

Beaver Trapping Questionnaire 2012-2013

By Brian Dhuey and John Olson

Abstract

Beaver trappers, days afield, sets made and mean beaver trapped during the 2012-13 season were all down from 2011-12 levels. An estimated 3,047 people trapped 29,374 beaver for 2012-13. Most beaver were caught in body-grip traps (65%), foothold traps were next at 26%, 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 5,000 people who purchased a resident trapping license or a conservation patron license. The sample was selected from the 2012-13 resident trapping ($\approx 2,500$) and the conservation patron ($\approx 2,500$) 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 2012-13 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 2,282 (44.9%) of the 5,000 trappers receiving questionnaires. Respondents to the questionnaires trapped for beaver 18.8% of the time during the 2012-13 season. This was the same as in 2011-12 season when 19% 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 3,047 beaver trappers during the 2012-13 season. The number of beaver trappers who participated in the 2012-13 season was 6% less than the 3,248 that trapped in 2011-12.

In the northern 1/3rd of the state, Beaver Management Zones (BMZ) A and B, the beaver season ran from 3 November 2012 through 30 April 2013. The southern 2/3rds of the state, BMZ C had a beaver season that ran from 3 November 2012 through 31 March 2013 (Figure 2). While BMZ D, the southern 2/3rds of the Mississippi River had a beaver season that ran from the last day of the duck season through 15 March 2013. This was the eighth year in a row that the two southern zones were not open in April. Most (48%) beaver trappers trapped in BMZ C, followed by BMZ A (29%), BMZ B (18%), and BMZ D (5%). Trappers harvested an estimated 29,374 beaver in 2012-13.

On the average, trappers trapped 21 days for beaver, had 9 sets out each day, and caught 10 beaver each. This was lower beaver trapping activity than in 2011-12 levels when trappers

averaged 24 days, 11 sets, and 14 beaver. Trappers used body-grip traps in 68% of their sets, foothold traps in 27%, and snares in 7%. As a result, 66% 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, trapper effort, and catch per unit effort compared to the 2011-12 season.

Beaver trappers felt that annual beaver populations were stable or decreasing in BMZ's A and B, stable in BMZ C and D (Table 2). Over the past 6-8 years beaver trappers in BMZ's A and B felt that populations were decreasing, stable or increasing BMZ C and increasing in BMZ D (Table 3). Beaver trappers also felt that the otter population is increasing in all parts of the state (Table 4).

The beaver harvest in 2012-13(29,374) was 37% fewer than the 2011-12 total of 46,413. The price paid for beaver pelts rose to \$22.17 in 2012-13 from the \$21.15 paid in 2011-12 season. Weather conditions for 2012-13 season were above normal for the months of December, January, and February. Snow falls were infrequent and temperatures were above average most of the season. Late season may have had difficult conditions with many late season snows with much below temperatures. This may have made access to open water and/or remote areas difficult and delayed or prevented late season open water trapping.

Beaver Trappers were asked how they would prefer to shorten the beaver season if beaver populations continue to decline in BMZs A&B. More trappers preferred to stop the season earlier in the spring, 31.9% (Table 5). Beaver trappers who primarily trap in BMZ's C and D were asked their impression of beaver abundance changes in the last 6-8 years, stable to decreasing in BMZ's C, and trappers were unsure of the change in BMZ D (Table 6). Trappers also said that trout stream management in BMZ's A and B did not directly impact (82%) their beaver trapping effort (Table 7).

Table 1. Number of respondents, mean number of days trapped, sets, and catch in the regular beaver season in 2012-13 by beaver management zone.

Beaver Zone	# of Responses	Mean # of Days Trapped	Mean # of Sets	Mean # Trapped in Regular Season
A	120	23.3	9.4	12.0
B	75	19.9	10.2	9.3
C	204	20.2	7.2	7.6
D	21	14.6	11.6	15.6
Statewide	420	20.8	8.6	9.6

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

Beaver Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone A	43.8%	10.8%	45.4%
Zone B	40.3%	10.4%	49.4%
Zone C	52.4%	22.1%	25.5%
Zone D	54.2%	25.0%	20.8%

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	33.9%	13.7%	52.4%
Zone B	27.8%	12.7%	59.5%
Zone C	41.5%	27.5%	31.0%
Zone D	36.0%	32.0%	32.0%

Table 4. Beaver Trapper's observations of otter populations in the zone they trapped.

Otter Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Northern	39.5%	54.6%	5.9%
Central	32.1%	60.7%	7.1%
Southern	36.1%	55.7%	8.2%

Table 5. *Beaver Trapper's response to declining beaver populations in BMZ A and B.*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Start later in the fall	580	25.8%
Stop earlier in the spring	716	31.9%
Both	508	22.6%
Neither	440	19.6%

Table 6. *Beaver Trapper's response to their impression of the abundance of beaver in BMZ's C and D in the last 6-8 years?*

Beaver Zone	Don't Know	Not Present	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone C	29.7%	3.1%	25.3%	14.9%	27.1%
Zone D	74.1%	0.6%	10.2%	7.8%	7.2%

Table 7. *Beaver Trapper's response to trout stream management activities directly impacting beaver trapping efforts?*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	90	17.4%
No	425	82.4%

No Response = 1,729

PART II.

