

Trapper Questionnaire

**Statewide Annual Report
1995–1996**

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

CODE OF ETHICS

A Trapper's Responsibility

- 1. Respect other trappers' grounds; particularly brushed, maintained trap lines with a history of use.**
- 2. Check traps regularly.**
- 3. Promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching nontarget animals.**
- 4. Obtain landowner's permission before trapping on private property.**
- 5. Know and use proper releasing and killing methods.**
- 6. Develop set location methods to prevent losses.**
- 7. Trap in the most humane way possible.**
- 8. Dispose of animal carcasses properly.**
- 9. Concentrate trapping in areas where animals are overabundant for the supporting habitat.**
- 10. Promptly report the presence of diseased animals to wildlife authorities.**
- 11. Assist landowners who are having problems with predators and other furbearers that have become a nuisance.**
- 12. Support and help train new trappers in trapping ethics, methods and means, conservation, fur handling and marketing.**
- 13. Obey all trapping regulations and support strict enforcement by reporting violations.**
- 14. Support and promote sound furbearer management.**

[This code of ethics was copied from the Alaska Trappers Manual. The manual was created through a joint effort between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Trappers Association. The manual is available in Alaska book stores for approximately \$20.00.]

State of Alaska
Tony Knowles, Governor

Department of Fish and Game
Frank Rue, Commissioner

Division of Wildlife Conservation
Wayne Regelin, Director
Ken Taylor, Deputy Director

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Game Management Regions

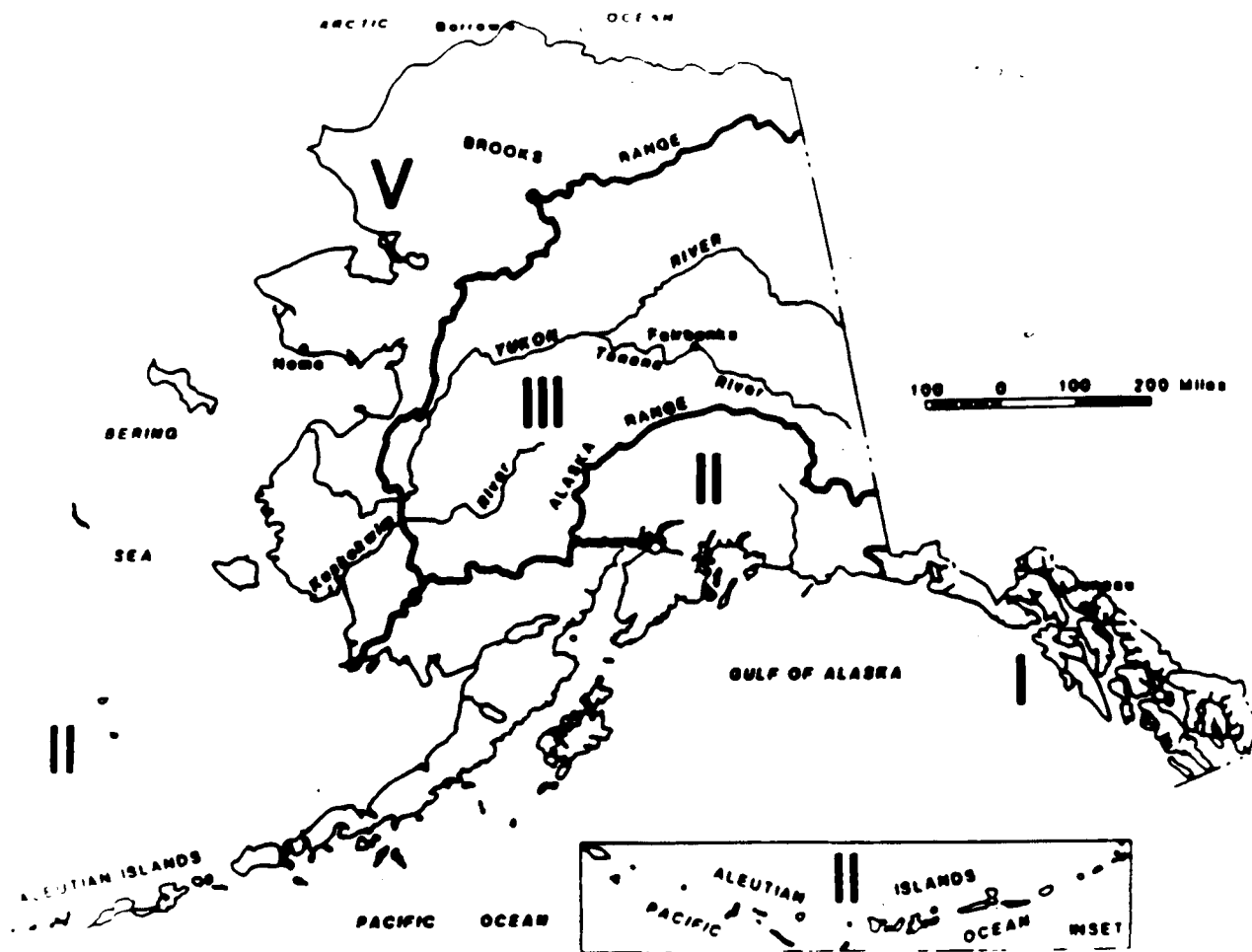


Figure 1. Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Game Management Regions

Game Management Units

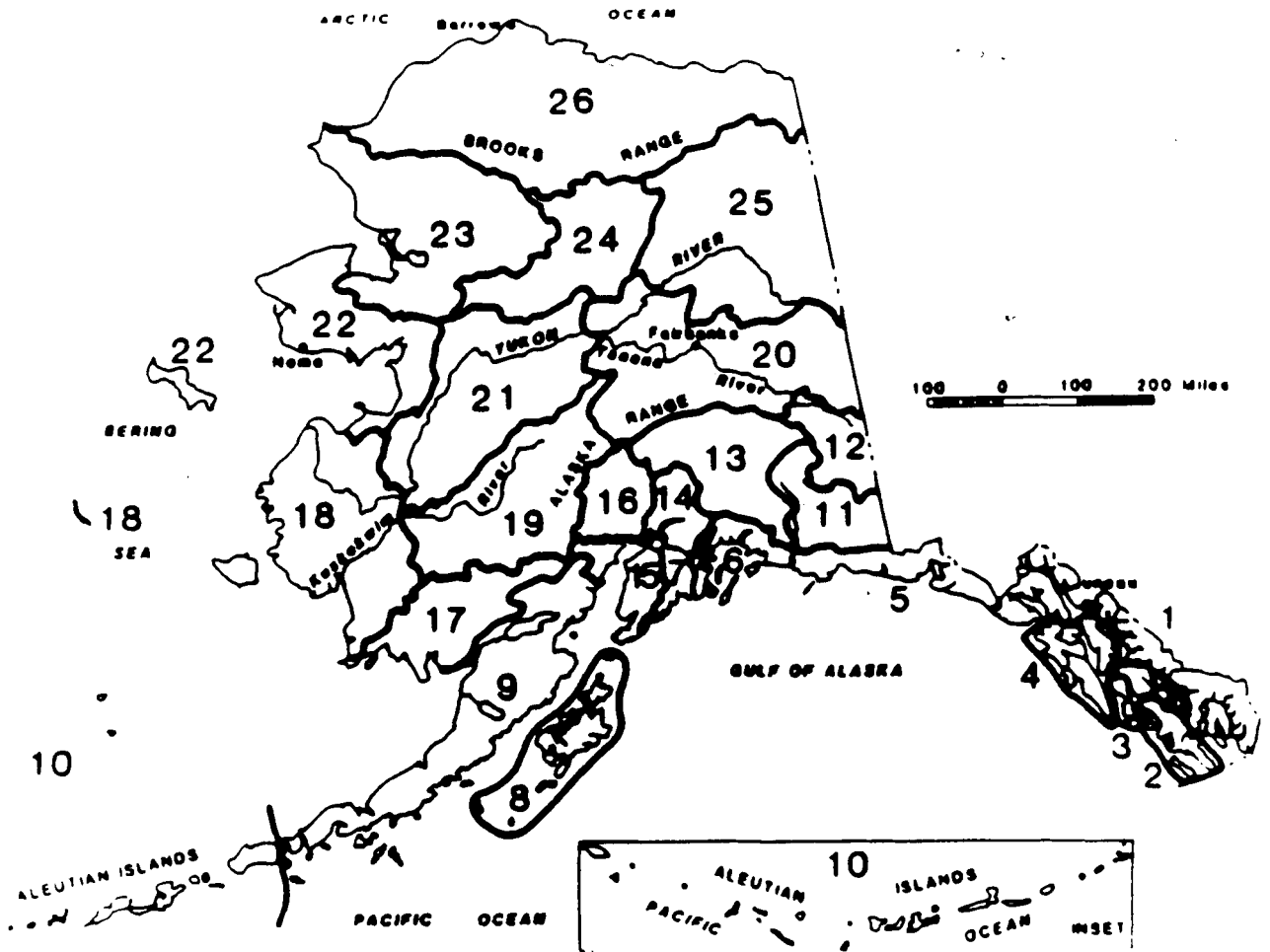


Figure 2. Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Game Management Units

ALASKA TRAPPER REPORT, 1995-96

INTRODUCTION

This report includes information contributed by you, the Alaska trapper. Our mailing list for the 1995-96 season included over 900 trappers. We received information back from 171 individuals. Of these, 28 people trapped in Southeast, 41 trapped in Southcentral, and 49 trapped in Interior Alaska. On the following pages you'll find out how other Alaskans run their traplines, how much effort they put into catching fur, what their primary target species are, and how many furbearers were trapped in the state. You'll also find summaries of current department furbearer activities, and comments of trappers that were written on the back of the questionnaires. As always, we strive to maintain strict confidentiality, and names of individuals and references to specific traplines are not included. We hope you find this report informative, and please let us know how we can improve it in the future.

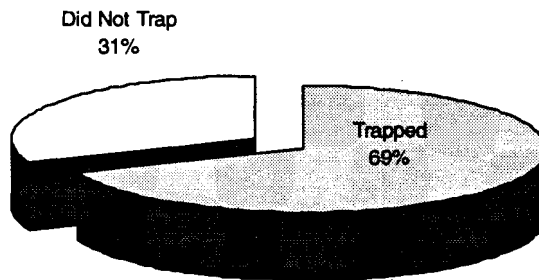
A PROFILE OF ALASKA'S TRAPPERS

We requested trappers like you to answer the following questions to help us develop this report.

Did you trap in 1995-96?

Sixty-nine percent of the trappers who responded to this questionnaire said they trapped during the 1995-96 season. This is slightly lower than the last 6 trapping seasons.

