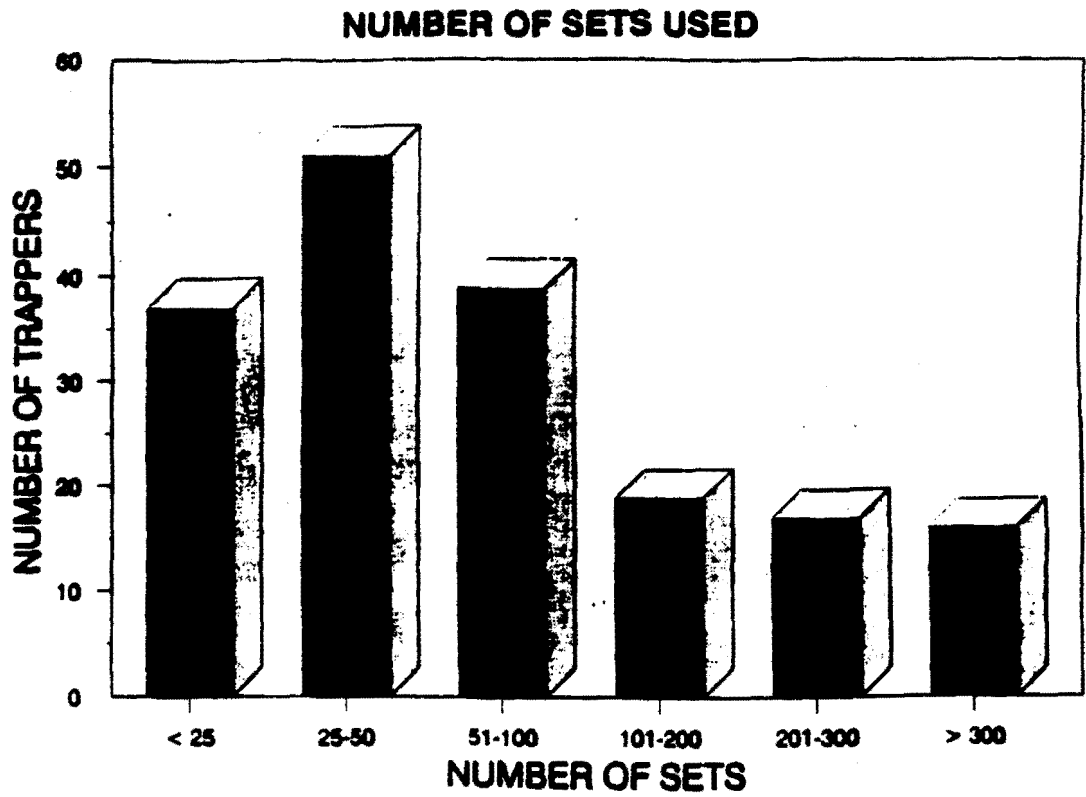
### LENGTHS OF ALASKAN TRAPLINES



### NUMBER OF YEARS SAME AREA TRAPPED







### **Did conditions this winter affect your trapping effort?**

This question was included to help us interpret the three index questions discussed above. More trappers (199) responded to this question than responded to the other questions. Of those responding, 83% said yes, that conditions during the winter of 1989-90 affected their trapping effort. Comments explaining what kind of conditions affected trapping effort have been incorporated into the comment section of this report.

### **RELATIVE ABUNDANCES AND TRENDS OF FURBEARER POPULATIONS**

The following summary of the relative abundances and trends in the populations of furbearer species in south central and interior Alaska are drawn from the information provided by trappers who took the time to fill out all or portions of the fur abundance table included in the trapper questionnaire. There are many variables that can influence the way trappers decide if the evidence along their trapline indicates that a species is scarce, common or abundant. Similarly, these same variables can affect a judgement as to whether or not the number of animals are fewer, the same or more this season than they were last season.

Unusually cold or warm temperatures, amount of snow, the amount of trapline actively used, the experience of the trapper along with actual changes in the numbers of animals are among the variables affecting a trapper's perception of the abundance of and trends in furbearer populations on the trapper's line.

In spite of the difficulties these variables present in interpreting how well or poorly furbearer populations may be doing, the fact remains that trappers spend more time on the ground making observations than most of the biologists responsible for managing the resources. On the other hand, most biologists get a chance to gather information over large geographic areas while doing aerial surveys, talking to many trappers or by reviewing the information from trapper questionnaires. By working together and pooling information both wildlife biologists and trappers can gain a better understanding of the status of furbearer populations throughout the state.

The following summary is presented in two different ways. Tables 1 and 2 provide an overall summary by species and for 9 geographic areas of southcentral and interior Alaska. In addition, there is a brief written summary for each species.

The tables contain both a number and a letter in each block. The number is a numerical index and the letter represents a broad category representing a range of index values. If you are comfortable with numbers, the index values provide a somewhat finer indication of abundance or trend than does the letter designation. Both indicators have limitations and are based on assumptions that may not be true. We need to do additional research to improve on the value of these indices.

The relative abundance numerical index presented in Table 1 is based upon work done on snowshoe hares in Alberta, Canada by Lloyd Keith and his student Christopher Brand. They compared the results of responses to a trapper questionnaire with estimates of snowshoe hare densities and found there was a good relationship between these two measures.

Based on this work, they developed an index for the responses received from trappers on the questionnaire. The index assigns numerical values to the responses of scarce, common or abundant that trappers mark on their questionnaires. The index ranges from 0 to 100%. Index values of 0 through 19% were interpreted as indicating hares were scarce, values from 20 through 50% as indicating hares at intermediate levels (=common), and values greater than 50% indicating hares were abundant.

We do not know if the same ranges of percentages are appropriate for Alaskan snowshoe hares, let alone other species. Testing such a relationship in Alaska remains to be done. However, the index provides a way to compare the trapper questionnaire results from different areas of the state.

The relative trend numerical index used in Table 2 to show if trappers felt animals were fewer, the same or more numerous than they were the previous year is slightly different than the relative abundance index.

The trend index was calculated by assigning a 1 if the box for fewer was checked, 2 if the box for same was checked and 3 if the box for more was checked. The responses from all trappers in a geographic area were then summed and this sum divided by the number of trappers who responded from the area (= the mean). Values can range from 1 through 3.

Since we don't have another independent measure of trend to compare with as was done in the Alberta snowshoe hare study for the relative abundance index, it is necessary to select arbitrary ranges of values to represent the average opinion of trappers in a geographic area as to whether they feel the number of animals have decreased, stayed the same or increased compared with the previous year. For purposes of this report, an index value of 1 through 1.66 represents fewer, values from 1.67 through 2.33 represent the same and values of 2.34 through 3 represent more.

Arctic Fox do not occur throughout most of the geographic range covered by this report. This species occurs on some islands in the Aleutian chain, a few islands off the Alaska Peninsula and from western Bristol Bay northward along the coast to the Canadian border. No trappers responding to the 1989-90 questionnaire covered by this report provided information on relative abundance or trend for this species.

Beaver were reported as abundant in 6 of the 9 geographic areas and as common in the remaining 3 areas (Table 1). Trappers in 8 of the 9 geographic areas felt beaver numbers remained the same as they were in 1988-89. Only one area, the Upper Tanana River basin (but also includes the Charlie and Forty Mile Rivers which drain directly into the Yukon River) seem to experience a noticeable increase in beaver numbers.

Coyotes were reported as abundant in 3 areas of southcentral Alaska, common in 3 interior areas and scarce in 2 areas, one in southcentral and one in the interior. Coyotes are not present on the islands of the Kodiak Archipelago. Compared with the previous year, coyotes were reported as more abundant in 1989-90 in 2 southcentral and one interior area. In the remaining 5 areas, their numbers were reported as about the same as they were the previous year.

Lynx were not reported as abundant in any geographic area. In 4 areas, 2 in southcentral and 2 in interior, trappers felt lynx were common. However, in 4 other areas trappers still considered lynx to be scarce. Lynx do not occur on the islands of the Kodiak Archipelago. In 5 areas, 2 in southcentral and 3 in interior, trappers reported lynx to be more abundant than in the previous season. In the remaining 3 areas where lynx occur, trappers reported numbers were about the same as the previous year. Based on an examination of our sealing records we know that lynx harvests indicate that lynx numbers do not peak during the same season in all geographic areas where they occur. The fluctuations in lynx populations are not synchronous.

Marten were reported as abundant in only 2 of the 9 geographic areas. Marten were considered common in 5 areas and scarce in 2 areas, both in southcentral Alaska. Interestingly, both areas are peninsulas, the Kenai Peninsula and the Alaska Peninsula. Some trappers in interior Alaska have reported observing a decline in marten populations when lynx became abundant. An analysis of fur dealer and fur export records for a few game management units in the interior, hint that harvests reflect this phenomenon. We need more data to determine if this happens in all areas where the two species occur. Information from trapper questionnaires could help in the evaluation of this possible relationship.

Mink were reported abundant on the Kenai Peninsula, common in 5 other areas and scarce in 3 areas (Table 1). Trappers in all 9 geographic areas generally agreed that mink numbers were about the same in 1989-90 as they were in the previous season.

Muskrats were reported abundant in only one area, the lower Susitna River basin area (includes rivers draining into Knik Arm). Six areas reported muskrats were common. Muskrats were reported scarce in 2 areas, the Alaska Peninsula and the lower Tanana River basin.

Red Fox were reported abundant in 7 of the 9 areas. Trappers in the lower Susitna River basin area judged red fox to be common and Kenai Peninsula trappers reported this species was scarce in their area. Five of the 7 areas where fox were abundant also saw an increase in numbers as trappers reported there were more in 1989-90 than in the previous season. There was no apparent increase in numbers in the other 2 areas where red fox were reported as abundant. There was no obvious change in numbers of fox in the area where they were scarce or the area where they were common.

Red Squirrels were reported abundant in 7 of the 9 areas and common in the two remaining areas. Trappers in all 9 areas reported no change in the numbers of red squirrels compared with their numbers in the previous seasons.

River Otter were reported abundant in 3 coastal southcentral areas, common in 2 other south central areas and 2 interior areas, and scarce in 2 interior areas (Table 1). Numbers of otters were reported the same as the previous season in all 9 areas.

Weasels were reported to be abundant in 3 southcentral areas and common in the remaining 6 areas. Trappers in all areas but one, the Kenai Peninsula area, reported the number of weasels remained about the same in 1989-90 as they were in 1988-89. On the Kenai, trappers felt there were more weasels than in the previous season.

