

Beaver Trapping Questionnaire 2015-16

By Jes Rees Lohr, Brian Dhuey and Shawn Rossler

Abstract

Beaver trappers, and number of sets made, were down from 2014-15 levels, while days afield and the mean beaver trapped were unchanged during 2015-16 from the 2014-15 levels. An estimated 2,285 people trapped 21,844 beaver for 2015-16. Most beaver were caught in body-grip traps (67%), foothold traps were next at 26%, and snares were last at 6%.

Methods

A special beaver trapping questionnaire was included with the annual furtrapper questionnaire which was sent to a sample of 6,000 people who purchased a resident trapping license or a conservation patron license. The sample was selected from the 2015-16 resident trapping ($\approx 3,000$) and the conservation patron ($\approx 3,000$) license holders who indicated they were trappers (Fig. 1). Both questionnaires were mailed at the end of the trapping season, April 30th in the northern one third of the state. Trappers were asked if they trapped for beavers during the 2015-16 season, where they trapped, the number of days they trapped, the type and number of traps they used, and the number of beavers they caught. They were also asked the percentage of their pelts they sold in and out of Wisconsin. A second mailing was made to non-respondents. These data were entered into the DNR production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Replies were obtained from 2,312 (38.5%) of the 6,000 trappers receiving questionnaires. Respondents to the questionnaires trapped for beaver 12.5% of the time during the 2015-16 season. This was the same as the 2014-15 season. Trapper effort by beaver management zone is shown in Table 1.

An estimate of beaver trappers was derived by multiplying the percent of respondents who said they trapped beaver by the total license sales for each of the two trapping license types. These data provided an estimate of 2,285 beaver trappers during the 2015-16 season. The number of beaver trappers who participated in the 2015-16 season was 4.8% less than the 2,401 that trapped in 2014-15.

In the northern 1/3rd of the state, Beaver Management Zones (BMZ) A and B, the beaver season ran from 7 November 2015 through 30 April 2016. The southern 2/3rds of the state, BMZ C had a beaver season that ran from 7 November 2015 through 31 March 2016 (Figure 2). While BMZ D, the southern 2/3rds of the Mississippi River had a beaver season that ran from the day after the last day of the duck season through 15 March 2016. This was the eleventh year in a row that the two southern zones were not open in April. Most (50.5%) beaver trappers trapped in BMZ C, followed by BMZ A (26.8%), BMZ B (19.7%), and BMZ D (3.1%). Trappers harvested an estimated 21,844 beaver in 2015-16.

On the average, trappers trapped 21 days for beaver, had 8 sets out each day, and caught 10 beaver each. This was very similar to the beaver trapping activity in 2014-15, when trappers averaged 21 days, 9 sets, and 10 beaver. Trappers used body-grip traps in 70% of their sets, foothold traps in 26%, and snares in 6%. As a result, 67% of the beaver were caught in body-grip traps, 26% in foothold traps, and 6% in snares. There were decreases in the number of trappers pursuing beaver, but trapper effort, and catch per unit effort were similar compared to the 2014-15 season.

Beaver trappers felt that annual beaver populations were stable in BMZ's A and C, stable or increasing in BMZ B, and increasing in BMZ D (Table 2). Over the past 6-8 years beaver trappers in BMZ A felt that populations were stable, stable or decreasing in BMZ B, stable or increasing in BMZ C, and increasing in BMZ D (Table 3).

The beaver harvest in 2015-16 (21,844) decreased 13% from the 2014-15 total of 25,062. The price paid for beaver pelts fell to \$9.48 in 2015-16 from the \$11.70 paid in 2014-15 season. Weather conditions for 2015-16 season were above normal. Temperatures in November and December were well above normal and December ranked as the warmest on record. Not only was it the warmest December on record, but it was also the wettest December with precipitation resulted mainly from rainfall and not snowfall. Spring season may have had improved open water conditions with less than average snow and above average temperatures. This should have made access to open water and/or remote areas easier and/or extended late season open water trapping.

Table 1. Number of respondents, mean number of days trapped, sets, and catch in the regular beaver season in 2015-16 by beaver management zone.

| Beaver Zone | # of Responses | Mean # of Days Trapped | Mean # of Sets | Mean # Trapped in Regular Season |
|------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| A | 79 | 19.9 | 9.0 | 12.6 |
| B | 58 | 21.9 | 9.5 | 10.5 |
| C | 149 | 20.4 | 6.8 | 7.6 |
| D | 9 | 19.9 | 8.0 | 8.9 |
| Statewide | 295 | 20.6 | 8.0 | 9.6 |

Table 2. Beaver Trapper's observations of beaver populations in the zone they trapped.

| Beaver Zone | Stable | Increasing | Decreasing |
|-------------|--------|------------|------------|
| Zone A | 50.0% | 37.8% | 12.2% |
| Zone B | 36.7% | 35.0% | 28.3% |
| Zone C | 53.7% | 33.3% | 12.9% |
| Zone D | 41.7% | 50.0% | 8.3% |

Table 3. Beaver Trapper's observations of beaver populations in the zone they trapped over the past 6-8 years.

| Beaver Zone | Stable | Increasing | Decreasing |
|-------------|--------|------------|------------|
| Zone A | 49.4% | 30.0% | 20.7% |
| Zone B | 37.5% | 25.0% | 37.5% |
| Zone C | 40.0% | 40.0% | 20.0% |
| Zone D | 30.8% | 61.5% | 7.7% |

PART II.