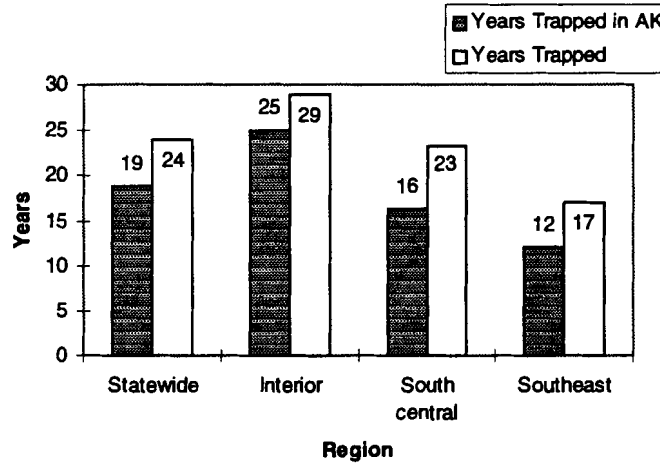
Of 171 Trappers Who Returned the 1995-96 Questionnaire:



How many total years of trapping experience do you have?

On average, trappers in Alaska have been taking furs for 24 years, 19 of those years in the state. The following graphs illustrate the breakdown by region and show the trend for past years.

Trapping Experience



What is your age?

Average age of trappers in Alaska is almost 45 years. Average age was 39 in Southeast, 42 in Southcentral, and 50 in the interior.

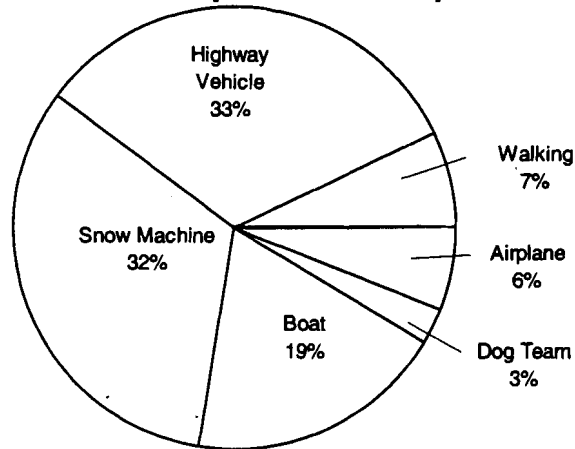
Did you have a youngster (under 16) with you on your trapline this year?

Half of all trappers had someone 16 or younger with them on their trapline at least once. Percentages in the three regions were: 59% in Southeast, 42% in Southcentral, and 52% in the interior.

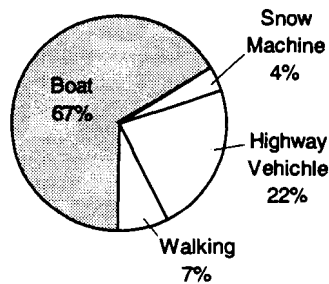
What transportation did you use to get to your main trapping area?

Transportation used by Alaskan trappers throughout the state to get to their traplines is summarized in the following pie charts:

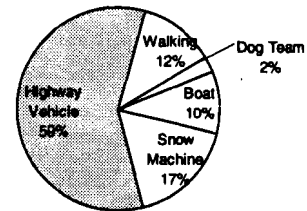
Statewide: Transport to the Trapline



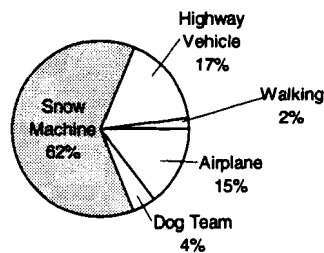
Southeast Transport to Trapline



Southcentral Transport to Trapline



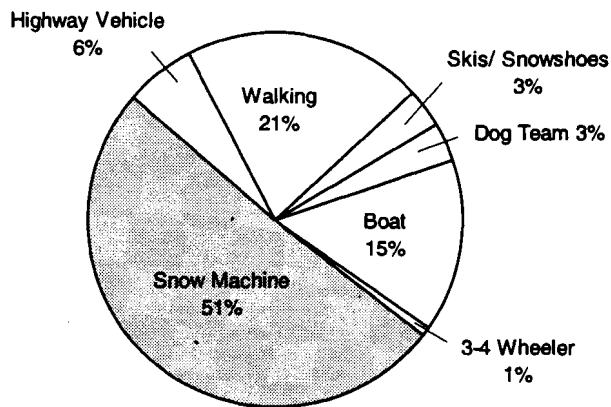
Interior: Transport to Trapline



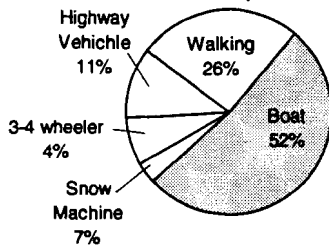
What transportation did you use run your main trapline?

Overall percentages of transportation used by Alaska's trappers to run their traplines are summarized in the following pie charts:

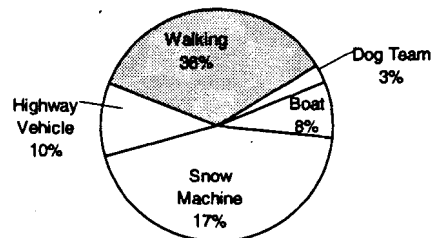
Statewide: Transport on Trapline



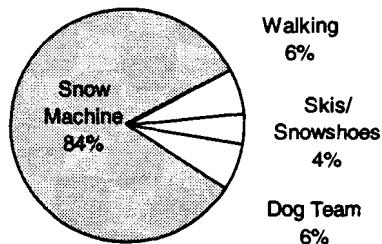
Southeast: Transport on Trapline



Southcentral Transport on Trapline

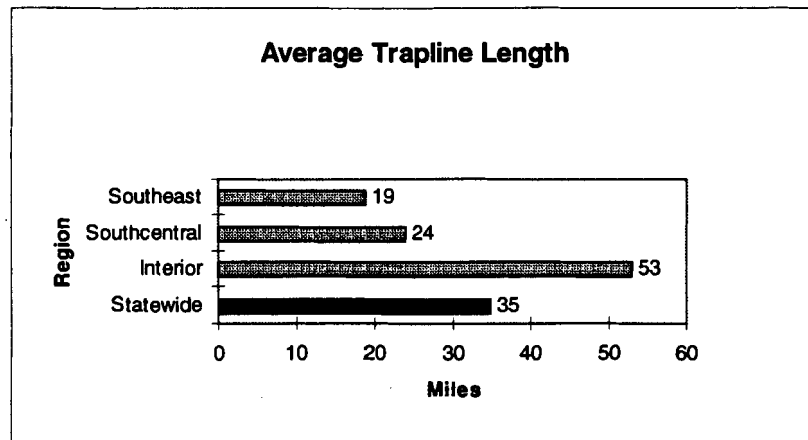


Interior: Transport On The Line

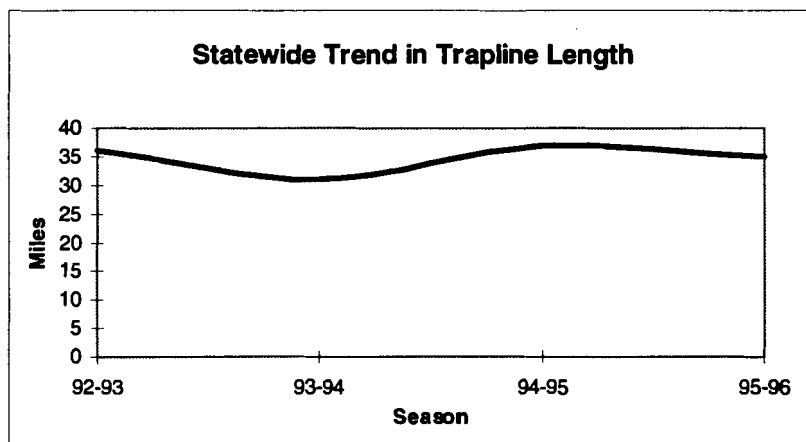


How long was your main trapline in 1995-96?

The average trapline length in Alaska was almost 35 miles. Traplines varied from 0.1 miles in Southcentral to 250 miles in the interior. In Southeast Alaska, average trapline length was 19 miles, and varied from 0.8 to 60 miles. In Southcentral, average length was 24 miles, and ranged from 0.1 to 100 miles. In the interior, traplines averaged 53 miles long, and ranged from 2.5 to 250 miles long.

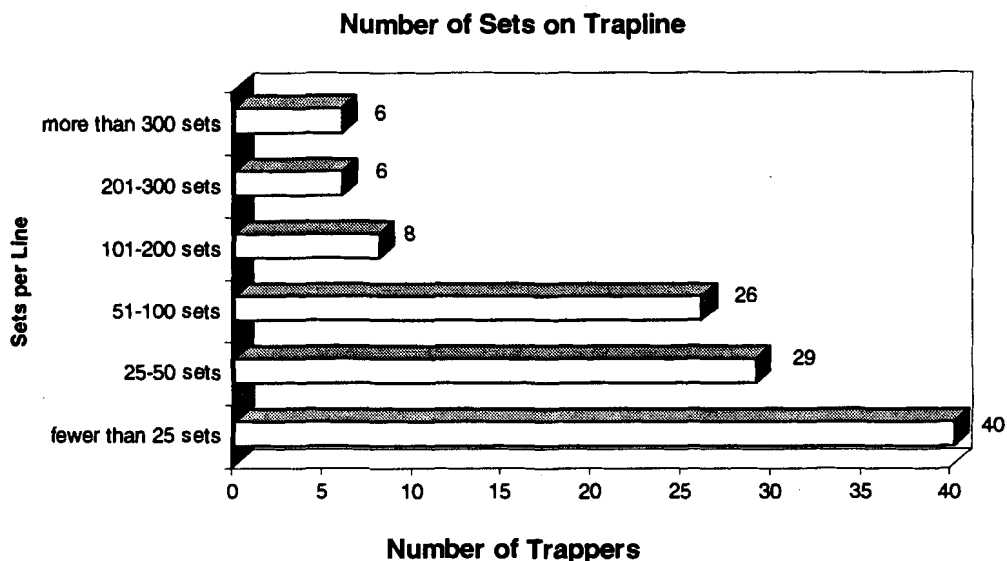


Since the 1990-91 season, when the average trapline was 38 miles, (the first season we included Southeast Alaska in the survey), average trapline length has decreased by one mile, after a low of 31 miles in the 1993-94 season. The longest trapline in the state has fluctuated between a low of 220 miles in 1990-91 to a high of over 400 miles in 1992-93. These changes are likely due to different people answering the questionnaire, as well as trappers' adjusting the length of their traplines for a variety of reasons, including weather, fur prices or abundance, and time spent doing other things.