Wolves were reported abundant only in the Copper River/Upper Susitna River basin (CUS) area. Trappers considered wolves common in 7 areas. No wolves occur in the Kodiak Archipelago. In addition to being abundant in the CUS area, trappers felt wolves were more numerous there in 1989-90 than in 1988-89. In all other areas trappers reported wolf numbers to be the same as in the previous season.

Wolverine were reported as common in only 4 of the 8 areas in which they occur. They are not present in the Kodiak Archipelago. Wolverine were reported scarce in 4 areas, one in southcentral - lower Susitna River basin - and 3 areas in the interior. In two of these areas, the lower Tanana River basin and the general interior area (includes Koyukuk R., middle Yukon and middle Tanana River), trappers felt wolverine were fewer in number in 1989-90 than in 1988-89. Since portions of these areas received more snow during the winter of 1990-91 than ever and many moose died, there should have been plenty of food available this winter for young wolverine born last year. It will be interesting to see if there is any increase in the numbers of this species in these areas next winter. Trappers in all other areas where wolverine occur reported their numbers remained the same in 1989-90 as they were in 1988-89.

**snowshoe Hares** were reported abundant in 6 of the 9 areas and common in the remaining 3 areas (Table 1). As an important prey species, especially for lynx, the abundance of this species should bode well for furbearers that prey on hares. In addition to being common or abundant in all areas, trappers reported there were more hares in 1989-90 than in 1988-89 in 7 areas (Table 2). For the remaining 2 areas, both southcentral coastal areas, the number of hares were the same in both seasons.

**Grouse** were reported common in all areas where they occur except the general interior area where trappers felt they were abundant. In all but one area, trappers considered the numbers the same in 1989-90 as they were in 1988-89. The exception was in the lower Tanana River basin where trappers reported fewer grouse than in the previous season.

**Ptarmigan** were reported abundant in 3 southcentral and one interior area (Table 1). Trappers in the remaining 5 areas considered this species to be common. Compared with the previous season, trappers in all areas except one, reported the numbers of ptarmigan were about the same as the previous season. In the Copper River and upper Susitna River basin trappers felt there were more ptarmigan in 1989-90.

**Mice/Rodents** were reported as being abundant in 7 of the 9 areas and common in the remaining 2 areas. Trappers reported the numbers of mice/rodents to be the same as in the previous season in all 9 areas.

To all of you who responded to the questionnaire, thanks for the information. If you didn't respond but receive a copy of this report, we sure would like to have you join the group of responding trappers even if you didn't trap this year but have trapped in the past or might in the future. If you have suggestions for improving the trapper questionnaire or this report, please contact your local area biologist or me and pass along your ideas.

The most recent auction indicated some improvement in fur prices for several species. I hope this indicates a better season in 1991-92. And speaking of 1992, the current schedule of the Board of Game indicates the Board will be taking up furbearer regulations at their spring Board meeting. Check with your local area biologist for more information about that meeting.

**Herb Melchior**  
Furbearer Coordinator

Table 1. Relative abundance of furbearers in nine areas of Alaska.

Region: Furbearers	SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA Areas					INTERIOR ALASKA Areas			
	AKP	KOI	KEP	LSB	CUS	UTB	LTB	UYB	GI
Beaver	86 A	44 C	54 A	53 A	46 C	57 A	64 A	60 A	48 C
Coyote	0 S	NP	73 A	76 A	56 A	25 C	21 C	0 S	37 C
Lynx	21 C	NP	44 C	14 S	15 S	15 S	23 C	41 C	19 S
Marten	0 S	40 C	9 S	24 C	44 C	67 A	41 C	68 A	39 C
Mink	50 C	0 S	54 A	48 C	13 S	44 C	46 C	23 C	17 S
Muskrat	13 S	50 C	50 C	67 A	40 C	25 C	15 S	27 C	25 C
Red Fox	75 A	80 A	6 S	48 C	63 A	88 A	63 A	53 A	69 A
Red Squirrel	38 C	50 C	83 A	68 A	54 A	72 A	74 A	77 A	55 A
River Otter	62 A	65 A	62 A	38 C	23 C	6 S	26 C	11 S	23 C
Weasel	43 C	71 A	73 A	64 A	47 C	44 C	40 C	46 C	50 C
Wolf	28 C	NP	42 C	22 C	56 A	30 C	39 C	42 C	24 C
Wolverine	42 C	NP	23 C	13 S	25 C	5 S	6 S	25 C	12 S
<b>PREY:</b>									
Hare	68 A	57 A	38 C	43 C	56 A	50 C	74 A	68 A	68 A
Grouse	50 C	NP	38 C	39 C	38 C	44 C	48 C	45 C	53 A
Ptarmigan	71 A	50 C	38 C	57 A	53 A	75 A	45 C	38 C	50 C
Mice/Rodents	41 C	93 A	50 C	67 A	63 A	69 A	53 A	65 A	60 A

**SYMBOLS:**

A = Abundant  
 C = Common  
 S = Scarce  
 NP = Not Present

**AREA DESIGNATIONS:  
 (Southcentral)**

AKP = Alaska Peninsula  
 KOI = Kodiak Archipelago  
 KEP = Kenai Peninsula  
 LSB = Lower Susitna Basin  
 CUS = Copper R. & Upper  
 Susitna Basin

**(Interior)**

UTB = Upper Tanana R. Basin,  
 Charlie and Fortymile R.  
 LTB = Lower Tanana R. Basin  
 UYB = Upper Yukon R. Basin  
 GI = General Interior, Includes  
 Koyukuk and Middle Yukon  
 R., Delta Junction Area

Note: See text for information on how to read and interpret the numbers in this table.

Table 2. Relative trend of furbearer populations in nine areas of Alaska.

Region: Furbearers	SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA Areas					INTERIOR ALASKA Areas			
	AKP	KOI	KEP	LSB	CUS	UTB	LTB	UYB	GI
Beaver	2.23 S	2.00 S	2.31 S	2.14 S	2.20 S	2.43 M	2.14 S	2.05 S	2.00 S
Covote	2.00 S	NP	2.18 S	2.50 M	2.39 M	2.50 M	2.07 S	2.00 S	1.85 S
Lynx	1.71 S	NP	2.75 M	2.21 S	2.57 M	2.85 M	2.46 M	2.13 S	2.47 M
Marten	2.33 S	2.25 S	1.71 S	1.95 S	1.67 S	1.87 S	1.74 S	1.96 S	1.93 S
Mink	1.70 S	2.00 S	2.17 S	1.96 S	1.79 S	2.00 S	1.96 S	1.84 S	2.05 S
Muskrat	2.00 S	1.67 S	2.43 M	2.30 S	2.38 M	1.67 S	1.68 S	1.65 F	1.88 S
Red Fox	1.71 S	2.50 M	1.67 S	2.08 S	2.45 M	2.77 M	2.39 M	2.25 S	2.57 M
Red Squirrel	2.33 S	2.00 S	2.00 S	1.89 S	2.14 S	2.13 S	2.13 S	2.07 S	2.05 S
River Otter	2.08 S	2.17 S	2.15 S	1.88 S	1.93 S	2.00 S	2.00 S	1.94 S	1.93 S
Weasel	2.13 S	2.20 S	2.38 M	1.96 S	2.08 S	2.00 S	1.92 S	1.95 S	1.71 S
Wolf	1.78 S	NP	1.70 S	1.90 S	2.37 M	1.89 S	2.23 S	2.09 S	1.86 S
Wolverine	2.14 S	NP	2.22 S	1.82 S	2.27 S	2.09 S	1.57 F	1.71 S	1.64 F
PREY:									
Hare	2.09 S	1.80 S	2.75 M	2.40 M	2.50 M	2.56 M	2.65 M	2.38 M	2.58 M
Grouse	1.88 S	NP	2.13 S	2.05 S	2.06 S	1.78 S	1.59 F	1.79 S	1.75 S
Ptarmigan	2.33 S	2.00 S	2.00 S	2.30 S	2.44 M	1.88 S	1.96 S	1.70 S	2.05 S
Mice/Rodents	1.50 S	2.00 S	1.89 S	1.89 S	2.07 S	2.22 S	1.85 S	2.00 S	2.00 S

**SYMBOLS:**

**AREA DESIGNATIONS:**  
(Southcentral)

(Interior)

M = More  
S = Same  
F = Fewer  
NP = Not Present

AKP = Alaska Peninsula  
KOI = Kodiak Archipelago  
KEP = Kenai Peninsula  
LSB = Lower Susitna Basin  
CUS = Copper R. & Upper  
Susitna Basin

UTB = Upper Tanana R. Basin,  
Charlie and Fortymile R.  
LTB = Lower Tanana R. Basin  
UYB = Upper Yukon R. Basin  
GI = General Interior, Includes  
Koyukuk and Middle Yukon R.,  
Delta Junction Area

Note: See text for information on how to read and interpret the numbers in this table.



## TRAPPERS COMMENTS

### INTERIOR AREAS

#### INTERIOR GENERAL

- Dangerous. Ice was pretty thin.
- Herb, your comments are a definite plus. Please make them a regular feature.

Not all trappers belong to ATA. If the articles in Alaska Trapper are ADF&G work, it would seem the rest of us should be able to get the information (in the form of monographs maybe, or a mailing list) without being forced to join a non-government association. Now it's as though ADF&G were working for ATA on State money. Perhaps ATA could pay for your work by printing the monographs and mailing them to non-member trappers. ADF&G work belongs to all of us. Because of price of lynx, no big sets made. Can't see taking fur that won't sell. I'm not a sport trapper. Price of marten: trapped, but with less enthusiasm.

[EDITORS NOTE #1: Regarding the comment about publishing furbearer information in the Alaska Trapper, the only cost to the state is my time to write the article. Publication and distribution is free to the state. Often the articles are summaries of published scientific reports on furbearer research. Such papers are available to anyone, but many trappers are unaware of their existence, which is why I summarize them in the column I write for the Alaska Trapper. I would be happy to provide the information to any other trapper publication that trappers read. This is just one way of getting information out. I've given talks at various trapper meetings around the state, and put together informational displays for the annual Hunting and Fishing Day open house. All furbearer survey and research work done by the state is written up and published (in limited quantities) as reports. Copies of these reports can be obtained from our headquarters office in Juneau. For a list of what is available write to Sid Morgan, Publications Technician, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, P.O. Box 3-2000, Juneau, Alaska 99802.]

- Too much snow and bad weather.
- Lots of snow early. Made for snaring K-9's easier, but snowshoeing harder. Coyote trapping season should close with the fox trapping season. Let hunting remain open until March 31st. Don't believe in registered traplines. We have enough regulations already. I intend to trap fox real heavy in 90-91 season because no one else is and there are a lot of them. I will sell them next summer to the tourist trade. ATA is a great outfit. Every Alaskan trapper should be required to be a part of it. If every trapper was a member, our voices would be heard.

