

Beaver Trapping Questionnaire 2017-2018

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Abstract

The number of beaver trappers were down from 2016-17 levels, as were days afield and number of sets made. The mean beaver trapped was mostly unchanged during 2017-18 from the 2016-17 levels. An estimated number of 1,895 people trapped 18,122 beaver for 2017-18. Most beaver were caught in body-grip traps (65%), foothold traps were next at 25%, and snares were last at 7%.

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 2017-18 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 2017-18 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 2,343 (39.1%) of the 6,000 trappers receiving questionnaires. Respondents to the questionnaires trapped for beaver 11.4% of the time during the 2017-18 season. This was less than 2016-17 season when 12.0% of trappers trapped for beaver. 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 1,895 beaver trappers during the 2017-18 season. The number of beaver trappers who participated in the 2017-18 season was 9% less than the 2,077 that trapped in 2016-17.

In the northern 1/3rd of the state, Beaver Management Zones (BMZ) A and B, the beaver season ran from 4 November 2017 through 30 April 2018. The southern 2/3rds of the state, BMZ C had a beaver season that ran from 4 November 2017 through 31 March 2018 (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 2018. This was the twelfth year in a row that the two southern zones were not open in April. Most (60.3%) beaver trappers trapped in BMZ C, followed by BMZ A (21.4%), BMZ B (16.3%), and BMZ D (2.0%). Trappers harvested an estimated 18,122 beaver in 2017-18.

On the average, trappers trapped 23 days for beaver, had 8 sets out each day, and caught 10 beaver each. This was very similar to the beaver trapping activity in 2016-17, when trappers averaged 23 days, 9 sets, and 10 beaver. Trappers used body-grip traps in 70% of their sets, foothold traps in 25%, and snares in 8%. As a result, 65% of the beaver were caught in body-grip traps, 25% in foothold traps, and 7% in snares. There were decreases in the number of trappers pursuing beaver, and a slight decrease in effort. Overall the catch per unit effort were similar compared to the 2016-17 season.

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

The beaver harvest in 2017-18 (18,122) decreased 9% from the 2016-17 total of 20,020. The price paid for beaver pelts fell to \$8.98 in 2017-18 from the \$9.93 paid in 2016-17 season.

Weather conditions for the 2017-18 season were mostly normal for the months of December, January, and February. Conditions for late season trapping varied greatly from south to north with ice out and snow melt occurring in much of the south in March but with winter conditions lingering or intensifying in the north in March and April. These prolonged snow and ice conditions made late season trapping in the north difficult and lead to little or no open water trapping in much of the extended late season.

Table 1. Number of respondents, mean number of days trapped, sets, and catch in the regular beaver season in 2017-18 by beaver management zone.

Beaver Zone	# of Responses	Mean # of Days Trapped	Mean # of Sets	Mean # Trapped in Regular Season
A	55	19.6	8.1	11.3
B	45	26.3	11.3	11.0
C	157	23.7	7.6	7.7
D	5	27.4	10.8	42.5
Statewide	262	23.4	8.4	9.6

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

Beaver Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone A	54.1%	36.1%	9.8%
Zone B	42.6%	36.2%	21.3%
Zone C	43.6%	44.2%	12.2%
Zone D	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%

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	45.2%	35.5%	19.4%
Zone B	37.8%	35.6%	26.7%
Zone C	36.2%	50.3%	13.4%
Zone D	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%

PART II.

1. Did you trap beaver during the 2017-2018 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. Circle the month you did MOST of your beaver trapping. (Circle ONLY one)
 Oct. Nov. Dec. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr.

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 2017-2018 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

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)