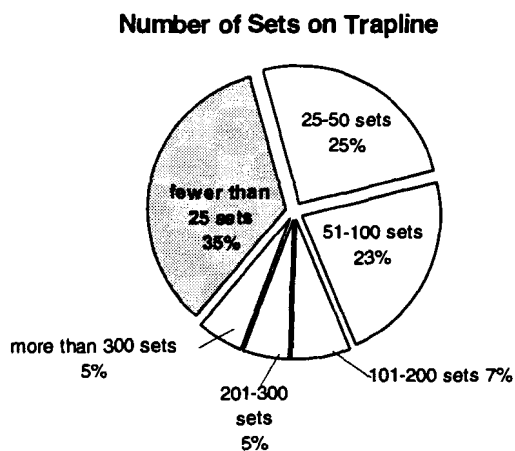


How many sets did you make on your line in 1995-96?

As shown by the graphs below, the number of sets per trapline varied a lot. Most trappers (83%) put out 100 or fewer sets. Throughout the state, 5% of trappers put out more than 300 sets.



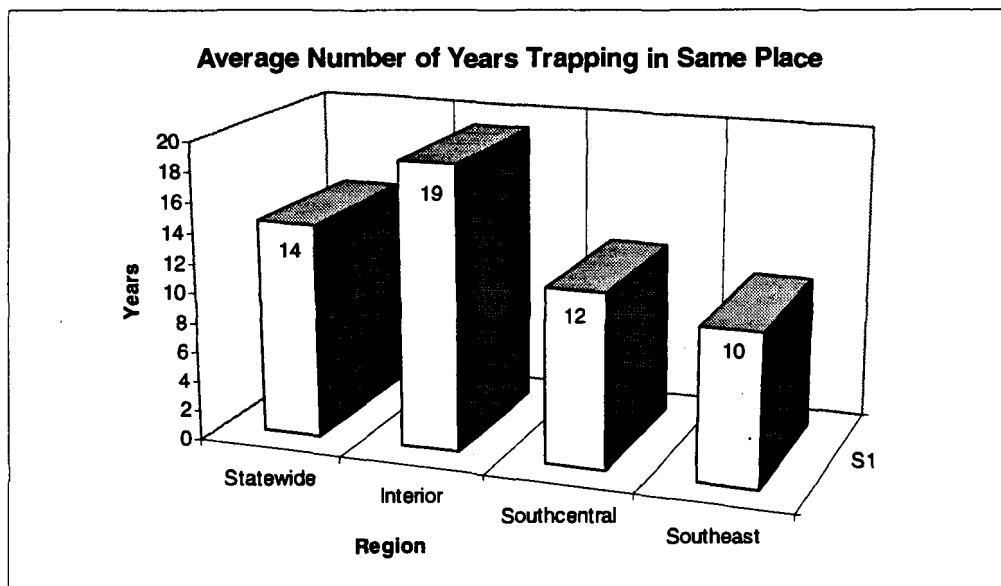
Looking at this same information in a different way:



Most Southeast trappers (70%) put out fewer than 50 sets, 22% put out 51-100 sets, and only 2 (7%) Southeast trappers put out 101-200 sets on their lines. In Southcentral, 71% of trappers had 50 or fewer sets on their lines. 25% of Southcentral trappers had 51-100 sets. Only 1 trapper (2% of Southcentral trappers) had more than 300 sets. In the Interior, the average number of sets was distributed more evenly. Many interior trappers (46%) had 50 or fewer sets, while 19% had 50-100, 13% had 101-200, 11% had 200-300, and 13% had more than 300 sets on their lines.

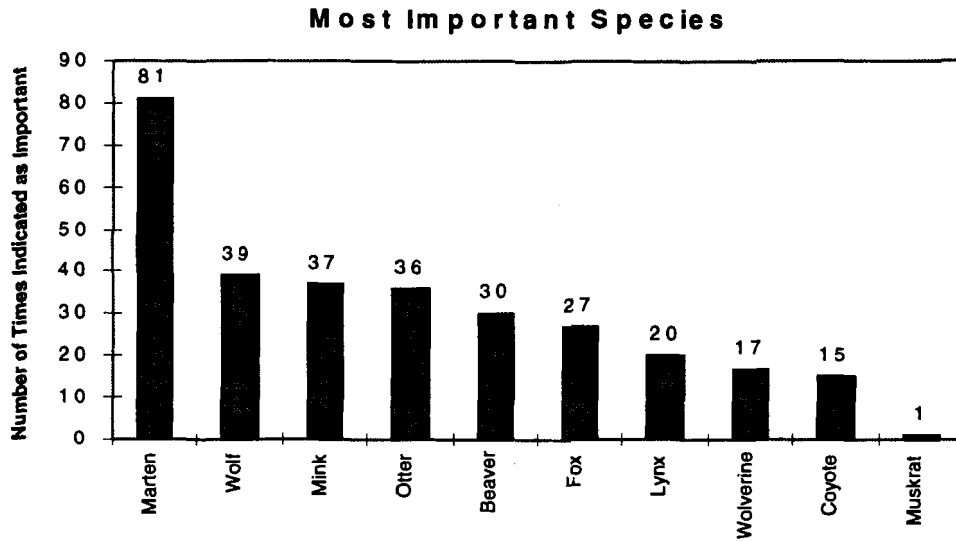
How many years have you been trapping in the same area?

The average amount of time that Alaskans have been trapping the same area is about 14 years. The longest period of time in the same area is 66 years. In Southeast, the average time in the same area is 10 years, in Southcentral the average is almost 12 years, and in the interior trappers averaged 19 years of trapping in the same area. On average, time spent trapping has remained about the same since the 1989-90 season, when the average trapper worked the same area an average of 12 years.

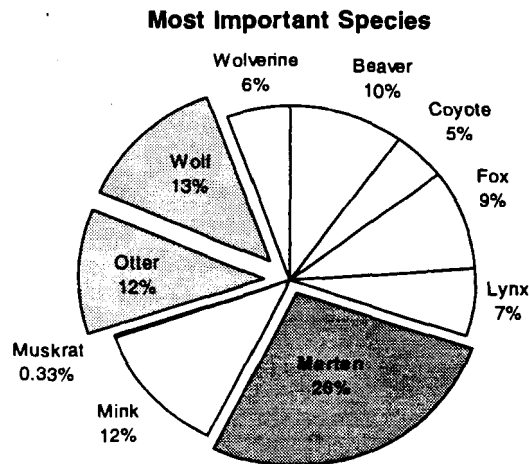


What were the three most important species you were trying to catch in 1995-96?

The three species most often listed as important by trappers were Marten (listed 81 times), wolf (listed 39 times), and otter (listed 36 times).

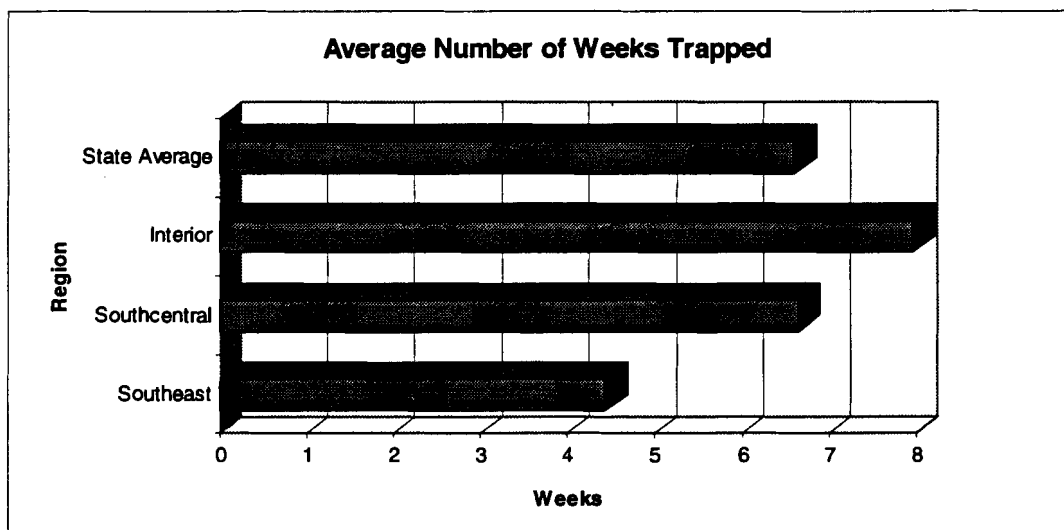


Looking at this same information in another way:



In Southeast, the species most often listed as important were marten (listed as important 36% of the time), mink (26%), and otter (21%). In Southcentral, the majority of trappers were after beaver and marten (18% each), otter (17%) and fox (13%). In the interior, trappers targeted mostly marten (29%), wolf (19%), and lynx (15%). Since we first asked this question in 1992-93, marten has remained species most often mentioned as important to Alaskan trappers. Wolf also continues to be an important furbearer. These obvious regional differences reflect which furbearers are available and current market value.

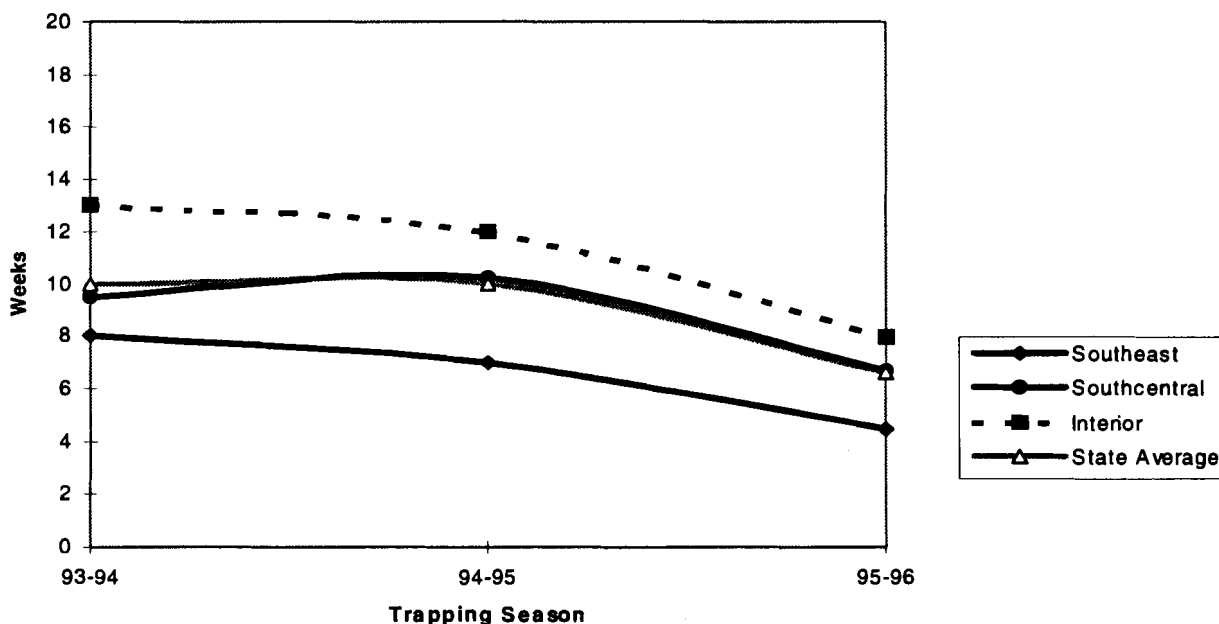
How many weeks did you trap during the 1995-96 season?