All trappers should be members of NTA also. Trapping is being challenged, but together we can kick their butts.

Last, but not least, voting is our privilege, and as trappers, we should exercise that right. Every vote does count, and every trapper counts even more. Trappers, turn out at the polls. Make your voice count for something.

\* Did not trap due to fur prices and weather conditions, i.e. deep snow, etc.

\* The price of marten was too low to make much of a profit without HIGH marten populations. The black bear population in Unit 21, Nowita River Region, is very high and survival rate of newborn moose calves is only about 40% due to predation by bears (primarily black bears, which predominate). We need to knock back the bear (black) population before the moose population crashes. Several ways to enhance this would be to allow many bait stations without having to register them in both spring and fall, and to allow the sale of black bear hides and parts. The bears can be just as detrimental to moose populations as wolves are.

[EDITORS NOTE #2: It is currently illegal to buy, sell or barter any part of a black or brown/grizzly bear except that the "traditional barter" of game taken by subsistence hunting may occur unless it is shown that such barter is harmful to the resource. See Alaska Statutes 16.05.930(e) for exact wording of this exemption. Sale of bear parts has served as an incentive to poach bears leading to overharvest in many parts of the world as demand for the parts exceeded the supply. I believe the Board of Game considered this problem prior to adopting the no sale of parts regulation that we have currently.]

\* I did not put in much line as I did not get started until late in season, and did not put out but a few marten sets as the price was not there for anything else.

\* All furbearers seem pretty good as far as numbers. Rabbit and feed seem good as well.

\* I haven't trapped hard for two years now. There have been two main reasons for this. First, I got rid of my dog team and didn't have trapline transportation. Second, was that for the second year in a row we have had a lot of snow early so that the creeks were insulated from the cold and never froze up safe enough to travel on. My long line is up a creek canyon so there is no place to travel except right up the creek. I now have transportation, so I hope the creek freezes up OK this winter. The lynx are coming back!!

\* We had a lot of snow early, and I have some steep and long hills to go up. The snow came so fast and got so deep, the only lines I could get broke out were some on fairly level ground.

Also, snowmachine breakdowns slowed me up as far as breaking out my lines.

- \* Deep snow. Trail sets for large animals were inoperative most of the time. Few moose, no calves. Need wolf and bear control.

- \* Those of you who advocate outlawing airplane trapping should consider whether you would like trapping by snowshoes, dogteam, or snowmachines outlawed. I have used all of these methods and each has its advantages and disadvantages. When I trap by aircraft, I do it legally and farm the area. Illegal trapping by any method is a problem best left to enforcement personnel. We can all help by reporting any illegal activities we observe, regardless of our trapping method.

- \* Main problem on my line was military shooting in area and military stealing traps. Snow was deep but good. Hare are coming up, cats are coming up. Cat season should be longer.

- \* More snow and prices down. Very few marten in my area. I'm in the middle of a much longer trapline, so am restricted to about ten miles of line. I am a retired Episcopal priest living a subsistence lifestyle downriver from Fort Yukon. Trapping is only a minor part of my life and I give most of my furs away. As I tell people, I'm trying to get over my addiction to hunting, fishing, and trapping! I only got one marten last season and snapped traps early because of lack of sign. P.S. I'm a poor fox trapper. They're too smart for "preachers". Keep me on your list.

- \* Trapping conditions were good here with lower than normal snowfall although we had many stretches of cold weather that slowed animal movements. Lynx populations are building now with steady rabbit increase. With falling fur prices, I think we will see a drastic decrease in the "get rich quick" trappers that have plagued the trappers with established lines who rely on a year-to-year harvest. Fur numbers are healthy.

- \* Heavy snows kept traps covered. Drifting snow meant hard work breaking line open. One month of -40° temperatures or better kept fur from moving so I stayed home too. Heavy snow closed Taylor Highway for the first time in over 15 years.

- \* Went through the ice early in the season. No snow early, and then extreme cold in February.

- \* Until about 15 January everything was excellent. From then to the end of the season we were slowed by military maneuvers and deep snow. After 15 February we were slowed considerably by deep snow even though we use Alpine and longtracks. Lynx are definitely on the rise in our area. The wolves in area 20(A) south of the north Fort Greely boundary stayed in the high country most of the winter so they must have been eating caribou. The moose (especially calf survival) was on the rise. Almost

every cow we saw was with young. How well they survived the month of March/deep snow, is unknown.

• In the area I trap, we had more than average snowfall "deeper than \_\_\_\_\_" and it made it harder for the animals to get around in. Was really hard on the movie!! [EDITORS NOTE #3: What movie?]

• I did not trap in 89-90.

• Early snow allowed good early trapping. Light snows each week optimized all sets, especially wolf. After January, lots of snow which slowed down trapping. In general, a very good season, plenty of fur, and good marten prices on early sale in Vancouver.

\* Poor fur prices.

• Cold weather and heavy snow slowed down trapping for me. Thanks for printing my last year's comments. Same old thing this winter. Cannot think of anything to comment on. Maybe to get the "Feds" out of Alaska.

\* Cold weather effectively shortened season on marten and lynx by a couple of weeks to one month. Heavy snow and low to average fur prices also affected trapping. Because our area is fairly remote and because of harsh weather conditions, I believe that heavy trapping pressure is not a problem. Eventually would like to see trapping system modeled by Canada.

• Volcano ash prevented snowmachine use. Large military training also caused some problems.

• Trapping affected by price of fur for fox.

\* Deep snow put my traps out of commission several times. Wolves are overpopulating the area. They should be thinned out or we won't have any other game.

\* Deep snow and cold weather, then ice and deep snow affected trapping. Did not trap some areas on account of thin ice on lakes and creeks. Thank you for stopping the aerial wolf and wolverine hunting and shooting. Did not get a wolf or wolverine in snare or trap in four previous years. Thanks for the good airplane hunting.

\* Trapping effort was reduced, very deep snow. Overflow was undetectable under deep snow too often. Lynx, wolf, and wolverine season should be restricted. Airplane shooters (Same-Day-Airborne shooters) should be banned.

Close lynx season 20(D). There used to be a lot of cats. Averaged 3-4 a season. I saw a drop after we had a guy come in and trap nothing but cats (got 21 cats in 1983). That really did him in. Rabbits were at their low. I talked to one other

trapper and we agreed no cat trapping. There is a guy north of me, he's a real money-hungry guy, so he's probably trapping them. I saw 3 different cat tracks. Our rabbits are peaking, but that's not it. I think local trappers stopping to catch them did it. Wolves are totally gone. Did F&G aerial hunt 20(D) area? Grouse are way down. Hunters have done this, and weather. We had a very wet year in 1987-88. and chicks died like fleas. 1988-89 was a dry year and grasshoppers really turned them around, but hunters knocked them back. This 7-week cold snap killed some too. I found 5 just laying in the snow. They tried to burrow under to stay warm, but didn't work. Rabbits very high. Give half-price fishing and game hunting licenses to all who return these forms filled out.

#### UPPER YUKON RIVER BASIN

\* Snow was very deep January-March. We had a cold streak of -45° for seven weeks. Couldn't check traps. I still did good for my area. Fox population was up a little. Wolf none (unusual). Coyote down a little; they killed most of our fox.

\* We had lots of snow which made it hard to keep trails open and sets operating. Did not get out as many sets as I would have like to. Have done better with less effort the year before.

I am very concerned about the future of trapping. Without trappers, offices such as yours would be overrun with problems such as nuisance animals, rabid animals, and overpopulated, starving animals. I think the Fish & Game Department could be a big help to trappers by letting the public know this and know that harvesting is necessary to maintain a balance.

I also agree with the person who said we should be allowed to sell bear skins, or at least parts. It is totally ridiculous that we have to throw away a valuable thing such as bear gall when we are trying to live off subsistence and could easily sell this to buy things we need. [See Editors Note #2 about selling bear parts.]

\* Depth of snow slowed me down but did little to my trapping year as a whole. Cold weather in February reduced marten movement to almost a standstill.

The wolves in the area seem to travel great distances as they move through as a pack, cross my trails, and are gone for a month or two before they move through again. Rabbits are close to peak cycle again. The otters are very few, and seem to be very vulnerable to wolves if the wolves were so inclined to take them, as my dogs have run them down on overflow ice and killed them before. Every so often conditions are such that open water is very difficult to find, and if the wolves come across the otters during this time, they could very well kill a whole family group as the otters seem disinclined to climb trees. Nobody that I

know of goes after otter to any great extent, if at all, in this area.

\* All animals are plentiful. Mink little scarce, will be here next year. Rats are coming back. Lakes all full of water. Plenty of big game. Moose are plentiful. There are better than a thousand moose in country I cover (30-40-50 years ago, there weren't 10-15 moose in the same area). Lots of rabbits.

\* Trapping conditions were normal, but fur was scarce. Can't complain too much about the month-long cold spell. Maybe it'll discourage some of the weaker ones from continuing (man and beast) to live in the bush. I think the State should do more to educate the public about trapping, here and outside. The Anti's have hurt the image of fur and lost us trappers some money. I for one ain't rolling over so easy. I'll do my part.

[EDITORS NOTE #4: The State (meaning Governor, the Legislature, Alaska's Congressional delegation and the Department of Fish and Game) has been monitoring the anti-trapping movement and groups who are opposed to the use of furbearer resources at the local, national and international level. Letters have been written, legislative resolutions passed and sent to appropriate decision makers, and meetings held with the U.S. Trade people dealing with the proposed European Community ban on the importation of certain furs and fur products from countries that allow the use of leghold traps. In addition, the state legislature is considering Senate Bill 144 which would establish an Alaska Fur Resources Conservation Commission. As proposed in the bill the purposes of the commission include educating the public about the historical, ecological and socioeconomic importance of the use of furbearers and ensuring the perpetuation of the use of furbearers. For more information on this bill and its status, contact your nearest Legislative Information office or contact the state Senator who represents you.]

Regarding lost revenues, you should be aware that the main reason for the drop in fur prices is because there was overproduction of ranched fox and mink a couple of years ago that flooded the raw pelt market causing ranched pelt prices to plummet. This in turn caused wild fur prices to drop. Overproduction was accompanied by relatively warm winters in countries that are traditionally important markets for furs. According to fur industry figures, the number of garments sold did not decrease worldwide. However, anti-fur activities have affected markets in some areas and probably added to the problem created by the surplus of raw pelts and warm winters.]

