

Beaver Trapping Questionnaire 2008-09

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Abstract

An estimated 2,680 people trapped for beaver during the 2008-09 beaver trapping season. They harvested an estimated 37,425 beaver. Most beaver were caught in body-grip traps (72%), foothold traps were next at 24%, and snares were last at 7%. The number of trappers who trap beaver, and the number of beaver trapped increased from 2007-08 levels.

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 2008-09 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 2008-09 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 UNIX computer and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Replies were obtained from 2,138 (35.6%) of the 6,000 trappers receiving questionnaires. Respondents to the questionnaires trapped for beaver 15% of the time during the 2008-09 season. This was lower than the trapper effort in 2007-08 season when 16% 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 2,680 beaver trappers during the 2008-09 season. The number of beaver trappers who participated in the 2008-09 season was slightly more than the 2,632 that trapped in 2007-08.

In the northern 1/3rd of the state, Beaver Management Zones (BMZ) A and B, the beaver season ran from 1 November 2008 through 30 April 2009. The southern 2/3^{rds} of the state, BMZ C, had a beaver season that ran from 1 November 2008 through 31 March 2009 (Figure 2). While BMZ D, the southern 2/3^{rds} of the Mississippi River had a beaver season that ran from the last day of the duck season through 31 March 2009. This was the fourth year in a row that the two northern zones opened two weeks later, and the two southern zones were not open in April. Most (48%) beaver trappers trapped in BMZ C, followed by BMZ A (30%), BMZ B (19%), and BMZ D (3%). Trappers harvested an estimated 37,425 beaver in 2008-09.

On the average, trappers trapped 19 days for beaver, had 10 sets out each day, and caught 14 beaver each. This is slightly different than in 2007-08 levels when trappers averaged 23 days,

10 sets, and 11 beaver. Trappers used body-grip traps in 71% of their sets, foothold traps in 25%, and snares in 8%. As a result, 73% of the beaver were caught in body-grip traps, 23% in foothold traps, and 7% in snares. While the number of trappers pursuing beaver and effort were similar to the 2007-08 season, the catch per unit of effort and the harvest were up.

Beaver trappers felt that beaver populations were stable in all BMZ's in the state (Table 2). Beaver trappers also felt that the otter population is increasing in the central and southern parts of the state, and stable in the northern part (Table 3).

The beaver harvest in 2008-09 (37,425) was 25% more than the 2007-08 total of 29,924. The price paid for beaver pelts fell to \$12.94 in 2008-09 from the \$18.73 paid in the 2007-08 season. Weather conditions for the 2008-09 season were conducive for under ice trapping as temperatures were normal for the months of December, January, and February. Snow falls were very frequent early in the season, but returned to a more normal pace as the season progressed. This may have made remote access difficult. This weather pattern was very similar to the 2007-08 season when beaver trappers had normal temperatures and above average snowfall.

Table 1. *Number of respondents, mean number of days trapped, sets, and catch in the regular beaver season in 2008-09 by beaver management zone.*

Beaver Zone	# of Responses	Mean # of Days Trapped	Mean # of Sets	Mean # Trapped in Regular Season
A	105	22.1	14.4	20.5
B	77	22.3	13.2	16.5
C	182	16.4	6.6	7.4
D	10	22.1	18.8	28.9
Statewide	374	19.4	10.5	14.0

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

Beaver Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone A	50.0%	13.2%	36.8%
Zone B	50.0%	11.5%	38.5%
Zone C	52.7%	21.0%	26.3%
Zone D	64.3%	7.1%	28.6%

Table 3. *Beaver Trapper's observations of otter populations in the zone they trapped.*

Otter Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Northern	45.0%	44.3%	10.7%
Central	39.5%	46.5%	14.0%
Southern	37.2%	55.1%	7.7%

PART II.

1. Did you trap beaver during the 2008-2009 season?
 (1) Yes (2) No

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

3. What percentage of your beaver CATCH came from body-gripping sets, what percentage from foothold sets, and what percentage from snares?
_____ % Body-gripping _____ % Foothold _____ % Snares

4. How many of the beaver that you caught since June, 2008 did you sell?
_____ beaver

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 2008-2009 season regardless of whether you caught any beaver.

Zone	Avg. No. of Sets	No. Days Trapped	No. Beaver Caught Regular Season	No. Beaver Caught Damage Programs
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

8A. Based on your observations in the zones you trapped, are **beaver** populations stable, increasing, or decreasing? (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.)