The average trapper in Alaska trapped for almost 7 weeks. Trappers in the interior trapped the longest (8 weeks). Trappers in Southcentral trapped an average of almost 7 weeks, and trappers in Southeast averaged a little over 4 weeks of trapping. This is a reflection of the length of the trapping season in the different regions. Marten season is 4 weeks in most areas of Southeast, a little longer in others. Marten season in many areas of Southcentral is 6 weeks. Interior marten seasons are 16 weeks. Seasons for other species also are longer in southcentral and the interior than in Southeast.

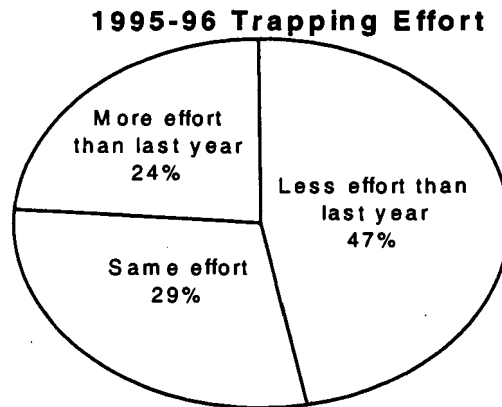
This is a decrease from past years:

Trend: Average Weeks Trapped



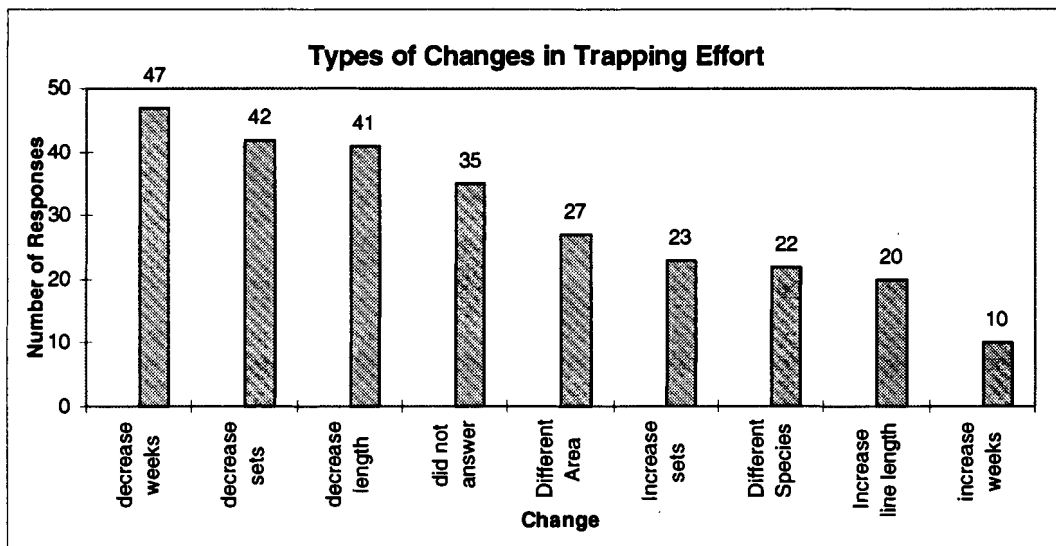
Was your trapping effort during the 1995-96 season less, the same, or more than the last season you trapped?

Most trappers (47%) said they trapped less than the last season they trapped. 29% said their effort was the same, and 24% said they trapped more. This is also reflected in the previous question



How did you change your trapping effort for the 1995-96 season?

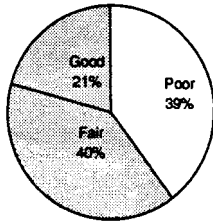
Many trappers (30% of those who said they trapped in 1995-96) didn't answer this question. This chart shows which types of changes trappers made.



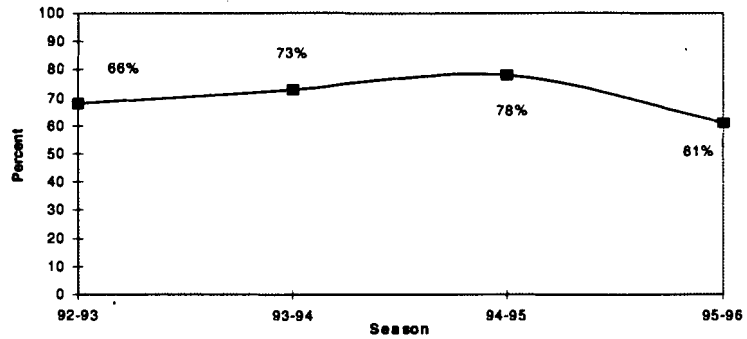
What were trapping conditions like on your trapline?

Most trappers (61%) indicated that conditions on their traplines were good to fair. This has been the trend since we began asking this question in 1992-93.

What Trappers Thought of Trapping Conditions



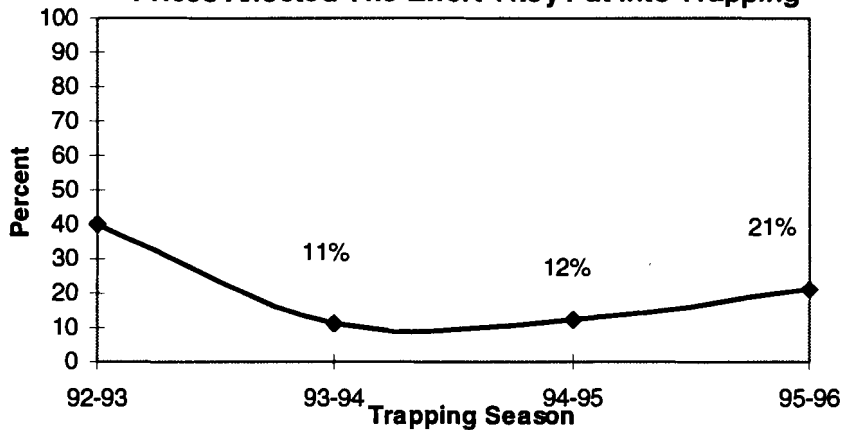
Percent of Trappers Who Indicated Trapping Conditions Were "Fair to Good"



Did last year's fur prices affect your trapping effort in 1995-96?

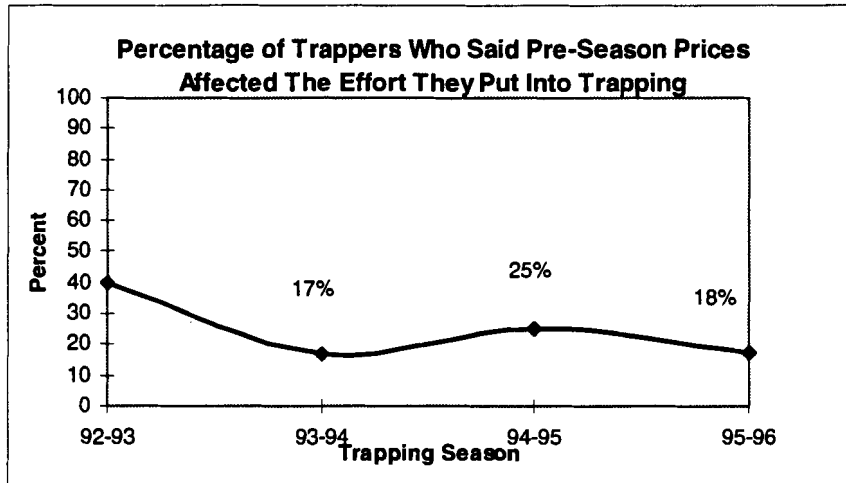
Most of the trappers who responded to this question said that last year's prices did not affect their trapping effort this year. Throughout the state, 82% said last year's price didn't affect their trapping effort. In the interior, 68% said last year's price didn't affect their effort. In Southeast 79% and Southcentral 93% said last year's price didn't affect their effort.

Percentage of Trappers Who Said Last Year's Fur Prices Affected The Effort They Put Into Trapping



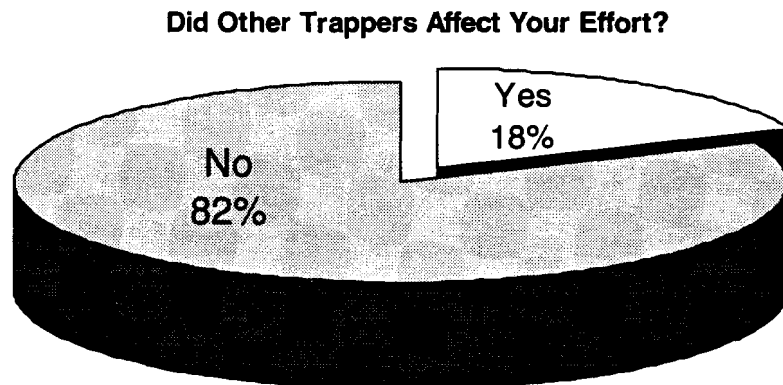
Did the 1995-96 pre-season advertised prices affect your trapping effort in 1995-96?

Overall, 79% of trappers said pre-season prices did not affect their effort. In Southeast, 85% said pre-season prices didn't affect their effort, in Southcentral 93% were not affected by pre-season prices, and in the interior 72% did not change their trapping effort because of pre-season prices.