\* Trapping affected by long, cold spells. Sometimes late snow makes hard traveling. Overall, the past season has been good. Had the fur market held, I would spend a vacation in Hawaii. Still in favor of earlier marten season. All animals still holding. In fact, there are more fur signs now than 10 years ago.

\* I noticed you did not ask for specific numbers of each species caught as in the past. Was there a reason? Is that information no longer needed, or did I mis-read the form? Or, do many trappers lie about their catches? [EDITORS NOTE #5: The column asking for numbers of animals caught by species was left off the form because many trappers (as much as 50% or more) did not fill in the numbers. The information would be useful if all or most trappers responded to that part of the questionnaire. I don't know if "many trappers lie about their catches." There is the possibility that some trappers with low catches might inflate their numbers while some with good catches fill in lower numbers because they are concerned about other trappers or the IRS or someone else finding out about their success. Since I have been involved with the trapper questionnaire process, the IRS has never asked me for information about trappers, nor have I had other trappers ask to see questionnaires. As you know, there is no place on the questionnaire for your name or address. This report summarizes the results by fairly large geographic areas, with no reference to individual traplines or areas. Even so, apparently many trappers felt uncomfortable about revealing the number of animals they caught. If the response rate to the questionnaire increases, we might consider putting the column back in the questionnaire.]

If the cost of living keeps going up and the price of fur keeps going down, we'll see more hobby trappers. What I mean to say is, it will cost more to get the fur than a person will be able to sell it for, so a job will have to support the trapping. It's getting difficult to make much of a living trapping, unless you cut corners and get by on very little and get a job. I suppose low fur prices will weed the men from the boys. Thanks for your work, keep it up.

\* I did not trap this winter because I thought it would bring back the marten. I will trap this coming winter (1990-91).

\* Weather conditions last winter were too cold.

\* Drop in fur prices= drop in incentive. Quit early this year. Weather was OK. When vole populations are good, marten are everywhere. Haven't seen a high in voles for 6-8 years. How come? I hear marten around Fairbanks have fleas. [In my area] with over 1,500 marten caught, I can only remember 2-3 marten with fleas. How come? [EDITORS NOTE #6: Vole populations usually, but not always, cycle from low numbers to high numbers and back to low over a 3-4 year period. Winter conditions, such as very cold temperatures and thin snow cover, can keep populations low. Voles with their small body size can't cope with real cold weather. When the snow is moderate to deep, the temperature beneath the snow, where the voles live, can be as much as 20-30 degrees warmer than the air temperature above the snow. With light snow cover, the temperature beneath the snow and above it is about the same. It takes a lot more energy to keep warm if the temperature is real cold.]

*I don't have an answer for your question about fleas at this time but will keep your question in mind as more research gets done on marten.]*

\* Trapping conditions were good except for the cold snap in January-February which slowed the fur catch. My catch is primarily marten, so did ok even though prices had dropped some.

\* The price of marten and lynx are low this year (1989-90) because of northern Europe. There are too many fur coats and that's why the fur price has dropped. Also, the weather has been cold this year. It's been -70° even month of February. It's been a good year with trapping, but trapping's pretty rough sometimes. You have to challenge the bad weather. Also, the blowing wind often covers your trail. I even lost traps on my marten trapline. The problem is I don't have trapline house, maybe that's why I have rough time. Still, I am planning to build a cabin on my trapline. I have a permit to build the trapline house.

\* I had 32 days without a break of 40-50 below zero. I could do little during this time and animals did not seem to be moving. Wind and drifting snow kept traps that were down below covered and out of use 60% of the time. I had lynx and wolverine walk on top of traps that were drifted in several times.

I favor registered traplines. It would give trappers more feeling of security from other trappers moving in and over-trapping areas. There should be open trapping season on black bears in the bush, for their numbers are too high, and they take hundreds of moose calves besides the damage they do to cabins, tent camps, and snowmachines. [EDITORS NOTE #7: The black bear is classified as a big game animal, not as a furbearer, so you can not take black bears on a trapping license or by traps or snares on a hunting license. However, with a hunting license there is no closed season and a bag limit of 3 bears throughout most of southcentral and interior Alaska (Game Management Units 7, 9, 11-13 and 15-26). For more information look at the hunting regulations (especially pages 8, 9, 22 and 23 in the 1990-91 regulations).]

\* Cold weather affected trapping.

\* Too much snow and wind.

\* Cold snap in January-February slowed me down some. Average winter with average snow and temperatures.

\* COLD COLD COLD COLD AND MORE COLD. Minus 45 to minus 55 for 42 days in a row. Almost went cabin crazy. Must open up aerial wolf hunting.

\* Overflow made November difficult but December was better. Trapping season should be open only during the time of fur



primeness for the respective animal, not open for sport hunting or food source purposes. These issues should be dealt with under hunting regs, not trapping. I am opposed to state or federal regulated trapline registration. If you can't travel back and forth to your trapline by airplane, then you shouldn't be allowed to travel back and forth to your village by airplane either, if that is where you trap from.

- Cold weather early; otherwise trapping was good. Prices lower, except marten. Many kit lynx! Grey jays are down a lot.
- Low price of fur. Trapping conditions were good.
- Fur prices were down this year, so it just wasn't worth it to go that far for the fur (plus higher prices for gas and grub).
- Deep snow came on too fast for us to break open all our lines. I am opposed to trapline registration. There would be too much bureaucratic regulation. Individuals must police their own area when an area is vacated, others will know in due time.
- Too much snow.
- Too much snow and lots of overflow.
- Prices were down on lynx and fox so I made little effort on these. The prolonged cold weather in January-February caused me to miss checking my line on a regular schedule.
- The long, cold spell in February affected trapping.

#### UPPER TANANA RIVER BASIN PLUS CHARLIE AND FORTYMILE RIVERS

- Very deep snow conditions.
- Deep, early snows, extreme cold in February, projected low pelt prices, concentration of Fortymile caribou affected my trapping. Only trapped November 1-January 31. Made only 4 lynx sets, and no trail sets for canids due to caribou. In spite of abundant marten prey (voles, squirrels, grouse, ptarmigan, and hares), marten abundance in the Tanana Hills was lower than in previous years. My neighbor to the north in lower elevation country, reported greater marten abundance. My early season marten take was lower per unit of effort and his was greater compared to previous years. I had more hares and lynx than he did.

Although wolves ran the line weekly, I could not set traps or snares because of abundance of caribou. Caribou even set off marten pole sets! Severe winter weather (snow, cold), low price quotes, and a shortage of marten persuaded me to close the line down a month earlier than normal.

\* Deep snow and a cold February with wind. I would raise nonresident trapping license fees to \$500. Most of the conflict is from nonresident trappers not knowing where other trappers are. Make them wait one year. Open fox hunting season from October 1 through March 31.

\* Too much snow, not enough time. I don't think registered traplines are a good thing.

\* The extra deep snow made driving a truck virtually impossible to get anywhere. As a result, we had to snowmachine 40 miles into our lines. The deep snow also made setting lines up high almost impossible.

\* Deep snow.

\* Too much snow and wind. Hard to get around, sets no good. Price of some fur was real low.

\* Conditions were poor last winter. Lots of snow and overflow. Cut into my mileage. I really went after marten.

About registered traplines. I believe if we could come up with reasonable guidelines, this would be a good idea. As it is now, it is impossible to "farm" a line because someone else will simply move in on you. The old days of respect for someone's trapline seems to have gone by the wayside.

Animal populations are stable. Lynx numbers are increasing, but very slowly. I am catching many more kittens now though. Marten seem to be steady, still catching at least 75% males. Fox are abundant! Prices are so low, it is not worth trapping them. Moose population has increased surprisingly! Ran into more this winter than in the last five years combined. Thanks for the questionnaire!

\* A lot of snow last year. Hard to keep sets uncovered. Also caught many rabbits in the ground sets. Prices too low. I'm against trapline registration and mandatory check laws. We don't need more regulations. If there is a problem area, then enforce the laws we have! I would like to see a spring beaver hunting season and black bear put into the fur category so parts could be sold. I hope lynx season is a little longer this year. The cats are really coming back, but the prices are way down, so it should ease the pressure.

\* Overflow really bad.

\* The low price of furs was why I didn't trap much this year.

#### LOWER TANANA RIVER BASIN PLUS YUKON RIVER IN GNMU 20F

\* This is my first year actually trapping this area, so I spent time cutting trail and etc. I have been in this area during

previous winters to prospect the fur. Perfect weather for trapping, lots of snow and not too cold for most of the time.

I feel the fur animals should be managed by what is best for each species and not by what is popular on T.V. or some influential, but wildlife-ignorant group. I also feel wildfires should not always be let burn. Some areas are just recovering from fires, then burn again. We should know what areas should burn, areas that are borderline, areas which should not burn, and then coordinate this information with other state/federal agencies.

[EDITORS NOTE #8: Fire management plans have been prepared for all areas of Alaska where burns are likely to occur. Areas are designated for full protection (immediate response at start of a fire), or designated as critical (protection of local sites where life or property may be in danger), or for a modified or limited response. The last category is basically the let burn areas but they are still monitored. These are pre-fire season designations that help fire managers decide where to put equipment and manpower initially. If all areas of the state were considered full protection areas, there would not be enough equipment and manpower in some years to deal with all the fires. For more information on this subject contact the Alaska Department of Natural Resources or the U. S. Bureau of Land Management.]

\* Deep snow was a problem after Christmas. Also some squirrely freeze-up conditions with overflow in odd places.

\* There was unusually heavy snow early, followed by minus 40-50° early in November. Lakes and bogs were treacherous throughout the early going. Then later there was unusually heavy snow which made it difficult to keep trails and traps open.

\* More snow than normal, but had little effect on my trapping.

\* Extreme cold in November, low price of fox and other commitments caused me to trap less this year than in the last 13 years. Foxes became very abundant at Minto this year, and there were many dark foxes. Too bad price is so low.

\* Little more snow. Saw wolf tracks twice, usually they only come by once.

\* Deep snow made travel difficult.

\* Overall conditions were good. The snow was deep, making it hard to keep trails in shape, but it insulated the lakes and streams against thick ice, making beaver trapping easy after digging down through it. The extreme cold spells slowed animal movement some and was hard on equipment and the operators.

More funding should be directed to furbearer study and management. This study and management should be done in

combination with biologists and trappers both in the field working together.

- Heavy snowfall.

- Price of fur reduced the number of sets. I turned loose all lynx caught except one that broke its leg. The increase of snow depth also caused the wolves to shift their travel patterns.