1. Did you trap beaver during the 2015-2016 season?
 Yes No (Please stop here and return the questionnaire)

2. What percentage of your beaver SETS use body-grip traps, what percentage use foothold traps, and what percentage uses snares?
 % Body-grip % Foothold % Snares

3. What percentage of your beaver CATCH came from body-grip traps, what percentage from foothold traps, and what percentage from snares?
 ____ % Body-grip ____ % Foothold ____ % Snares

4. What percentage of the beaver that you caught since June, 2015 did you sell?
 _____ %

5. What percent of your catch did you sell:
 ____ % In Wisconsin ____ % Outside Wisconsin

6. Which beaver management zone did you trap in most?
 (See attached beaver zone map)
 Zone A (north of Hwy 64, west of Hwy 13) Zone C (south of Hwy 64)
 Zone B (north of Hwy 64, east of Hwy 13) Zone D (Mississippi River)

7. Please fill in the blanks below for each zone in which you trapped for beaver during the 2015-2016 season regardless of whether you caught any beaver:

| Zone | Average Number of Sets | Number of Days Trapped | No. of Beaver Caught Regular Season | No. of Beaver Caught Damage Programs |
|------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | | |
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8. Based on your observations in the zone(s) you trapped, are **beaver** populations, stable, increasing, or decreasing since last year? (Please reply **ONLY** for zones you trapped)

| Beaver Zones | Stable | Increasing | Decreasing |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Zone A | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Zone B | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Zone C | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Zone D | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. Based on your observations in the zone(s) you trapped, are **beaver** populations, stable, increasing, or decreasing over the past 6-8 years? (Please reply **ONLY** for zones you trapped)

| Beaver Zones | Stable | Increasing | Decreasing |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Zone A | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Zone B | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Zone C | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Zone D | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(Note: See attached beaver zone map)

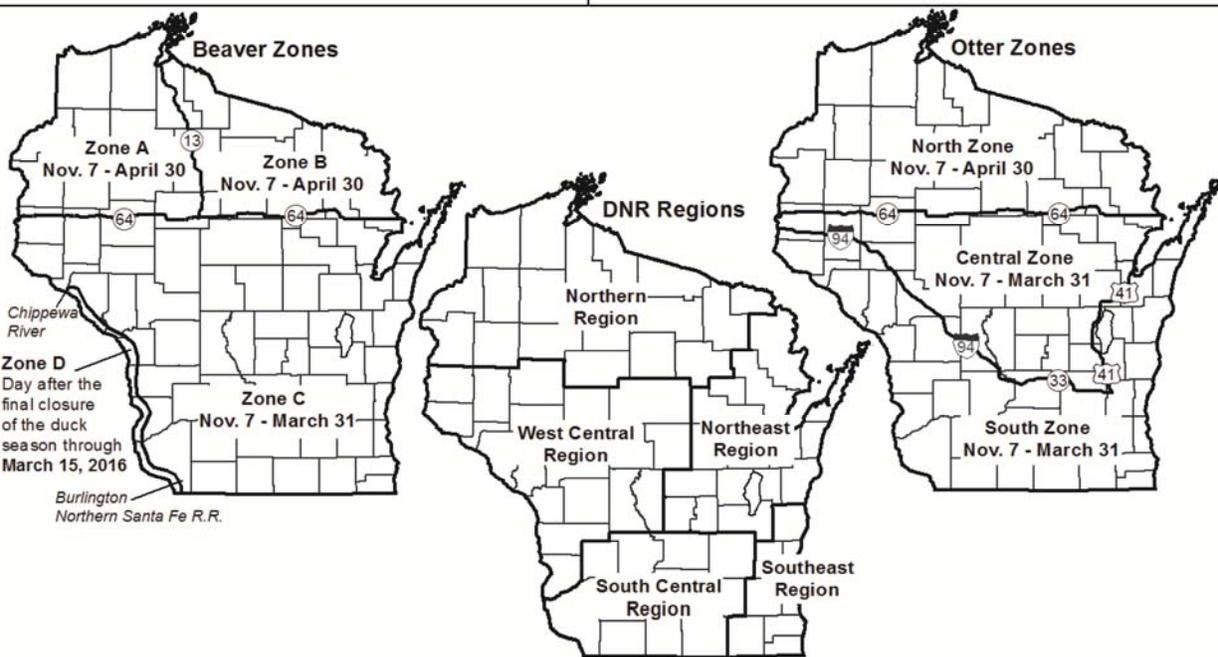


Figure 1. 2015-16 Beaver Trapper Questionnaire.