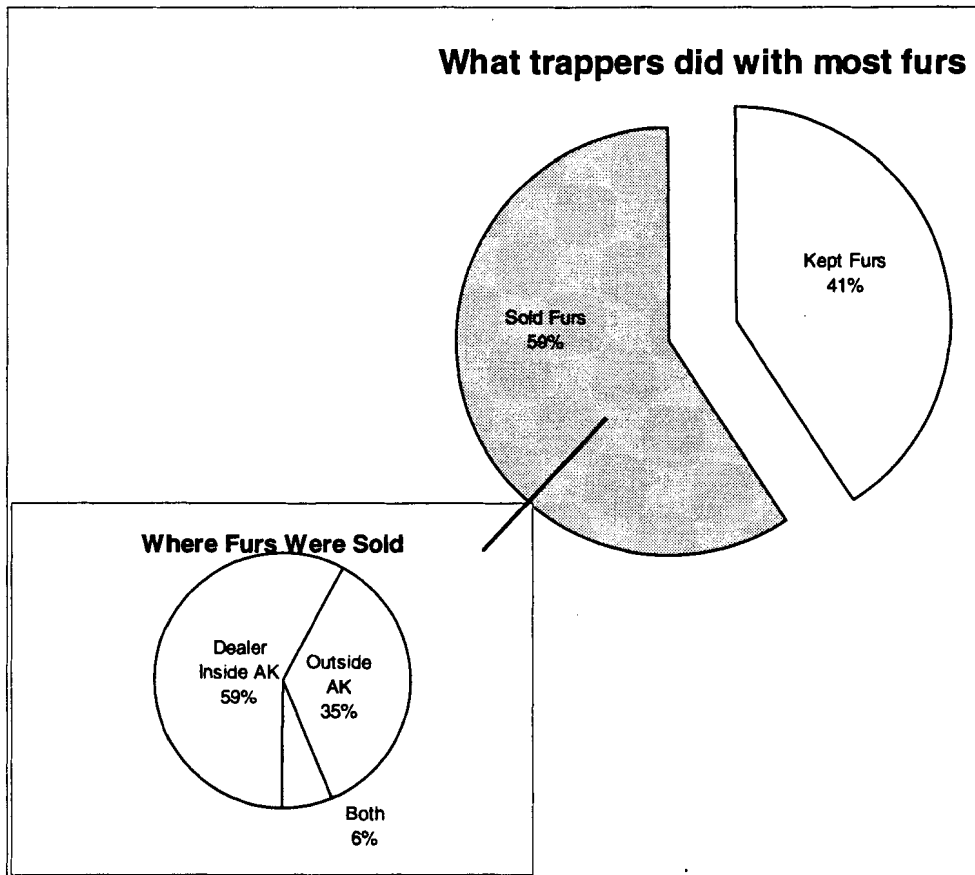


Did the presence of other trappers in the area that you trap affect your trapping effort in 1995-96?

About 82% of trappers in the state said the presence of other trappers did not affect their trapping effort this year. Those changing their trapping effort because of other trappers were: 11% in Southeast, 22% in Southcentral, and 19% in the interior.



Did you keep or sell most of your furs?



ALASKA'S FURBEARER POPULATIONS - TELL US WHAT'S HAPPENING

Only 5 of the 15 species defined as furbearers require sealing statewide: beaver, lynx, otter, wolf, and wolverine. Marten are required to be sealed in some units, but not statewide. Consequently, information on the numbers, distribution, and utilization of many furbearers is limited. On this year's trapper questionnaire we are asking trappers for harvest information on all Alaska furbearers. As usual, strict confidentiality will be maintained. Thanks for your help!

METHODS OF TAKING FURBEARERS

Trappers were asked to provide, for each furbearer species taken, the approximate percentage of animals taken with leghold traps, conibears, snare, gun, or other methods.

We asked this question because of the increasing pressure from animal rights activists to require more humane trapping methods. We want to document the extent to which Alaskan trappers rely on leghold traps, conibears, etc. As time goes on, we want to be able to document what changes in trapping methods trappers initiate on their own. It is difficult to quantify the number of each species taken by various types of traps, but we hope you will continue to fill out this information.

ALASKA'S FURBEARER HARVEST

As noted above, beaver, lynx, river otter, wolf, and wolverine require sealing statewide. In addition, marten are required to be sealed in Game Management Units 1-5, 7, 13E, and 14-16. Harvest estimates for these species are determined from sealing records. Please refer to Table 2 for a summary of furbearer harvest estimates (for species that require sealing) from 1992-93 through 1995-96.

Reported furbearer harvest totals in Alaska, 1992-93, 1993-94, and 1995-96.

Species	Region	Reported Harvest 1992-93	Reported Harvest 1993-94	Reported Harvest 1994-95	Reported Harvest 1995-96
Beaver	I	145	324	225	385
	II	1517	1720	1892	1450
	III	956	1886	1720	1114
	V	621	685	520	665
	Total Statewide	3239	4615	4357	3614
Lynx	I	29	22	6	5
	II	268	188	172	113
	III	1047	999	587	439
	V	22	11	13	17
	Total Statewide	1336	1220	778	574
River Otter	I	327	409	557	496
	II	449	449	488	586
	III	79	139	97	126
	V	353	118	220	298
	Total Statewide	1208	1115	1362	1506
Wolf	I	193	226	219	209
	II	218	368	413	292
	III	527	840	668	624
	V	113	149	143	126
	Total Statewide	1051	1583	1443	1251
Wolverine	I	22	25	35	29
	II	151	186	246	165
	III	143	242	293	133
	V	79	61	48	62
	Total Statewide	395	514	622	389
Marten*	I	1393	1560	2170	2787
	II	192	159	277	416
	Total	1585	1719	2447	3204

*Marten sealing is required only in Region I and II (GMU's 1-5, 7, 13E, 14-16).

COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING FURS

We also have records of commercial transactions involving furs. Individuals who engage in fur dealing and who purchase, or acquire through consignment or barter, raw skins of furbearers must report the transactions on department fur acquisition forms. Each transaction report shows the species, number of each species, and location in which furs were trapped.

Average prices paid for raw furs by dealers in Interior Alaska

Species	1992-93 (\$)	1993-94 (\$)	1995-96 (\$)	1996-97 Average \$	1996-97 Top \$
Beaver	17.50	26.00	31.50	35.00	60.00
Coyote	25.00	25.00	27.50	27.50	50.00
Fox	17.50	17.50	22.00	24.00	50.00
Lynx	70.00	85.00	77.50	77.50	125.00
Marten	35.00	42.50	38.50	42.50	100.00
Mink(wild)	15.50	17.00	12.00	18.50	30.00
Muskrat	1.25	1.25	2.00	2.00	4.00
River otter	35.00	60.00	60.00	45.00	70.00
Squirrel	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Ermine	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	3.00
Wolf	275.00	235.00	250.00	237.00	500.00
Wolverine	235.00	235.00	275.00	250.00	350.00

Raw fur export reports are filled out when an individual sends raw furs outside of Alaska. The same information is collected for these reports as for the acquisition reports.

Note: The fur acquisition and raw fur exports are not actual records of furbearer numbers harvested in a given regulatory year. Both reports may include furs taken in previous years, and many trappers keep their furs for tanning and use at home. In addition, some individuals may not fill out the required forms. Consequently, these transaction reports are used only as a general indicator of harvest trends. For individuals seeking out more information about these trends, contact your regional or statewide furbearer coordinator.

AREA REPORTS

Interior Region

by

Interior Furbearer Biologist, Mark McNay

Lynx and hare populations are expanding

In 1992, the Board of Game instructed Fish and Game to manage lynx using a harvest tracking strategy in the road-connected game management units of Interior and southcentral Alaska. That strategy requires that the harvest be reduced during the low and increasing phases of the 10 year lynx cycle. By keeping harvests low even as lynx numbers increase, the ultimate peak of the lynx population should be higher and trappers should achieve higher overall harvests when lynx reach the high point of the cycle.

To monitor the relative position of lynx in the 10 year cycle, biologists use a number of indicators. Harvest has been the traditional indicator. When trapping seasons were consistent from year to year the harvests simply mirrored the change in lynx numbers. Harvests were high when lynx were high and harvests were low when lynx were low. Now with restricted seasons during the low and increasing phases of the cycle changes in harvest may reflect changes in season length as much or more as actual changes in lynx population size. Therefore, we are now using other indicators of lynx population size, such as track counts, to estimate lynx and hare distribution and abundance.

Biologists from Fairbanks and Tok conducted aerial surveys to estimate lynx and hare distribution in game management units (GMUs) 20A, 20B, 20D, 20E and 12 during February and March 1995 and 1996. Using global positioning system (GPS) navigation equipment, we flew along predetermined transect lines. For example, in GMU 20A, we flew 6 parallel transect lines. Transect lines ranged from 28 to 70 miles long and all 6 lines totaled 253 miles.

Both lynx and hares make tracks unique enough that they can, with practice, be read from the air under the right conditions. We use these rules to make sure we are counting in similar conditions from year to year in the same survey area. Rule 1) wait until there is a snowstorm that drops 3" or more of snow to cover old tracks. Rule 2) only conduct surveys on days that have sufficient sunshine to clearly see tracks in the fresh snow. Sometimes fly on cloudy days if the clouds are thin and the sun can be seen through the clouds, but in general we survey on sunny days. Rule 3) wait between 36 and 48 hours after the snowfall ends before starting the survey. This allows lynx and hares to make some tracks, but not too many.

During the survey the pilot flies along the GPS transect line at an altitude of about 200-300 feet. The pilot and observer watch the snow on opposite sides of the aircraft, in a band roughly 50 feet

wide on either side of the aircraft. When lynx or hare tracks are seen the observer records the type of track (i.e. hare or lynx) and the mileage along the transect from the GPS instrument.

During 1994-95 lynx and hares were near the low in their cycle and along our survey lines there were large empty spaces (sometimes several miles long) where there were no tracks of either lynx or hares. During 1995-96, again few lynx tracks were seen, but the empty spaces between hare tracks were much shorter. In fact, the number of 1-mile segments that contained hare tracks doubled between 1995 and 1996. So, we soon expect lynx numbers and harvests to increase. Although we have not conducted our 1997 surveys yet, it is apparent from trapper reports that lynx are on the increase.

Wolf population decline in the western Interior

Department biologists conducted an intensive wolf survey over a 5,200 mi² area of eastern GMU 19D during February 1995. During February 1996 we conducted a survey of the moose population in the same area. Both surveys were done in response to a noticeable decline in moose numbers and moose harvests by residents of the upper Kuskokwim valley. A population of 164 wolves was estimated in 23 packs during the February 1995 wolf survey. The moose population was estimated to be about 1600 moose. Observations of numerous winter killed moose, and reduced harvests of moose by local residents suggested that moose numbers had declined during a series of deep snow winters in the early 1990's.

In a report presented to the Governor last summer, biologists predicted that the current moose population could support a wolf population of roughly 1/2 the 1995 level of 164 wolves. During early March of 1997 our biologists again conducted a survey for wolves in GMU 19D east. As expected, wolf numbers declined during the two years between surveys. In the 1996 survey we estimated 56 wolves in 15 packs. Although natural declines in wolf numbers have been previously reported, this case is one of the most abrupt natural declines documented in an Alaska mainland ecosystem. Biologists expect wolf numbers to stabilize at or below their current level. Wolf populations in most of the Interior are increasing or unchanged relative to last year's estimates.