Do not register traplines. Keep information (names, addresses, location of traplines) confidential. In other words, keep this information out of animal rights hands. Trappers need to get serious about contacting their political representatives concerning trapping issues. We had better wake up and pull together or the anti's are going to get trapping outlawed nationwide. The fur market is in poor shape already due to the actions of the animal rights groups. If this continues, Alaska is going to see a drastic increase of rabies and other diseases due to overpopulation in the state. Trappers do a great service to the public in preventing overpopulation of furbearers. We cannot continue to let the federal government dictate to us on management of fish and game resources; namely in the refuges, preserves, and parks (now also on all federal lands). Sue them! Don't change the constitution!

- The early, deep snow was the reason I didn't do much last season.

- Fur prices were starting to drop on a lot of different animals. That had a tendency to make you trap less hard. Good conditions for trapping, early snow, good weather.

Tagging different kinds of animals is really a waste of your time and also a waste of mine. The info you get on your forms is never right, so if you record it and use it for a study, your study will be wrong. A lot of times it is hard to find the person who does the tagging in this village. If you wanted real good, accurate information about furbearers weight, size, length, area caught, sex, and other things, you should use the money saved by not tagging and hire a few good trappers from different areas. They could also give you information on habits, movements, and pretty much anything you want to know about most any kind of animal in their area. [EDITORS NOTE #9: Regarding tagging of animals, it is really only a waste of time if the person presenting the pelts for tagging lies about the information requested. Giving false information is a violation of the law (Alaska Statutes 11.56.210(a)). Saying "the info you get on your forms is never right" is a pretty strong statement. When you say that, you are saying, in effect, that everyone must be lying about when and where they took the animal and you're saying that those who take the measurements don't do that correctly either. Although I'm sure some mistakes are made in the process of tagging (sealing is the term we usually use for

this), I guess I have more faith in people and believe that most trappers are honest folks.

In Alaska, 5 species are sealed statewide (beaver, lynx, river otter, wolf and wolverine) and one species (marten) is sealed in southeast Alaska and on the Kenai Peninsula. In addition to getting some useful information when these animals are sealed, we are obligated to seal these species by law. Federal law requires that lynx, river otter and wolves are sealed (tagged) to meet the requirements of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna). If we didn't seal these species by putting CITES tags on the pelts, these pelts would not be permitted to leave the United States and enter the international fur market. If the pelts couldn't be marketed outside the U. S., the value of Alaskan pelts of these species would probably drop and Alaskan trappers would get less money for these species than trappers in other states or Canada. In fact, buyers might not want them at all if they weren't sealed because they would have less opportunity to sell them. Under state regulation (=law), we must seal beaver and wolverine. When demand is high, beaver can be overharvested (it has happened before) although right now they are generally abundant and prices are low. Wolverine are never really abundant so it's good management to keep track of the harvest. Some countries have considered listing wolverine under CITES. If this happens, they would be treated the same as lynx, otter, and wolf.

Although we have not hired trappers full time to work for us just because they are trappers, many of our wildlife biologists do have years of trapping experience. In addition, we have a number of trappers who cooperate with us by providing information and/or carcasses. In some years we buy carcasses from trappers so we can examine them for reproductive condition and general health. If you are interested in cooperating with the Department on furbearer studies, talk it over with your local area biologist.]

- Deep snow, most difficult to keep sets operating. Depressed prices on furs.

- Heavy snows limited travel. Marten population in my area appears low, but did not get out early.

- Snow depth slowed me down some in March. Late start each fall (November 25) while waiting for the river to freeze. The state spends thousands of dollars to promote the tourism industry. It should do the same to promote the trapping industry. Like advertise the renewable resource aspect, glamorize fur and show it as practical, an alternative to the petroleum-based fake fur. Show how fur \$'s circulate and help the economy. Helps the balance of trade, helps the furbearer too, i.e. more of some kinds of furbearers because of trapping practices. [See Editors Note #4 relating to bill before the state legislature.]

- Deep snow and poor prices on fox.

• Little hard to keep sets working because of snow. Wolf patterns upset because of airplanes. The season for lynx should be later and some longer. My father trapped this area and towards town (Fairbanks) since the early 20's. When an animal population is low it is trapped by other trappers instead of left to increase.

• Deep snow and cold weather were more of a nuisance than a problem. Snowmachine is getting up there in age and mileage. When a trapper encounters a disabled condition a few days before the closure of a season, he should not be preyed upon and treated with disrespect to their livelihood. I have three children to feed and clothe. The traps I have were bought with sweat and tears, so I did not appreciate getting traps stole and destroyed by Forestry workers without even notifying me.

• I used to live and trap in the bush. Since moving to Fairbanks, I've turned into a weekend trapper. My line is small. My traps are few. My sets are humane. Last year's trapping conditions were as expected. I walked lots of miles, fought the icy cold, and caught a little fur. I enjoyed it immensely!

• I like trapping. I like being out in the countryside and being free to wander. But more important than actually getting their hides, is the need to maintain healthy populations of all wild critters. I'll do what is necessary as a trapper to insure that wild animals prosper; for without them I am less!

• Trapping conditions were fine, but I burned a tent camp down and had to nurse burnt wrists and snare rabbits for food along with marten and fox. A flood wiped out our dry grub during the summer, possibly because of fast run-off from last summer's burn upstream.

Also, I don't think we are giving the beaver enough credit for his place in the scheme of things. Not only as a water works engineer and trail cutter, but as a source of food for wolves

Over trapping by hard-headed, greedy, wicked city trappers who need to have their tailfeathers clipped is a problem. They are wiping out the fur resources. There is a lot of disturbance on the hills to the north and south of me by snowmachiner, city trappers chainsawing their way in. So I try to provide a peaceful, park-like atmosphere for the animals, myself, and whoever finds their way in by canoe or on foot.

These are my objective views. I'm out of it. They squeezed me out. It's the law of the jungle. The mongrel dogs took over. The problem of the wicked city trapper has become critical. It affects everyone who might someday want to see a wild animal alive and moving. Or a track in the snow. These guys shoot moose and leave them in the snow for bait. Wolves are getting the blame. Wise up! You've been radio-collaring the wrong critters. Ole Bushy.

\* Snow conditions were deep, but good. I had to take a 30-day break down to the Lower 48 and this caused me to close up and then reopen my line. My first year on a snowmachine. This helped a lot. As a military member, I have enjoyed my trapping in Alaska. ATA has greatly enhanced my abilities as a trapper. The one thing that does bother me is the military cops' free hand at harassing the military trapper. Not only do we have to abide by Alaska laws, but then we have to deal with whomever is at Ft. Wainwright at the time. Things like running our lines and pulling traps to check for I.D. marks. During trapping and hunting seasons we have a lot of harassment.

• Deep snowfall before Christmas affected me adversely the most. Couldn't break and/or keep trails open. Sets buried, traps lost. Poor freezing early on stopped me from getting out as early as most seasons. Money for new snowmachine held up plans to open trails for dogs. Price of lynx went down, affecting me greatly as I'd "geared up" by ordering snares, traps, and lure. Marten prices good, but for only a very short time, making me nervous.

• Deep snow. Harder getting around-buried the sets. I've been against registered traplines in the past, but new people traveling around are posing a threat to my trapline. The people I've trapped with on either end of my line for the past 10 years, and I, have had an understanding among ourselves. I'm easygoing and don't want any trouble. That's why I'm out there, to be left alone.

• Lot's of snow and wind. Had to open trail with snowshoes several times. River froze later than normal. Both of these factors slowed me down this year. Had a pretty good season this year, although I had some problems with recreational snowmachiners and several other greedy trappers trying to move in on me. The weather made things a little tough too, but hey, that's trapping. Keep up the good work guys.

• Wind and too much snow. Too hard-packed, couldn't break out trail. I also think that moose season should be later so that there is colder weather. Or have a permit hunt for locals. It's too warm in September to keep meat.

• Although I did not trap, I did spend time this winter in the trapline area. I did note that fox were more abundant. This spring there seemed to be very high numbers of rabbits.

• I took the year off. I did look around a little. Wolf populations seem to be high in all areas.

• Excellent early season, but very cold weather limited late season.

• We had a lot more snow than usual, plus enough cold weather to slow us down a lot. In February we had a lot of snow, 8-12" of

fresh snow, 3 of the 4 times we ran the line. The only equipment failure we had was a burned-out dog team by March.

On our trapline we have found that leaving a good-quality marten area fallow for 2 years will increase the number of older marten as well as increasing the population. I believe the older females produce larger litters, too. While a high proportion of young could indicate a population jump, on our line it's more likely to mean we have been catching marten so steadily that few of them have a chance to mature. This does not jive with your editor's note #11 in the 1989 survey. [EDITORS NOTE #10: Last year's note #11 referred to closing up a line when more females than males are being taken and when more adults than young are taken. These suggestions were intended as guidelines and came from research on marten done in Canada. They might not be appropriate guidelines to follow on all traplines. For example, if you don't have anyone trapping near you, you might be able to violate those guidelines. If there is good marten habitat surrounding your line that is not being trapped, there might be enough marten being produced in the untrapped area to resupply your line. If traplines are pretty close to one another and there is no untrapped "buffer" zone, then following the guidelines might be a good idea.]

Beaver are declining due to natural causes here, especially where they have not been trapped. We got 2 wolverine after going 5 years without, and also got the first lynx for 4 years. The lynx are coming back, but not very fast, and I would like to see the shortened season continue for one or two more years. Caribou are common now. If we were required to check out our trap more often than once a week, we could not trap the full line and would no longer be able to make a living at it. A 7-10 day requirement would not be unreasonable, and more often in areas where warm weather might cause spoiling. Usually we see damaged fur only on lines that go 8-10 days.

## **SOUTH CENTRAL AREAS**

### **COPPER RIVER AND UPPER SUSITNA RIVER BASINS**

\* Didn't trap this season, fur prices too low!

\* Lots of snow in Unit 6(D) (Valdez area). Uncovered and pulled most traps by January, but left a couple protected otter sets that produced for me. Compared to other winters, I would have to say Unit 13(D) was an average year trapping. Snow conditions average. I covered lots of area trapping and just looking (13(D), Tonsina, Ernestine, Tielke Area). I have not seen one winter kill moose as compared to other parts of the state. I would say the moose fared rather good in the part of Unit 13(D) I observed. How come you did not ask for our fur catch count this year? [See Editors Note #5] This was the first year I caught 4



wolves, had a double on 2 grays about 40 yards apart. I really think it's time for all trappers and hunters to pull together and join some kind of association to help fight the anti-movement. It's getting very serious out there folks. These animal rights people are real and they are making headway, so if we want to keep our guns and traps, we had better join hands to fight the movement. We need to give financially to our associations such as NTA, NRA, and any local associations.