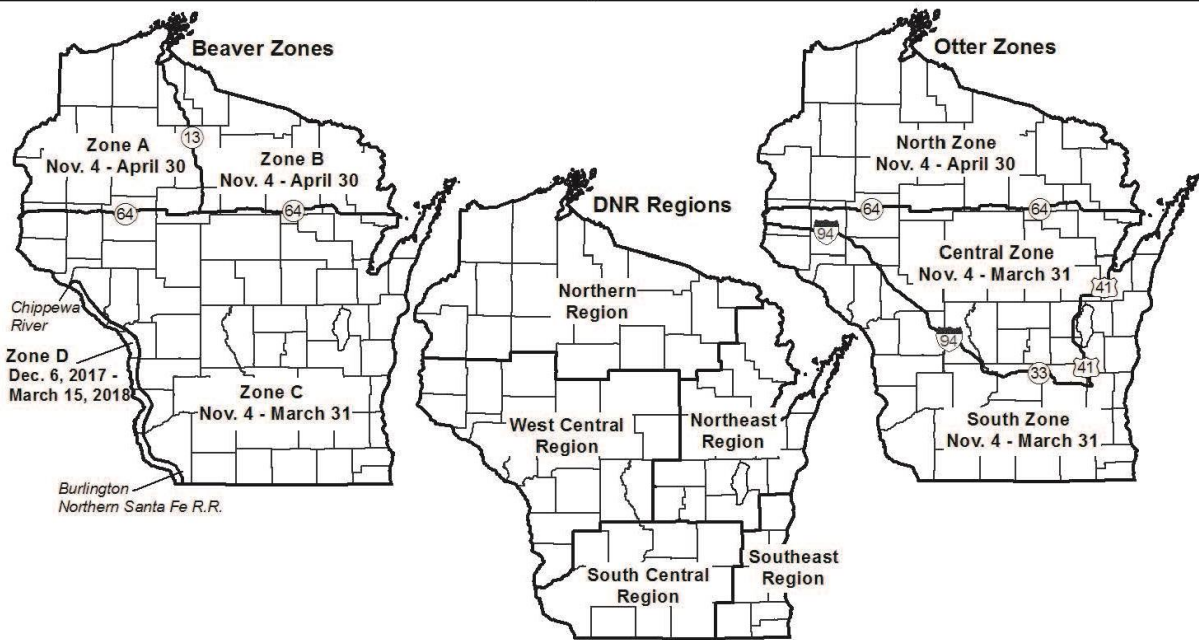


Figure 1. 2017-18 Beaver Trapper Questionnaire.

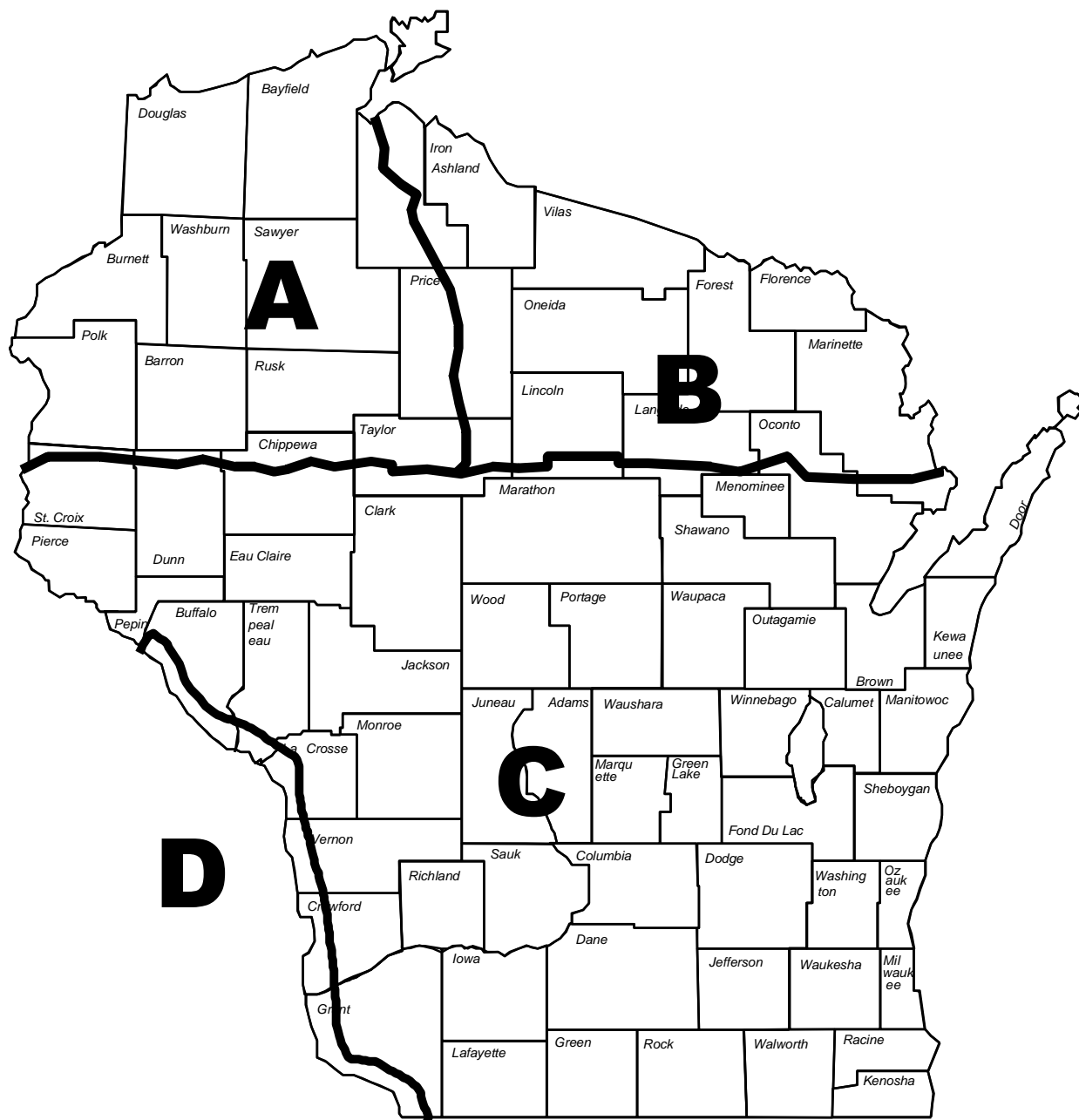


Figure 2. 2017-18 Wisconsin beaver trapping zones.