Southcentral Region

by

Southcentral Regional Furbearer Biologist, Howard Golden

This year the Board of Game considered proposals for Southcentral Alaska. Among the proposals were a large number dealing with furbearers. The following material was presented to the board to familiarize the mostly new members with some of the most important issues.

Use of Seasons Versus Bag Limits to Manage Furbearer Harvests

For most furbearers, harvests are regulated by adjusting season length but not bag limits. This is done mainly because it is very difficult for trappers to limit their harvest to a certain number of animals when they may be using many traps. Trappers normally modify their methods in order to target more abundant furbearers and to limit their take of less abundant ones. However, incidental catch of an animal with a bag limit is always a risk that often ends with animals killed because they were caught in a killing trap, like a Conibear, or could otherwise not be removed successfully. This is less of a problem when trappers know they can no longer catch a species after a certain date and must pull their traps or modify their methods.

The major exception to the preference of trapping seasons over bag limits is where the risk of overharvesting certain furbearers is unacceptable. This approach applies to furbearers with relatively low productivity, such as wolverines and river otters, or to species that may be very accessible to trappers or confined in their range of movement, such as beavers and coastal river otters. The goal in this case is to provide some opportunity to trappers without jeopardizing the furbearer populations. In Southcentral, bag limits are established for beavers in most units and for red foxes and wolverines in some units.

Bag limits for beavers have been used in most areas for many years because they are colony animals and are easy to trap. This resulted in beaver harvests in some areas exceeding sustainable yield. It is fairly easy for trappers to target beavers. They can also limit the number of traps, usually of the killing type, around a lodge, which makes bag limits more practical.

The bag limit on foxes was established to provide some opportunity to trap foxes on the Kenai Peninsula and in GMU 14C where their numbers are typically low. It also allows trappers targeting coyotes, which are abundant in these areas, to keep the pelt of a fox caught incidentally in a coyote set.

The bag limit on wolverines was established in Units 11, 13, 14, and 16A primarily to put a cap on their harvest where there was concern about a decline in abundance. The average trapper takes less than two wolverines per year, so this was not seen as a method to reduce take of wolverines. This issue with wolverines is discussed in greater detail later.

Bag limits for fur animals under hunting regulations are designed to allow hunters some limited opportunity to take these animals. Most are probably taken incidentally by hunters pursuing other game.

Lynx Tracking Harvest Strategy

In 1987 Fish and Game and the Board of Game adopted a "tracking strategy" for managing lynx harvest. The strategy uses two basic and three supplemental criteria for changing seasons in the road-connected areas of Interior and Southcentral Alaska with heavy trapping pressure. The two basic criteria are percent kittens in the harvest and evidence of increasing populations of both lynx and snowshoe hares. The supplemental criteria are (1) period of pelt primeness, (2) probable negative effects of early seasons orphaning kittens too young to survive, and (3) the effects of a late season on harvest due to increased movement of lynx.

This tracking harvest strategy (THS) was designed to allow more dynamic management of lynx based on the ability of populations to support harvest. The THS was put into effect in 1988 and resulted in season closures in some units when lynx populations seemed to be at low levels and pelt prices (and the incentive to trap) were high. The THS became difficult to use because of the need to issue emergency orders to change seasons outside the usual regulatory schedule set by the Board. This problem was fixed in 1992 when the Board agreed to allow in-house regulatory changes within the broad seasons of Nov. 1-Feb. 28 (for Interior units) and Nov. 10-Feb. 28 (for Southcentral units). Lynx populations are now on the upswing throughout most of their range in Southcentral. As a result the seasons in several units were reopened or extended to allow greater harvest.

Alignment of Season Dates and Lengths

Several proposals requested modification of season dates and lengths to align harvest periods among a number of species in a unit. The desire in Unit 17 was to align trapping among land-based species and among water-based species. This would give trappers greater opportunity to trap during the most favorable weather and field conditions and to be able to maximize their efforts. This approach would also reduce incidental take of several species. Fish and Game favors season alignments when it's practical to provide greater opportunity and allow harvest of furbearers that should be able to tolerate higher take. Alignments are seldom attempted on the scale of that done in Unit 17, but it was justified in this unit with its variable climate and moderate harvest pressure.

Wolverine Bag Limit in Units 11 & 13

A bag limit of two wolverines was established in 1992 in Units 11, 13, 14, and 16A in order to cap wolverine harvest in those areas. There had been an increase in the take of wolverines beginning in 1989 that followed a long decline since the early 1970s. Going along with the increase in harvest were reports from trappers that wolverine numbers seemed to be lower than usual and perhaps declining. There were few indicators of population status other than the newly developed density estimation technique, which had not been fully tested or widely applied. The prudent option at the time was to establish a bag limit of two wolverines to limit harvest to its

1991 level. There was the additional objective of allowing wolverines to repopulate areas like the Lake Louise Flats, where wolverines had been more abundant in the 1970s.

An unanticipated situation arose with the establishment of the state's 2-wolverine bag limit. The Federal Subsistence Management Board ruled that such a restriction would reduce subsistence opportunities. Therefore, it imposed a further restriction that only residents of Units 11 and 13 would be allowed to take wolverines on federal land in those units. This additional restriction created a hardship for many trappers living outside those areas who traditionally trapped there. Further, the additional potential reduction in wolverine harvest from those units went beyond the our intention in capping harvest.

The year the 2-wolverine bag limit was established, the we began a long-term study of wolverines in western Unit 13A and started trend counts in other areas of Southcentral. We have not fully tested the accuracy of the density estimation techniques, but we have measured wolverine densities in several areas of the region. Wolverine densities in western Unit 13A, the northern Chugach Range in Unit 13D, the western Chugach Range in Unit 14C, and in the Kenai Mountains in Units 7 and 15 all range between 4.7 and 5.2 wolverines per 1,000 square kilometers. We believe these to be conservative estimates because data from radiocollared wolverines indicate many animals may not move enough after different snowfalls to be counted in the estimation.

The data from radiocollared animals also indicate dispersal patterns. Many of the males and a few of the females have left the study area and were either relocated through telemetry or were trapped in areas to the north or west. Two male wolverines dispersed long distances from the study area. One was trapped north of the Alaska Range approximately 110 miles away, and another male was taken by a trapper near Chulitna approximately 60 miles away. No study animals have been observed moving down into the Lake Louise Flats, although wolverine sightings there are not unusual.

Wolverine harvests in Units 11 and 13 remain light and about the same as prior to the change in bag limits. Density estimates indicate wolverine populations, at least in parts of Unit 13, are about the same as those observed in similar habitats elsewhere in Southcentral. In addition, both units have large areas with very light harvest pressure and substantial refugia from which wolverines may be produced. Given these circumstances and the problems of incidental catch, it seems reasonable to remove the bag limit on wolverines in Units 11 and 13. More data are needed before a decision about the 2-bag limit in Units 14 and 16A can be made.

Fish and Game biologists will continue to monitor wolverine populations closely in Southcentral. There is growing concern among the staff that ORV traffic, particularly from snowmachines, may contribute to the dispersal of wolverines from areas of high human use, such as Units 13, 14, and 16. Unit 13A is of particular concern because of the rapid increase in the amount and extent of snowmachine and other ORV activity in the last few years. The level of disturbance from such human activity in terms of harassment, illegal harvest, or simply its presence is unknown but the impacts to wolverine populations are likely not positive.

Southeast Region

by

Southeast Regional Furbearer Biologist, Rod Flynn

The furbearer management program in the Southeast Region consists primarily of the monitoring of the numbers taken each year. The program's objectives are to regulate seasons and bag limits to maintain viewable and harvestable populations of furbearers. The pelts of beavers, land otters, lynx, martens, wolves, and wolverines are sealed by area managers and other appointed representatives. Our other furbearers, primarily mink and ermine, do not need to be sealed and our only sources of information are from fur export reports, trapper reports, and the trapper survey. Some furbearers seem to be quite rare in Southeast Alaska. For example, red foxes and coyotes are occasionally reported. A fisher was caught near Juneau in December 1996; the second confirmed record for Southeast. We would like to receive any information on these rarer furbearers. Currently, we are involved in cooperative research with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum on the distribution of terrestrial mammals in Southeast Alaska. For this project, we are interested in specimens of several furbearers, including ermine and flying squirrels.

Martens are the furbearer taken in the largest numbers by trappers in Southeast Alaska. Since the 1988-90 trapping season, the number of martens trapped in southeast Alaska has averaged 2,310 animals. In comparison, an average of 404 otters was taken each year over the same period. By Game Management Unit, the greatest numbers of martens were usually taken from Units 4 (34%), 2 (32%), and 1A (12%). The remainder of the Units (1B, 1C, 1D, 3, and 5) provided less than 10% of the average regional catch. During the 1995-96 trapping season, 2,784 martens were taken by trappers in Southeast or 474 more than the 5-year average.

In Subunit 1A, beaver harvests were down 44% from last season and up 44% in Unit 2; marten harvests remained constant in both areas; and otter harvests declined 47% in Subunit 1A and 13% in Unit 2. Trappers believed the Subunit 1A beaver population was common (Index of Abundance IA = 33, n = 3), the marten population common (IA = 30, n = 5), and the otter population abundant (IA = 58, n = 6). Similarly, trappers in Unit 2 believed the beaver population in that unit was common (IA = 50, n = 4), the marten population common (IA = 25, n = 4), and the otter population abundant (IA = 67, n = 3).

Furbearer populations seemed healthy in Subunit 1C. Lynx and beaver harvests decreased, and marten and otter harvests increased. Lynx are present when prey levels are low in Canada; the decreased lynx take is probably reflective of an increasing prey base in Canada. Other changes in the harvest are probably due to differing trapping effort and not population level perturbations. Using trapper questionnaires, we will continue to examine fluctuations in fur harvest in future years.

Furbearer populations within Subunit 1D appeared consistent with historic levels, although the higher than average marten harvest indicates that species population density has increased. The absence of lynx in the harvest is probably reflective of improving prey populations in Canada.

In Unit 4, marten harvest increased as the population recovers from the recent population low. The increased otter harvest probably reflected an overall increase in trapping effort as trappers generally make sets for both species. There is no indication that trapping has depressed furbearer populations in the unit.

Residents of Yakutat and nonlocals contributed anecdotal information concerning sighting of furbearers. The harvest of martens and wolverines was greater than the previous year, the result of increased effort by one trapper rather than a population increase. It is doubtful this high harvest level will continue.

Furbearer harvests in the Southeast Region, 1995-96.