My 13-year-old son and I enjoyed a very successful April Beaver trapping season this year in Unit 13(D). We had all traps pulled by April 28. We are still observing lots of beaver, but very low prices. I enjoy the trapper questionnaire. You biologists keep up the good work. Seeing just a little bit more cat sign in the area I trap in Unit 13(D). P.S. I believe the anti-fur movement has accounted for low fur prices. [See Editors Note #4]

\* Price of fur was terrible.

\* Went out on my line for a few times this winter just to let people know I was still around. Saw quite a few lynx tracks for the amount of time out there. Did not trap this year because I didn't think I could without catching a few lynx. Don't plan on going after lynx next year, but will trap for marten, wolverine, coyote, and wolf, so probably will catch a few lynx too.

• I haven't trapped much the past two seasons because of involvement in pro-life activities. I've put out enough traps to maintain a presence on my lines. Weather and price of fur haven't really affected my efforts.

• Deep snow was only a minor problem for marten. It did hinder finding beaver houses in spring. Deep snow slowed me from trapping fox, but with very low prices, I would not have made much more effort. I mostly did spot trapping for marten with an airplane, so length of trapping line would not be comparable. I landed at about 7 places, each snowshoe trail there was about 1/4 mile with about 12 traps per stop, and about 8 marten average per landing site. The great amount of marten sign impressed me.

It is generally believed wolf numbers in Unit 13 are very high, but I saw little sign in my areas (I don't necessarily disagree, however). Trapped with dog team and snowmachine in late February. Saw a great amount of fox sign. Pelts in excellent condition.

\* Trapping conditions were fine, although a lot of cannibalism among marten. Also problems with foxes eating marten caught in traps. One trip, 7 out of 9 were eaten by fox or other marten. Due to weather, I had been unable to check line for 2 weeks.

I did a lot of flying in Unit 13. Trapping was hobby this year. Observations: Fox population skyrocketed from last year. No incentive to trap them (price). Marten population very healthy.

Lynx population rebounding finally. Wolf population noticeably higher than last year. Wolverine pretty scarce. Coyotes, plenty on lower rivers. Lots of otter, maybe more than last year.

- Snow was a lot deeper this year. It was harder to get to my sets. Also, marten were very scarce on my line this year. I did see a lot more wolf sign on my line than previous years.

- Fur prices low; prompted me to wait until next year to build up the critters. Overflow on lakes. Concerned for safety, too dangerous.

- \* Deep snow, more wind than usual. Don't know what caused the decline in marten. On [one line], only 10 marten. Usually 15-20. I hope I'm not over-trapping this line. Will not trap this line 1990-91, and see what happens. Saw one lynx and foot tracks of 4 more during the winter. Not much, but very encouraging compared to what lynx sign I've see the last few years. I got 3 nice wolves in 13(D), 2 males (grey) and 1 female (black). Turned the legs in to ADF&G in Palmer.

- Prices were down, animal numbers are down, and air poaching is increasing. I thought I would give the area a chance to build up, but guess it will never, as long as there is no enforcement to keep the air poaching down. Last winter I saw signs of numerous wolf poaching down in the Lake Louise area. I know who is doing it, or at least most of it. I wish you guys could and would get out there and stop this illegal practice going on. I'm sure you guys know, but don't take any action to stop it.

- Conditions were bad. Great amounts of snow. Thanks for your interest.

- Reduced trapping due to low fur prices.

- \* Conditions in November-December were fair to good as far as weather and abundance of furbearers. Heavy snow along with low fur prices in January and February really brought a halt to an otherwise productive season. Wolf trapping was very good all winter. NOTE: You might consider putting limits on furbearers that are subject to easy overharvesting, i.e., lynx, marten, land-and-shoot wolves, etc.; especially when the prices for these furs are high. I know that bag limits are easy to get around, but by taking that into account and setting the limit according to abundance in the different GMU's, I would think that drastic measures such as closures could be greatly reduced.

- \* Low fur prices and very heavy snow limited my trapping to wolves, marten, and beaver, with a few fox (40-50) taken for our fur sewing business.

- Sorry I can't help you this year, but my wife had a major operation in October and I was unable to go on the line last

year. She is walking good again, and we are looking forward to 1990-91.

- Prices for fur were very low so I didn't trap much. There are too many wolves in Unit 13. They're killing an awful lot of moose this year. You ought to open the airplane hunt.
- Due to low prices on fur and coyote, and very low number of marten, I trapped very little last season. Lynx populations are increasing dramatically.
- Had a good early freeze-up and enough snow at first of season to get around good. It was a good year. Now that the rabbits are getting abundant, the fur sign looked better last season, especially coyote. I believe the coming season will be very good trapping, even with the low fur prices. It is fun to trap when you make good catches.
- I did not set as many traps last season as the price of fur was so low.
- Snow conditions very good November-January. Six-eight inches snow at the start of the season and no more than a 4-inch dump in any one storm until the end of February, when 2 1/2 feet of snow fell in about a week and a half. This end-of-February storm neutralized all my wolf sets, and I am sure I would have caught another 1 or 2 but for the storm. All in all, we had a normal season. Prices were ok; the money return on the marten was worth the work output. And of course, wolf and wolverine bring a good price for the longer-furred animals.
- Repeated snows. Kept snowing in the sets and made it difficult to cover as much country with the dogteam. The fur population of fox, coyote, and marten seemed stable. A noticeable increase in wolves and lynx. Rabbits (hares) very abundant. Wolverine about the same.
- The weather was good, but the price of fur was down and I concentrated on wolves and wolverine. The snow was too deep in the Lost Lake area, so I pulled that trapline early.

#### **ALASKA PENINSULA**

- I suppose I would of covered a lot more area if I would of had a dependable snowmachine. Still looking forward to getting out again next year, hopefully with dependable equipment. What can I say, I had a lot of fun and enjoyed myself as always. For the first year I didn't go "swimming". I think I had one heck of a season.
- Last year we traveled more on 4-wheeler because there wasn't any snow, and made more sets. Also got more furs. This year we

didn't get much fur because of snow (4-5 feet deep right out on the flats). We also traveled with dogs. I think it would be nice if beaver season opened the same time as other animals, or later. We sure would like to have airplane hunters quit. They sure make too many problems hurting animals after they shot them and can't get their furs after they're dead. They would just leave them without picking them up. It would be nice if the season was open longer. This way a person would have more time to get what they want. The prices sure are getting worse every year.

\* Conditions were good; a little more snow than normal, but no worries. Did not affect trapping.

\* Trapped through snow and wind conditions. Makes for humorous times.

\* Animal rights movement, declined fur prices affected trapping. In my opinion, this movement shouldn't affect the fur prices because we depend on trapping due to lack of jobs. Trapping brings in money in one's pockets to pay for food, bills, etc. Also, in my opinion, airplanes should not be used for obtaining furbearing animals such as moose, caribou, and bear for spotting, because this isn't called hunting. Beaver trapping should be open in January because from January-March, they are still prime. Shouldn't change the regulations for beaver for Unit 9(B).

\* First off there was too much water. Then the snow came and there was too much of it. I did not go back to my cabin after Thanksgiving! Made only a few mink sets, none for otter, as I didn't see any signs of them because of the water being so high.

\* The weather was a big factor; for the early part of the season I used a 3-wheeler. Then we got an extreme warming and the overflow got so bad I pulled all my sets. About a week later it froze solid again and we got way more snow than usual, so in order to continue trapping, a snowmobile was a more sensible means of transportation. I did not encounter anything unusual on my line other than in one beaver set, I got a river otter in my snares. Also, I was on my way to check my sets one morning, and as I started crossing one lake as usual, I noticed something dark on the other end. I usually saw caribou lying down out there so I didn't pay much attention until I got closer and saw an animal start running away. It was a coyote which had just made a caribou kill and was starting to devour it. Well, needless to say, the coyote ran off and I went about checking my line. I decided to return to the carcass to set for the coyote. But to my surprise, when I returned there were 11 eagles and I don't know how many ravens at the kill site, and there was absolutely nothing left of the kill but some bloodstained snow. The time lapse was approximately 2 hours

\* There was a lot of snow this year. The snow stayed here rather than blowing or melting away, which made it a lot easier on a snow machine and more accessible to more areas.

\* Snow depth was very high but seemed to help in some cases.

\* The worst conditions are land-and-shoot airplane trapping, which is keeping wolves and wolverine far back and scarce. The land-and-shoot airplane trapping is much abused. If the main culprits had their planes confiscated, it might help. Everyone knows who they are, including the Protection officers. These guys take anything they can, anywhere they want, from walrus to fox, and they should be stopped.

\* Generally good conditions. Had some freeze-thaw, but it mostly stayed cold and snowy making things easier.

\* Conditions were bad. I wasn't able to trap because of snow depth. I need a snowmachine and I'm not quite sure that would even work.

\* November and December were good. The heavy snows for the rest of the winter were very difficult. The rabies carry-over caused big drop in fox. Otter holes were close every day. I was planning on trying for beaver, but too much snow. Beaver are very abundant and no one from my village is trapping beaver. I would like to see Fish and Game consider a spring season, maybe to April 30th. King Salmon River has especially high beaver population. No beaver have been trapped there for years. Even with the weather, it was well worth the work to take part in harvesting this resource.

The heavy rains in the fall and the heavy snow seemed to keep the mice down. All the mice I saw were juveniles. Lots of shrews. I am sure the fox population will bounce right back up. This spring I saw mated pairs filling in the areas that were scarce during winter. Fox seemed to mate later this year, as late as March 30th. I feel the Department of Fish & Game is doing an excellent job. I would be glad to help in any way I can. P.S.: I wish natives would have been allowed to handle sea otters commercially.

\* Too cold, too much snow during beaver season. Snow melts and too much water on swamps; creeks flood.

\* Good snow conditions in November, February-March. No snow December-January.

• Too much snow. Couldn't get to, or travel on, trails. Also, 3-wheeler not in working order half of winter.

\* Much snow, changed mode of travel. Aerial killing affects wolf and wolverine harvest.