1. Did you trap beaver during the 2012-2013 season?
 (1) Yes (2) No

2. What percentage of your beaver SETS use body-grip traps, what percentage use foothold traps, and what percentage use 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. How many of the beaver that you caught since June, 2012 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 2012-2013 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 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"/>

(Note: See attached beaver zone map.)

8B. Based on your observations in the zones you trapped, are **beaver** populations stable, increasing, or decreasing over the past 6 - 8 years?

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.)

9. 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.)

10. Recent aerial surveys suggest a significant decline in beaver populations in Zone B and similar but less dramatic declines in Zone A. If a shortened beaver season is needed in either Zone A or Zone B (and this would shorten the otter season as well), what would you prefer?

(1) Start later in the fall (3) Both
 (2) Stop earlier in the spring (4) Neither

10A. Without aerial surveys in Zones C or D we rely on field observations and your input to monitor the status of beaver. If you're trapping these areas or familiar with beaver abundance in these zones, what is your impression of the abundance of beaver in the last 6-8 years?

	Don't Know	Not Present	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zone D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

11. Currently only 10% of our priority trout streams in Beaver Management Zones A & B have a beaver reduction program in place. Have these activities directly impacted your beaver trapping efforts?
 (1) Yes (2) No

Figure 1. 2012-13 Beaver Trapping Questionnaire.

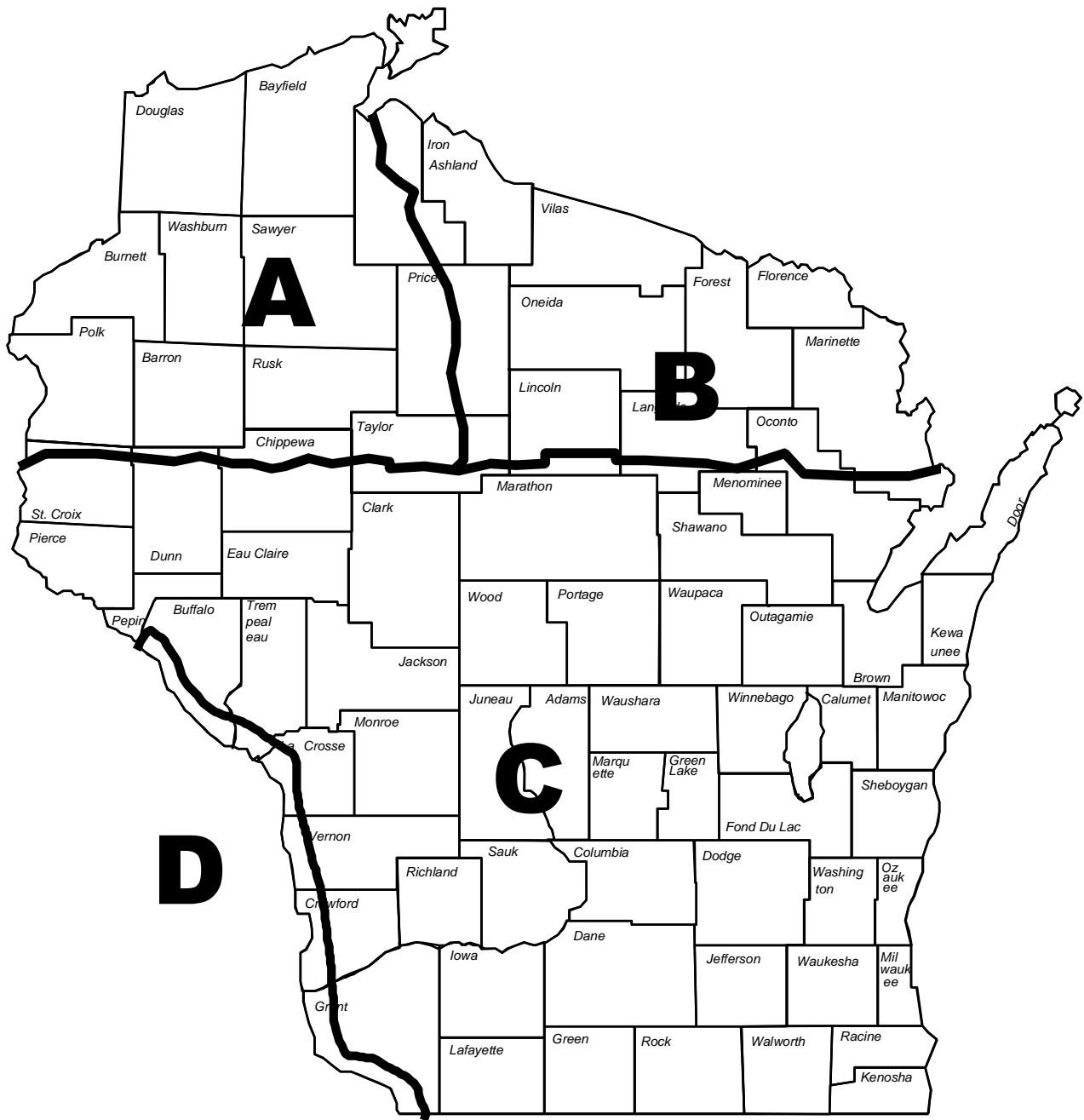


Figure 2. 2012-13 Wisconsin beaver trapping zones.