Unit	Beavers	Marten	Otter	Wolverine
1A	32	134	65	0
02	259	1052	202	
1B	1	77	4	1
03	26	232	33	1
1C	4	118	24	10
1D	0	120	3	3
04	0	762	187	
05	0	289	4	9
Totals	322	2784	522	24

UPDATE ON FUR ISSUES

FACING ALASKA

By Steve Peterson

Statewide Furbearer Coordinator

The European Union regulation banning the importation of certain furs into Europe continues to rear its ugly head like smoke from a smoldering fire that just won't go out. Deadlines have come and passed. I won't be surprised if the next one comes and passes as well, but for now, North American fur will continue to go to Europe at least until the end of June. The U.S. has refused to sign an agreement that eliminates a class of traps (legholds) before they have been tested. Our position has been: "Make every country test their traps by the same standard and let the chips fall where they may!" Canada and Russia initialed an agreement with the EU to ban leghold traps in a few years and then the EU came back and said they wanted to speed up the process. Funny thing! Canada is a bit upset and complained "a deal's a deal!" Stay tuned on that one. I'm sure we will hear more about this failed agreement at the furbearer meeting in Yellowknife, NWT, in May but in the meantime the U.S. is not going to sign an agreement the states do not feel comfortable in implementing.

During Thanksgiving I attended an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) meeting in London as part of the U.S. delegation representing our Technical Advisory Group (TAG) working on recommendations to the trap standards process. The anti-trapping groups were obvious by their absence and we finally got something worthwhile accomplished. Agreement was reached on a standard for testing traps. This standard will not evaluate the performance of how well a trap holds an animal without injuring it, or how fast a trap will kill an animal. It just lays out the ground rules for how traps will be tested around the world. One of the big things we requested and got approved as an amendment, was language that requires an evaluation of a trap's safety features to protect the user. We argued that a trapper needs to be able to get out using only one hand if the trap is accidentally tripped. The ISO is planning another meeting in five years, at which time the group will again review progress in trap testing with the idea of going forward on evaluating trap performance.

As far as work by the USTAG is concerned, I suspect the group is going to die a slow death, but it may be resurrected in preparation for the next ISO meeting. Some people want to use the group to develop a national standard but I don't think that is going to happen with the mix of interests in the group. Consensus will never be reached on any useful standard unless several people representing special interests can be convinced that "animal welfare" does not equate to "no trapping." In all fairness to the state agencies involved in that process, we honestly tried to make that committee work, but it just didn't. Consequently, we picked up our marbles and began playing a new game with a different set of rules and a different set of players.

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) has been representing state agency interests since the turn of the century. One of the standing committees

in this organization is Fur Resources, and it contains a technical sub-committee that has been working on a variety of fur/trapping issues. As a member of this technical sub-committee for the past several years, I have found its efforts to be very rewarding. One of the big items we are presently working on in this sub-committee is called "Best Management Practices for Trapping" (BMPs). Most of the furbearer biologists and representatives from trapping organizations I have been working with on this committee believe this effort will replace the failed trap standards process and at the same time help improve the image of trapping in the eyes of the public. I submitted an abbreviated portion of our first report on this process to the editor of the **Alaska Trapper** magazine. Hopefully she will find the space to include it in the last issue before summer break so you can think about it before fall when I will provide comment on additional work we accomplish over the summer. The article is titled: "Improving Animal Welfare in US Trapping Programs." I guarantee you will be hearing a lot more about BMPs for trapping in the next few years so you might just as well get informed and help me out with your ideas.

Another trapping issue that tested Alaska's resolve this winter was the US Fish and Wildlife Service's efforts to stop trapping on our National Wildlife Refuges. I think we all made a pretty good effort to get the word out to trappers and I believe the response was very good. I haven't heard the results yet but I do know a lot of individuals and organizations took the time to tell Washington what they thought of the effort to take away our privilege to trap on public lands. I suspect we have not heard the last of this one yet and if the Fish and Wildlife Service again decides (or is directed) to form a task force to examine trapping on refuges, we will do our best to sit at the table and represent Alaska's trapping interests. Since 85% of all refuge land occurs in Alaska and literally thousands of Alaskans trap on these refuges, we have a lot at stake in being well represented. Stay tuned.

The other major issue that faced Alaskan trappers this year was the US Fish and Wildlife Service's newly amended regulation regarding the exportation of fur to Canada (or any other country). We have solicited the help of our Congressional delegation on this one since the Service didn't seem to listen to the letters that were sent in objecting to what they were trying to do to us. I think we have finally gotten their attention. However, the Service has repeatedly said it would "fix the problem" but so far nothing has happened to fix the regulation. The Service seems to think it cannot make an exception for trappers who want to export fur without having to pay the fees. Right now, Alaska is one of only a few states that is really complaining about the hardship caused by this regulation. When the feds want to extract \$50, \$100, or \$150 right off the top before you ship even one pelt, let alone sell it, you wonder whose side they're on!

Well, some days appeared real gloomy this past year, but as Yogi Berra once said: "It ain't over 'till it's over."--- You're still trapping, and you're still shipping and selling fur, so we must be doing something right.

Good hunting, and
Good trapping;

Steve Peterson
Statewide Furbearer Coordinator

ALASKA TRAPPER COMMENTS

1995-96

SOUTHEAST:

Don't know where the mink and marten went. For whatever reason the number dropped to near zero.

Still a big problem with trapping ethics (or lack of). Education is the key but no one wants to be the one educating. The picture last year was extended area, more traps and less fur. But who cares, it was fun trying.

I suggest you include fur dealers in your questionnaire. I have had a fur dealer's license for many years.

Dog control at mile 6.5 Copper River Highway. Witnessed dogs killing baby geese. Reported to Cordova ADF&G three times.

In the bay I trap, more mink and river otter sign and sightings; coyote and bear about the same; more people activity (USFS trail) (snow machines), etc.

Been too busy at other occupations to get out much, prices for fur not worth the effort.

In the past I always trapped mink on this island, this was the first year of really trying to catch marten and wolves. I did as I expected on the marten, but the wolves (even though there was tons of sign) didn't even come close to getting caught. I had planned to sell all marten caught and keep everything else for personal use. I'll try again next year.

Stopped trapping because lack of animals. Anyone telling you the numbers are up is wishfully dreaming. They are not. Been in this area 37 years and am an avid snow machiner and know what is going on animal-wise unless the animals have learned how to get around without leaving tracks.

I heard the area by the bay I trap was closed to otter trapping this past season. I trapped there the 94-95 season, and it had an abundant population of land otters. I don't agree.

SOUTHCENTRAL:

Although this past season was slow I plan on a 300% increase this year. The purchase of some new equipment (sno-go and boat) and increased scouting in new areas have been productive. Current plans are to trap more wolves in western AK as well. A price increase is anticipated on most furbearers is added incentive, and to control wolf populations in areas of personal interest and concern. I attended one of the wolf trapping seminars in Delta last winter and really enjoyed it and came away with some good info on gear and different methods, my thanks to the F&G people that helped make it possible. Also it is nice to see more effort put into promoting the importance of the fur business.

We must continue to manage on sound biological information and not hearsay or emotions. We cannot manage Mother Nature but we can manage the human pressure (trapping and hunting) of a species. Combined, we can continue our heritage. If we don't manage, we don't harvest!

I would have and could have trapped last season if the season for marten had started and finished at what I consider a reasonable time. No one could have started Nov. 15 and stopped Dec. 15 this year or possibly any other year because the River separates me from my trapping line and doesn't freeze adequately until after Dec. 15. Besides, this year, NO SNOW, therefore no travel by sno-go (or dogs!!). Terrible year, plus I refused to further impact the beaver (who suffered greatly last winter) by trapping them this spring. So, the season was a complete flop, and I may be through for good!

First time in 47 years I wasn't able to trap extensively. Surgery's not the best way to lose weight. Missed most of the season but marten sign was abundant after we finally got snow, and wolves were common. Below zero temps and no snow hurt beaver and rats. Later in winter when we got some snow some areas had good amounts of rabbits and did see lynx sign. Only managed to set a few sets this year and spent the spring working on our new log house. Be back in full swing next year. Very little effort by local trappers this year. Mostly because of no snow and extremely rough conditions during the marten season but also because of the EU ban that was supposed to take effect Jan. 1, 1996. One trapper lost everything during the late Sept. flood and was busy trying to fix up a place for his family for the winter. Very few locals got moose this winter as moose didn't show up until late winter and the no snow, rough conditions prevented traveling very far. Need a Nov. 1 opening for marten and wolves in this portion of Unit 16B.

Was a poor year for me with the lack of snow early thru mid season, then when snow came I had to pull line as I was busy having a home remodeled and moving. Hoping for a better season next winter. Don't bow down to the EU if they don't want quality furs, we can find others that do. Give them an inch, then they'll want a mile. In your summary of trappers comments for 94-95 seemed to be substantially fewer than in years past. Are you printing them all or are there just fewer trappers commenting? We need some sort of regulation of snowmobilers to keep them off our lines and keep them from running game into the ground. They're pushing further and further back off the road systems. It's becoming a real problem.

It's time to lengthen the marten season again. It was a mistake to shorten it in the first place - a decision based on insufficient information. I'm still peeved you guys let a few disappointed hippies close (essentially) the whole Valley area to reasonable marten trapping.

I liked the open water trapping in Unit 13E and would like to see it down in Units 14, 16. Also the lack of snow really limited my activities this year. Hopefully more snow for next season so we can get into some wolf country.

I sure hope we get some snow and the river will freeze up early this year, because there seems to be a lot of animals around and this winter no one could trap.

Trapping season should open on Nov. 1 or sooner in Units 14, 16, southcentral AK. Trapping beaver after April 30 may be fun but you should not trap for them after April because it is not sound management. It would be better to trap them in October. The same with muskrats (refer to enclosed article). Marten season in Unit 14 should be longer. The Nov./Dec. spike fork moose season should be closed in Unit 14. There were lots of people in the woods, and some of them are thieves. In twenty years of trapping I have never lost not even one trap to thieves until this year. The -----ers stole 2 wolf snares, 1 330, 1 220 and 3 120s. If there's so many moose the season should be longer in the fall or give out more drawing permits for the fall.

It is becoming ever more obvious to me that in this day and age the trappers, and Fish and Game, need to be controlling Alaska's furbearer resources, NOT the politicians. Politicians who try to (wrongly) intervene are only showing how they don't care about Alaska's future, as they lack the outdoor expertise for true and proper management.

Not only is this questionnaire good for furbearer management, and a tool for the area biologist, I use it to keep informed what is taking place across the state. I encourage all trappers to join their local trappers association.

INTERIOR:

I know the reason for the short lynx season and agree with it, but I felt that I needed to pull entire line after cat season closed (marten sets and wolf and wolverine snares) for fear of incidentally catching cats. Thus my total trapping effort was reduced.

Without snow we were not able to get out until the end of January and still not enough snow to get on the end of our line. These things happen from time to time. Maybe 1996 to 97 will be a better year.

No snow for most of the year made travel tough.