**KODIAK ARCHIPELAGO**

- More snow and less rain that stayed on through most of the trapping season along with lasting freezing temperatures, greatly improved trapping conditions and taking of fur over past seasons.
- \* I think a quota of 30 beavers on Kodiak is absurd. They're a nuisance on Kodiak, and get very little trapping effort in most areas.
- \* I only had a month and a few traps. It was only part time. I didn't have a lot of prep time. Fox were really shy. Trapped before. First time I trapped marten only. Got one. Also, the first time I trapped this area.
- \* Lots of deep snow. Hard to get around. Bears stayed out the whole time I was there, November-January. Had to pull lines in. Bear's get on a line and take all my bait and destroy sets. I take ferry from Seward to Kodiak, and fly from Kodiak to Afognak. I use my 3-wheeler and walk my lines.
- \* I failed to receive shipment of a new snowmachine on my line and was not able to trap but a few sets.
- \* We didn't trap this winter after all, but all populations were observed to be about the same.
- I have a full time job in Anchorage, and only trap in conjunction with my annual deer hunting trip to Kodiak, November 10-17. I trap mainly for enjoyment and to help defray my hunting trip expenses.
- \* Conditions good, no reduction in effort. More red fox this year. Fox are being sighted in the daytime, moving about more than before. Land otter about the same.
- \* Trapping was good but had to work at the camp a lot, plus did much deer hunting, so I only trapped a few days for beaver and otter.
- \* Normal season. Set few traps for fun and enjoyment.
- \* The conditions for December-January (the time I trapped) were excellent. About 1 inch of snow every 4 days, which usually melted up to 300 foot elevation. The freezing at night, coupled with light rains made pan trapping extremely hard. Snares proved close to as effective for fox. I noticed that the fox had quite a few bite marks on their butts, which tends to make me believe the population was quite high. In the immediate area I trapped, I probably removed 80% of the fox, 90% of the beaver, and 50% of the otters. There were 4 beaver areas, 3 with 1 house. 1 with 2 houses. The adults were right at 50 lbs, approximately 3 2-year-olds at each house, (25 lbs). The otters ranged to 71" (stretched). My catch consisted of 70% adult males, 20% females,

and 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  young (2 of them). I caught 31 red fox, 43 cross, and 9 silver fox. The largest one was a red stretched at 64" and weighed 22 lbs. Biggest fox I've ever caught. Most all the animals were extremely fat and healthy. I also had one fox eaten by a bear.

- Deep snow, price of fur affected trapping. High deer kill number good for fox at worst of winter. Beaver over abundant.
- The snow seemed to cause more movement by fox and marten than "normal", which helped trapping.

#### LOWER SUSITNA RIVER BASIN

- Fresh snow nearly daily. Snow got deep drifts in open areas. Not enough lynx numbers in 13(D) to warrant open season. I saw more lynx activity this winter than in the last 8 years. I saw 1 large lynx track, plus a tabby with 2 kitten tracks and also saw 1 lynx (total of 5). Rabbits not returning like I had hoped or expected. Healthy wolf population in 13(D). I have mixed emotions on the registered trapline. We don't need any more state controls, but how can a trapper use conservation measures when you're overrun by weekenders and others that just move in without regard for someone that has been trapping an area.

- Snow depth was biggest problem, packing down trails to get to sets. I feel that closing wolverine in my area (14(A), Knick River), or shortening the season would have no effect on the population. Recreational activities are keeping these animals away. I would like to see some research done on wolverine habitat. Due to the amount of lynx sightings and tracks in the snow, I think they are becoming more abundant. In the Mat Su trappers comments of 1988-89, I agree with the paragraph marked. I don't agree with a registered trapline. To me it's like selling peoples' rights to trap other areas (like limited entry fishing). On page 3, I agree with the theory that controlled burns and clearcuts are necessary to the increase of species. I am not against recreational use on the river. I feel everyone should have a place to relax.

- The snow depth was far more extreme. Prices for fur were slightly lower. Too much snow made my equipment use harder. With the large amount of snow, will have saved a lot of seed for next year. Trap thieves were a problem. I think beaver numbers remained stable in 14(A) and 14(B) with longer seasons, but after the heavy snows of last year, will make for more beaver. I have reduced my beaver lines to let them come back for the last 2 years. It is nice to be able to trap beaver at the start of the season, but do not object to a shorter season.

- Too much snow. Marten are very scarce again. I caught only 12 on 45 miles of prime marten habitat. I saw no wolf, wolverine, or lynx tracks last winter. I have never seen a lynx track in the 7 winters I've trapped the upper Mat Su valley.

Wolf and wolverine were around a few years back, but none the last winters. I trap up pretty high also. Lots of otter and beaver. Registered traplines? No way! Better wildlife management and no airplane hunting.

- Lot more snow than usual, had to cut season short. Also more weekend trappers than usual. Not enough lynx and wolverine in many areas to know wether or not they are on the rise or fall.

- I haven't seen a lynx track on my trapline since 1970! Close season for a couple of years. I believe that I was instrumental in extending the season on beaver (Mt. Yenlo Fish & Game Board). Prior to the extension, the trappers across the Susitna River (Unit 16) would pick up their 40 beaver (November) and then trap another 40 in 14(B) in February. When I started trapping in February, the beaver usually were selling at a low price. Registered lines sound good, however. A friend of mine in Ontario, Canada has trapped for years on his registered trapline. The game officials tell him how much and what kind of game he can trap. If he didn't catch his "quota", he would trap on someone else's line and vice versa. That was quite a few years ago. Having heck of a time with weekend trappers and snowmachines. Don't know what to do.

- Conditions were bad. I could not get to some of my higher areas. Traps were hard to find. I had to carry a stove poker to hook my traps this year. Once, my traps were three feet down under the snow. These traps were on drags.

Keep it closed until the lynx make a comeback. The rabbits are just starting to make a comeback. We have seen 2 lynx tracks in 12 years. They came off one side of the creek and back up the other. There has not been a resident lynx on my line since back in the 70's. I don't think you should let people land-and-shoot wolverine. They follow their tracks for miles, then land and shoot. As long as this is allowed, there will never be a good population of wolverine. When I marked hares as scarce, I meant it. We had none and it is up to about 4 now. I haven't seen a grouse in 10 years on my line.

- Deep snow. Had to dig sets out every other day. Didn't trap marten because of snow conditions and steep hills, etc. Snowmachine couldn't make it! Also, price of rats was too low; just trapped for bait and fox food. Snow was too deep for beaver trapping. Lots of otter sign. Trapped 8 otters and there was still otter using the area (2 set locations). Mink trapping was good in the valley. Had only 6 sets and caught 23 mink. Very few trapping this year because of snow and low fur prices. Had 3 otter traps stolen in the Nancy Lake area by a trapper. Talked with other trappers that did good trapping marten in Unit 14(A) at start of season. Lynx tracks were evident throughout Unit 14(A). Rabbits are not increasing in numbers. Had a good time! saw lots of fur sign, etc.



- Did not trap. A lot of snow, gave area a rest.
- Very deep snow. Low prices. Scarcity of some animals. In the 60's, Sunshine Creek was alive with mink. In 4 weeks this past December and January, did not see a single mink track. Creeks in Unit's 13 and 16 along the Parks Hwy. had less mink than in the past.
- Snow too deep. Quit trapping in December. Thanks to the army and Fish and Game for help feeding hay and breaking and packing trails for the moose in Unit's 14(B). Keep it up next year, but start in December. A packed trail between Kashwitna and Little Willow from the mountains to the Big Su River with timothy hay put along it about every mile or so.
- Conditions good.
- Too much snow.
- Extra heavy snow last winter made trapping difficult. Spent lots of time breaking trail and re-making sets that got buried. When the snow got deep, the mink stayed under the snow and were hard to catch. Lynx in my area are quite scarce. I think the season should be closed. I only saw 2 tracks all winter. I haven't seen a wolverine track in my area for 10 years. I think there's just too many people here and too many snowmachiners riding around on weekends. Closing the season might help, but I doubt it. I call it habitat destruction. As far as marten are concerned, I think the season should be shortened. When the price of marten was high, there were too many taken. Many weekend trappers and young trappers don't know when to quit.
- I read through the trappers comments and I'm glad to see that many like the "registered line" rather than continuing the way it is. What got me was the attitude of "Lets close or shorten the season because of lack of fur due to overharvest." Do these people want to trap or not? This "Get it while you can or someone else will," is the greatest cause of fur population decreases today in many areas. We can't control the ups and downs in Mother Nature. However, if there is one person in a given area, he can get along with Mother a whole lot better. How does anyone think that outright closure or sharp reduction for a period enhances the game population for more than just a short period. The numbers of animals come up, the season is lengthened or reopened, an uncontrolled rush of people into the fur-rich area. Result: fur is gone again, closure, and on and on. The animals take it on the nose and the trapper starves.
- Snow too much. Volcanic ash on line. Too many moose on line so could not set snares. Lynx season should be closed for at least 2 more years. One month on marten in Unit's 14 and 16. Open beaver on February 1 and close May 30 in Unit 14. To get more beaver taken, we need open water on rivers.

\* Prices for fox and coyote were way down, so I discontinued trapping for them by mid-December. From mid-January on, we had one snow storm after another, so I quit trapping until April when I took a few beaver. I would like to see the marten/wolverine season shortened or closed, although once it is reopened, we'd be right back where we are now, as long as these furs are getting good prices. The beaver in Unit 14(B) haven't shown much increase since the floods in October 1986. That high water washed out feed caches and dams, and they never had time to rebuild before winter. I haven't seen a lynx track in this area since March of 1984.

\* This year the soft snow kept us from crossing the Susitna River until it was too late to set a marten line. The marten season should start later and last longer in Unit 16. In Unit 14 (where I was) I was only able to set traps for fox and coyote. It was a difficult year for getting around, and I ended up with other obligations when I usually would trap beaver. Bad year all around...ask the moose. In Unit 16, the marten season should start later and last longer. Access to this unit (unless you fly or live there full-time) occurs after January 1st. I truly believe that the apparent scarcity of marten is due to the large number of voles, and because of this, the marten have not moved about as much as before. There is little trapping in my area, so that affects the population hardly at all.

\* Deep snow, thefts, first job and a breakdown all made this past season short for me. I saw one set of lynx track last season. Not good. But I do not feel the season should be closed. By closure of this season, you lose a realistic count of cats. Due to accidental catches, there should be a bag limit not to exceed a set number of incidental catches. Concerning animal numbers, although beaver and coyote were common last season, in my 15 years of trapping I have seen much higher density. My catch was slow and low. I will be looking for a new area for next season. I also feel that land-and-shooting of furbearers should be stopped. This is not trapping. It is hunting and should be treated as such. In order to take fur under a trapping license, one should be required to use traps or snares, not bullets. [EDITORS NOTE # 11: You're wish came true. Land and shoot take of wolves is a hunting, not trapping activity. Also, you may not hunt arctic or red fox the same day you are airborne. The Board of Game changed the regulations.]

