

Fall 2017 Furbearer Quotas

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Recently, 2017 Furbearer Advisory Committee quota recommendations were approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Policy Team, as described below.

Bobcat

The Furbearer Advisory Committee recommended a **Northern Zone quota of 550** (a increase from the 225 quota recommended last year) and a **Southern Zone quota of 200** (an increase of 50 from last year).

The final quota, minus tribal declarations, will be split equally between two time periods (Oct. 14 to Dec. 25 and Dec. 25 to Jan. 31). The Northern Zone quota for each time period is 253, with a Southern Zone quota of 98 for each respective time period. Due to differences in success rate, the number of permits for each zone and time period will differ.

In the Northern Zone, where the department and harvesters have years of experience and history, we use the highest success rate in the prior three years for permit issuance. In 2017, for Time Period 1 this would be 50%, and Time Period 2 would be 78%. Primary reasons for a higher success rate in the latter time period most likely relates to the presence of tracking snow and devoted, late-season hound hunting. With a quota of 253 bobcats for each time period, there would be approximately 505 permits issued for the Northern Zone Time Period 1, and 325 permits issued for the Northern Zone Time Period 2.

In the Southern Zone, where we have three years of recent harvest experience, the success rate was 42% for Time Period 1 and 58% for Time Period 2. With a quota of 98 bobcats for each time period, there would be 230 permits issued for the Southern Zone Time Period 1 and 170 permits issued for the Southern Zone Time Period 2.

The total statewide bobcat quota for 2017 is more than double than in 2016 (375 in 2016, 750 in 2017).

Harvest needs to be reported within 24 hours online at gamereg.wi.gov or by phone at (844)486-9194 (844 GAME REG). Experience proves online reporting to be quicker and easier. Pelts must be registered (carcass included) with your local conservation officers within five days of the month of harvest. Carcasses are used to collect age information from all bobcats and reproductive status for females.

Fisher

Fisher management continues to present unique challenges, with somewhat long-term declines in northern portions of Fisher Zones A – D and a significant population increase in southern portions of these zones, as well as Zones E & F in southern Wisconsin.

Approved harvest quotas are identical to 2016 levels and are as follows:

Zone A – 150

- After tribal declarations are honored, the highest success rate in the last three years (38%), 220 permits will be available this year.

Zone B - 75

- After tribal allocation and with a success rate of 22%, 300 permits will be available this year.

Zone C - 60

- With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 18%, 340 permits will be available this year.

Zone D - 100

- With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 22%, 445 permits will be available this year.

The southern half of Wisconsin is comprised of two fisher management zones. Without consistent snow for annual track surveys we carefully watch success rates and combine this with local knowledge and observations in developing quotas.

Zone E – 250

- With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 36%, 690 permits will be available this year.

Zone F – 350

- With no tribal declarations and a success rate of 23%, 1,540 permits will be available this year.

Fisher harvest follows the same criteria as bobcat, with 24-hour harvest reporting online at gamereg.wi.gov or by phone at (844)486-9194 (844 GAME REG) and pelts must be registered with local conservation officers within five days of the month of harvest. This year, in place of collecting the entire skull of harvested fisher, the DNR will collect a small section of the lower jaw for aging purposes. The remainder of the fisher skull can be immediately retained for personal use. See the 2017 trapping regulations for additional details <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/wm/wm0002.pdf>

Otter

Over the past two decades, the department has worked to improve survey methods and continue aerial surveys through direct financial assistance from the Wisconsin Trappers Association. The Furbearer Committee closely evaluated survey results, harvest success rates, and input from trappers and field personnel in developing quota recommendations.

For 2017–18 season, the statewide otter quota has been set at 2,000. Permits will be allocated to each zone proportional to previous years' (2016-17) application level. Last season, the total quota was divided amongst three zones with 40% allotted to the North Zone, 30% to the Central Zone, and 30% to the South Zone. The goal of the new approach is to distribute permits equitably based on prior trapper interest and to minimize incidental take across all zones. In recent years success rates have been somewhat similar, a statewide success rate of 20% was used for determining the total permit level this season.

Total permit level for the 2017-18 season is 9,800. Approved permit levels for each zone are as follows:

North Zone – 3,815 permits

Central Zone – 3,420 permits

South Zone – 2,565 permits

Like bobcat and fisher, harvest needs to be reported within 24 hours online at gamereg.wi.gov or by phone at (844)486-9194 (844 GAME REG), and pelts must be registered with local conservation officers within five days of the month of harvest. Otter carcasses are not being collected during the 2017-18 trapping season.