8B. Based on your observations in the zones you trapped, are **otter** populations stable, increasing, or decreasing? (Please reply **only** for zones you trapped.)

Otter Zones	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
North	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Central	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
South	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Note: See attached otter zone map.)

Figure 1. 2008-09 Beaver Trapping Questionnaire.

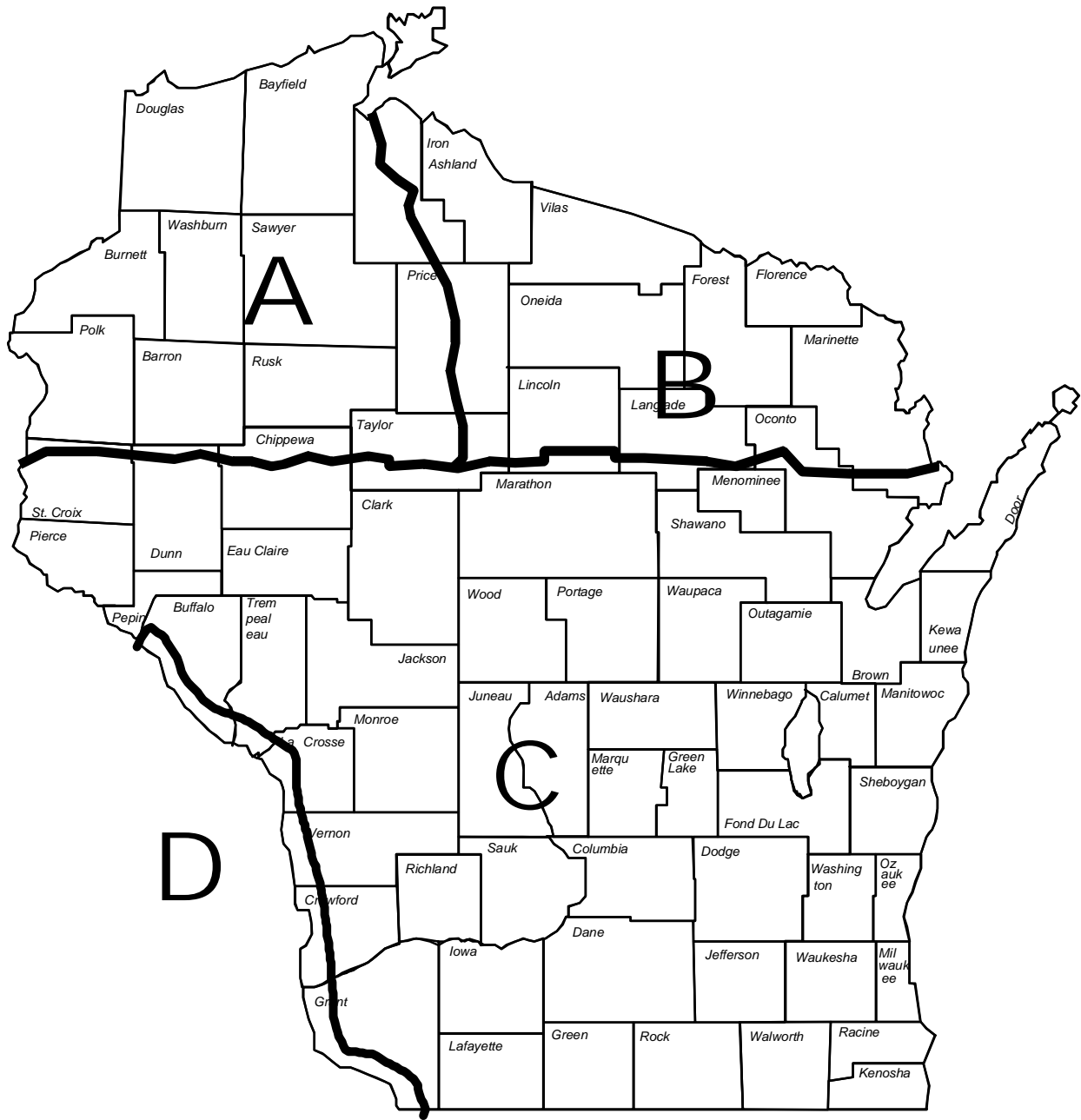


Figure 2. 2008-09 Wisconsin beaver trapping zones.