\* The snow was heavy and deep, and I didn't trap much. I don't trap for the money. I trap because I enjoy getting out and doing things in the winter.

\* Wasn't able to fly as often as I liked because of weather. Snow extremely deep and animals weren't moving. Saw lot's of starved coyotes. I spend a lot of time on the ground. I've never seen a lynx, only a few tracks over the years. I believe that every resident Alaskan, regardless what their transportation is, has the right to trap anywhere the seasons allow, whether

it's 5 feet or 5 miles from any other trapper! Claiming a trapline or area is Bull! Just because that 60" bullmoose is in my sights, doesn't mean it's mine until I tag it.

• Had a good season for beaver this year. I caught a dog trapping fox, this had me stop for fox because I felt badly and didn't want to catch more. I trap for fun, but better fur prices would be nice. Muskrat and beaver are about all I trap. I have little experience with the animals that are more difficult to catch. I will be happy with whatever you do with the season as long as there is one.

\* Little time due to job. Price has some effect, snow depth was also a problem. Our greatest problem was due to unknown people destroying our sets and stealing equipment. This was not being done by other trappers. I do not want to see registered traplines. The state has given away enough exclusive rights to Alaskan wildlife. Prime examples are the commercial fishing industry and the way the state guiding system is run. Why should another system be established to allow the sale of wildlife.

• Snow conditions were good in the Chugach for trapping of wolverine, but I didn't trap marten in Unit 16(A) this year because of heavy snows which would have made it impossible to trap as hard as I did last year. I think it will help marten populations though, because of decreased pressure. Wolverine are definitely scarce in some areas of the Susitna Valley, but populations are healthy in other areas and parts of the Alaska Range where airplane trappers can't land anywhere close. I felt martens were hit pretty hard in our area of Units 16 and 14(B) in 1987, so we laid off the stocks this year. It was a good thing. Snow levels and frequency would have made it very tough to check our 350 miles of line. Wolves and lynx seem to be coming back. I don't like the idea of registered traplines. One of the reasons I trap is to explore new country. Finding a new pocket of game abundance is always fun. Establishing a trapline registration system would be a bureaucratic mess that would rival the guide area fiasco. Just who would get what when 3 or 4 trapper's lines intersect at some point? Trappers are often transient by nature, here today, gone tomorrow. Who would get these new lines when they open up? Creating such a system that would actually work would cost more than the value of the furs caught in Southcentral. We're better off trying to keep a closer eye on population trends and adjusting seasons and limits accordingly.

\* Way too much snow this winter, not to mention cold and the ash. Was in the process of opening my main trapline when the first storm hit, followed by the ash. I sprang all traps after the ash, waiting for new snow. Got so much snow, I never made it back to reset most traps. This year was mainly an exercise in trailbreaking. My area is close to "population." Wolverine are about non-existent. Can't really imagine there could be a lot around due to people pressure. I don't have 20 years experience

with the marten population. I feel the population has been pretty stable the 5 years I've trapped here. Considering my close proximity to 2 roads, I feel lucky that there are as many around as there are. I don't favor any restricting of the season. The weather the past couple of winters has accomplished that. It appears the vole population has dropped drastically over the past year or two. With all the snow we've had, it's hard to say for sure. But I've noticed an absence of voles around the place this spring. No damage in the berry patch this spring; usually it's devastated. I've lived in this area for 6 years now, and this winter ptarmigan were sighted a number of times, a first. Beaver are not as common as it would seem they could be, and once were. I haven't trapped them much the past few winters. I don't understand why more houses don't spring up. I can think of one house that's never been trapped in 6 years, but can't account for any new startups that might be from young in that house. I wonder if the young are surviving. Information on managing beaver populations and factors affecting their survival rate would be useful.

- Excellent conditions until December, then excessive snow buildup caused me to pull out. I feel units 14(A) and (B) should be closed to lynx.

- As a recreational trapper, time and conditions weight the most on my potential to get in the field. This year, the volcano and snowfall played heaviest in not getting into the field.

- Lots of snow, small game hunters, and snowmachine riders. More moose in the area than usual. The areas that I have worked in the past are receiving more pressure than I was able to notice earlier. I don't think that the additional pressure has had an impact on the population of the species that inhabit the area. These new trappers are very new at the game and they usually give the animals an education instead of making a take (and I usually do not see them the next year). I am thankful to the state for being able to conduct a hobby that I enjoy very much.

- Snow depth was incredible. You need to put a limit on the number of lynx per trapper per season until the population is once again well established.

- I got a late start and deep snow was a problem, but early breakup helped beaver trapping. I don't feel the extended season on beaver in Unit 14(A) and 14(B) has been to the detriment of beaver populations because of the strict take limit. If you want an effective limit, then allow no more than 2 beaver to be taken from a colony per year. Also extend the season through May 21 so the Susitna River beaver can be harvested in a profitable manner (i.e. open water!). This would take the pressure off road-accessible beaver since trappers would not feel pressured to catch them where they can.

Registered traplines are no good. The guys whining for them now will really cry if they don't get one. Make shooting otter illegal. Most will get away through the ice holes because they're very tough and a tough target. Lynx are getting back into pretty good shape; in fact abundant in some areas. Mice are very scarce. I never see any, or any sign when the snow melts. Don't close marten season until you establish a tag/sealing records database because now you don't know anything except hearsay. Open coyote season year-round. There will be more fox if there are fewer coyotes, and also more lynx. I would hate to be a lynx hunter at Point McKenzie or in the Kenai River drainage because of the coyote numbers.

#### **KENAI PENINSULA**

- I have a bad left leg due to a motorcycle accident, and snow depth did make it hard to run my line, but I did catch 2 river otter and 1 mink.

- On Kenai Peninsula we had to deal with frequent and heavy snowfall last season, making it hard to keep a line productive, especially foothold traps. But even snares got covered by heavy snow. Moose disturbed a lot of my sets. Enjoyed the cold temperatures; much better than freeze-thaw conditions we used to have. We need to get rid of the 4-day trap check on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Unit 15. It is impossible to operate a trapline and work a 5-day work week. Snowmachine restrictions are too burdensome on the Refuge also. We need to have an earlier beaver season on Kenai Peninsula. Otter season should extend through the beaver season on the Kenai.

- Too much snow and ash. Trappers need 7-day trap check.

- Did not start until mid-January. Heavy snow got bad later on. Low fur prices. Lack of adequate plowing of turnouts on roadsides restricts access in many, many areas. Early break-up helped on the beaver line. There are more lynx tracks around than previous years, in fact some areas are full of lynx. Too many coyotes, especially on Kenai Peninsula. I would hate to be a lynx kitten on any of the Kenai River drainages. They also eat up too many fox and rabbits. Marten are spotty and drift around and go too high on mountains to get to them. Saw no wolf sign where, in previous years there were always some. Shooting otter should be illegal. They can be seen often at big distances on top of ice. Lazy trappers try to shoot them and they slide down their holes. They should instead look for a good set.

Everyone must realize that the only fair way to allocate trapping areas (registered lines) is by drawing. Then I guess the boys whining loudest now will really be screaming if they don't get one. Grandfather rights don't stand as legitimate because no matter what you think, you are still trapping on public property for the most part, and just because you have trapped creeks "x", "y", and "z" before, doesn't give you automatic future rights.

Apply the thought of registered hunting areas to everyone with a hunting license, or registered fishing areas to everyone with a fishing license, and it is the same thing even if you consider yourself a professional trapper, for most of us do. If you want exclusive rights, go get permission on private property. Also, if you're any good and a hard-working trapper, then you know that 10% or less of the trappers bring in 90% or more of the fur.

\* The long, cold spell during beaver season prevented me from bothering to trap them. Deep snow and cold weather adversely affected movement of target animals. Lynx should be left closed a little longer. There was more sign of them this season. Rabbits are definitely on the increase. In areas that used to have red fox, where coyotes moved in, the fox have disappeared. In examining some wolf scat, I found coyote toenails. Wolverine should be closed down earlier in areas that they are susceptible to being shot from aircraft with wolf hunters.

\* Snow was deep and the young moose died. Kept the wolves from ranging out. Other than deep snow, the year was good, but sales and prices have been cut back by anti-fur movement.

\* I wasn't too aggressive because of fur prices, but the snow conditions were excellent all year! I'm attending UAA so it's hard to get out more than twice a week. The weather in Unit 7 is sometimes wet and rainy in January-February, but this year I only encountered 0-20° weather. Before December, it was warm with little to no snow, making travel by snowmachine or foot hard. The rivers are usually frozen, making access possible. I am very willing to assist you in any survey needed of my trapping area. I also really appreciate you sending me the results of the survey with the next questionnaire!

\* Trapped total of 60 days due to volcano, deep snow, low fur prices, and boat towing truck broke down. Have high hopes for next year. I am for registered traplines.

\* Lots of snow. Over 8 feet. Always digging out and breaking new trail.

\* The road trapping wars continue.

\* Snow, rain, and unsafe ice. Otter should stay legal through beaver season. Wolverine season should stay open until March 1. Marten should be closed.

\* Economic hardship due to loss of fishing caused by Exxon Valdez oil spill. Caused greatly decreased effort. Extreme cold early in season closed rivers to boat travel but left them unsafe for other travel (foot or skis). Deep snow toward the end of the season also limited animal travel in effect causing reduced catch and reduced effort. Beaver season, however, was fair with good snow and ice cover. Produced excellent color for Kenai beaver.

Extreme weather and snow conditions during the 1989-90 season altered furbearer travel patterns greatly in Unit 15. Wolves remained high with the caribou and sheep. Basic populations remain stable. The catch rates don't reflect that beaver in Units 15(B) and (C) are on the rise in all areas, especially along the road systems. Trappers who claim otherwise are not very successful or observant. Lynx have increased greatly over the past few years. However, due to overzealous federal management of moose range, it is still illegal to trap them in Unit 15. This, in my opinion, will lead to cats being tagged as taken in other areas and incidental catches prosecuted under federal permit violations. I oppose this state's management policy to close trapping in areas when they have little or no information on true densities and rely on the word of 1 or 2 local trappers to make their decisions. More tagging is not the answer. I feel a mandatory annual report of all trapping activity and species taken would be the most useful tool for management. Also, trapper education for first time trappers and trap tags would benefit all trappers and help prevent whining old-timers who feel they own the state. Isn't it We The People who own the state?

\* The weather conditions were ok. Had a lot of snow and rain.

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