Nothing new or drastic here in unit 20E. Rabbits seem to be up some and a few more cats. The lynx I caught were all small ones. Marten about the same. Had no caribou around so no wolves on my line this year. Sure hope we get some snow for next season!! Thanks for listening.

Cold weather, long stretches of -60 slowed us down a little.

Trapping conditions were difficult. No snow, hard to run line. Other trappers are affecting my trapping. One person trapped within 1/2 mile of my line.

Freezing is probably the best anesthetic known to date. A toothed leghold trap is probably the most humane trap for northern climates. I detest conibear traps for dry land; I've seen too many no kill body catches.

I occasionally set wolf kills from an airplane. No real trapline and if I know a trapper is in an area I don't set the kills I find in this area.

The fur prices are just too low for me to trap. I will be trapping in the future once the prices come back up.

Did not trap since 1988 due to knee injury.

No snow until mid-February; couldn't get to my line!

Trapping effort decreased this year due to a lack of snow during early season and cold weather during mid-season. Your efforts to fight off animal rights groups is very much appreciated by all trappers. Thanks.

Trapping effort decreased this year. Environmentalist observers and Fish and Game activity regarding wolves in area--to much company all of whom know more than a trapper!

Cold decreased # of trap checks. Low snowfall = rough trails. High wind = drifted trails and sets. No caribou were close around town so the wolves weren't around as much where I'm at.

Increased my trapping effort this year. I concentrated on wolves more. It paid off even though I have a limited area. Other trappers were zeroing on wolves more than normal around here. Thanks for the update from the trapper questionnaire. Keep up the good work, and don't let people with no knowledge of our wildlife and our special problems here in Alaska run the show. The people that want to do this, have made a total mess of where they live. So do what is best for Alaskan's and don't worry about the treehuggers and greenies.

Trapping conditions were poor this year. Not worth all the break downs. No snow a lot of people didn't go out. The lack of snow and cold caused a lot of pushups to freeze over.

Trapping conditions were fair this year. Short on snow for 1st half of season.

STATE OF ALASKA

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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May 9, 1997

Dear Trapper:

The trapping season is over, and I hope you had a good season. A lot of things that impact trapping have occurred over the past year and I wrote an update on a few of them in the enclosed report.

For all of you who have been participating in our Trapper Questionnaire program, we thank you for all the information you provided. Results from the 1995-96 questionnaire are enclosed. Also enclosed is the 1996-97 statewide questionnaire for this past winter's activities. For those of you who have not been part of the program, we request your help, so please consider responding to this questionnaire. If you are not interested in participating in this program, please let your local area Wildlife Biologist know, and we will remove your name from our mailing list. If you know of someone who would like to be added to the list, please let your local Wildlife Biologist know that as well.

I hope you had a good season, and please keep good track of the relative abundance of furbearers and prey in your trapping area. We really do appreciate your comments and observations. Take along a pencil and small notebook to jot down what you see. This will make it a lot easier to remember your observations when we send you the trapper questionnaire next year.

Finally, I want to let you know the department has completed its video called "Alaska Guide to Fur Handling". The video shares step by step instructions in the professional skinning, fleshing, and boarding of marten, mink, large furbearers and beaver. Even if you've trapped for years, you may find this video useful. Details of preparing large furbearers for the lucrative taxidermy market are also covered. The video has been distributed to schools and libraries in Alaska, to Fish and Game departments and to the other 49 states. Copies are available to the public free of charge. Watch for it, it's good!

Good trapping,



Steven R. Peterson
State Furbearer Coordinator



**ALASKA TRAPPER QUESTIONNAIRE
1996-97**

- 1) How many years trapping experience do you have? _____ years
- 2) How many years have you trapped in Alaska? _____ years
- 3) What is your age? _____ years (We would like to know the age structure of Alaska's trappers; many states are seeing fewer youngsters interested in hunting or trapping)
- 4) Do you want to continue receiving the trapper questionnaire and annual report?
 Yes No
- 5) Did you trap during the 1996-97 season?
 Yes (**Please complete the rest of the questionnaire**)
 No (**Please answer question 6 and add any comments you have**)
- 6) Prior to the 1996-97 season, when was the last season you trapped?

If you trapped during the 1996-97 trapping season, please complete the rest of the questionnaire.

- 7) At any time this trapping season, did you have a youngster (someone under 16) with you on your trapline?
 Yes No
- 8) What kind of transportation did you use **most of the time** to **get to** your main trapline from where you live during the trapping season? (Circle only one):

1) Airplane	4) 3 or 4 wheeler	7) Highway vehicle
2) Dog Team	5) Snowmachine	8) Walking
3) Boat	6) Other ORV	9) Skis/Snowshoes
- 9) What kind of transportation did you use **most of the time** to **run** your main trapline? (Circle only one):

1) Airplane	4) 3 or 4 wheeler	7) Highway vehicle
2) Dog Team	5) Snowmachine	8) Walking
3) Boat	6) Other ORV	9) Skis/Snowshoes

10) How long was your main trapline in 1996-97? _____ miles

11) How long have you been trapping in the same area you trapped this season?

_____ years

12) How many sets did you make on your line this season? (Circle one):

1) Less than 25

3) 51-100

5) 201-300

2) 25-50

4) 101-200

6) more than 300

13) What were the three most important species you were trying to catch in 1996-97?

14) What GMU(s)/Subunit(s) and drainage(s) did you trap in?

15) How many weeks did you trap during the 1996-97 season? (Season length varies depending on species and location, so if you trapped "all season," please specify the number of weeks in the season)

_____ weeks

16) If you changed your trapping effort from the last season you trapped, did you (please circle all that apply):

1) Change your effort to a different species

2) Trap in a new area

3) Increase or decrease (please circle one) the length of your trapline

4) Increase or decrease (please circle one) the number of sets on your trapline

5) Increase or decrease (please circle one) the number of weeks you trapped

17) If you increased your trapping effort, did the increase result in a higher catch?

_____ Yes

_____ No

18) What were trapping conditions like on your trapline? (please circle only one)

1) Poor

2) Fair

3) Good

19) How did trapping conditions affect your trapping effort?

20) Did the 1995-96 fur prices affect your trapping effort during 1996-97?

Yes No

21) Did the 1996-97 pre-season advertised prices affect your trapping effort?

Yes No

22) Did you:

1) keep most furs you trapped in 1996-97 for personal use?

Yes No

2) sell most furs you trapped in 1996-97 to a fur dealer?

Yes No

If you sold most of your furs to a fur dealer, did you sell to a dealer (please circle one):

a) in Alaska b) outside of Alaska c) both

23) Did other trappers in your area affect your trapping effort?

Yes No

If yes, please explain:

HARVEST REPORT FORM

If you trapped this season, we would greatly appreciate knowing the number of furbearers that you took from each subunit during the 1996-97 season. Sealing records provide harvest information on some species, but we would like to know directly from you the number of all furbearers you took in the 1996-97 season.

Please include information for both those species that do require sealing and those that do not (we have very little information on species that do not require sealing).

You are our best source to determine the numbers of each species that were taken from an area. Your response will help us determine the status and value of each species. Every effort will be made to keep your identity confidential. Thank you for your help!

Number of Furbearers Harvested

Fur Species	Game Management Subunit						
	GMU/ subunit	GMU/ subunit	GMU/ subunit	GMU/ subunit	GMU/ subunit	Other? _____	Other? _____
Arctic Fox							
Beaver							
Coyote							
Ermine (Weasel)							
Lynx							
Marten							
Mink							
Muskrat							
Red Fox							
Red Squirrel							
River Otter							
Wolf							
Wolverine							

SPECIES ABUNDANCE ON YOUR MAIN LINE

Please mark (x) the boxes that best describe the abundance and population trend of furbearers and their prey on your trapline during the 1996-97 trapping season. If abundance and/or trend is unknown for a species, please leave the box blank.

FURBEARER SPECIES	During the 1996-97 season, were the animals on your trapline:				If you trapped this season and last season, please compare the numbers of animals you saw in <u>1996-97</u> with the number in <u>1995-96</u> ?			In what GMU or subunit? *	Did you make sets for this species?
	not present	scarce	common	abundant	fewer	same	more		
Arctic Fox									
Beaver									
Coyote									
Ermine (Weasel)									
Lynx									
Marten									
Mink									
Muskrat									
Red Fox									
Red Squirrel									
River Otter									
Wolf									
Wolverine									
PREY SPECIES:									
Hare (Rabbit)									
Grouse									
Ptarmigan									
Mice/Rodents									

* Please fill in this column with the appropriate GMU or Subunit for each species that you enter abundance and/or trend information. We want to summarize species abundance and trend as accurately as possible for the appropriate GMUs and Subunits. Thank You.

METHODS OF TAKE FOR FURBEARER SPECIES

For each species you took in 1996-97, please indicate the **PERCENTAGE (%)** of pelts you took by each method.

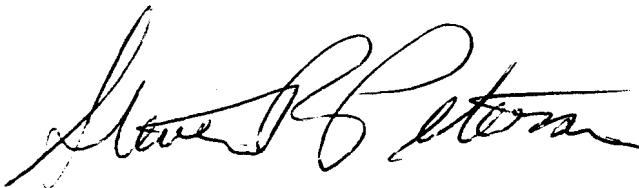
FURBEARER SPECIES	METHOD OF TAKE				
	SHOT	SNARED	LEG-HOLD	CONIBEAR	OTHER (boxtrap, submarine trap, deadfall, etc.)
EXAMPLE: BEAVER *	10%	10%	60%	20%	0%
BEAVER *					
COYOTE *					
FOX					
LYNX *					
MARTEN *					
MINK					
MUSKRAT *					
RIVER OTTER *					
SQUIRREL					
ERMINE *					
WOLF *					
WOLVERINE					

* Species potentially affected by the European Economic Community's ban on the importation of fur into Europe.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS TO ADF&G?

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game thanks you for your cooperation in the Trapper Questionnaire Program. We appreciate the time, effort, and interest you have put into this very important tool for furbearer management in Alaska.

Sincerely,

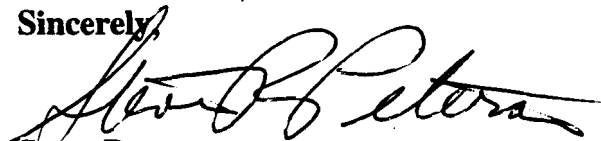
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Peterson" clearly distinguishable.

**Steve Peterson
Statewide Furbearer Coordinator**

EDITOR'S NOTE:

If you have questions about your specific area, please let your local area biologist know that you would like to hear from him or her regarding your concerns. Thank you all for your comments. We appreciate hearing from you, and I am sure that other trappers enjoy reading about what's going on in other areas of the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Peterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" at the beginning.

Steve Peterson

Statewide Furbearer Coordinator

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