

# **Furbearers**



# **MIDWEST FURBEARER GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2014**

## **MEETING TIME AND PLACE**

This year's furbearer workshop was a joint workshop attended by the Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast furbearer groups. It was hosted by the Ohio Division of Wildlife at the Salt Fork State Park Lodge and Conference Center from 5-8 March 2014.

## **ATTENDANCE**

A total of 46 people attended the joint workshop. Participants at this year's workshop included state furbearer biologists from 9 Midwest member states (IN, KS, KY, MO, MN, NE, ND, OH, and WI), as well as representatives the Southeast (AR, FL, GA, LA, MD, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV) and Northeast (CT, ME, NH, NJ, PA, RI, VT) member states. Additionally, participants included individuals from US Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA APHIS-Wildlife Services, National Trappers Association, Ohio State Trappers Association, Ohio Division of Wildlife, Ohio Native Species Support, Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Program, South Dakota State University, Mississippi State University, and Virginia Tech University. A complete list of attendees and contact information for the Midwest state furbearer biologists is available in Appendices 1 and 2.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Numerous speakers presented information about furbearer research and management (Appendix 3). Topics included:

- BMP update and future testing needs
- CITES update
- EU threats on wild fur trade & other threats
- Need and funding for a 10 year trap ownership & use survey
- Muskrat workshop
  - Current status and data collection in each region
  - Research on the muskrats on the Upper Mississippi
  - Comparisons of muskrat trapping efficiency
  - Factors influencing muskrat populations
  - Needed research
  - Opportunities for regional research
- Trap-Alert™ demonstration and discussion of remote trap monitoring systems
- Bobcat and otter population modeling
- Update on petition to list Prairie Fox and the Eastern Spotted Skunk
  - Impacts of listing and state agency input
- Status of gray fox populations

- Missouri's gray fox genetics project
- Ohio gray fox population trend & status
- Current research in other states
- Monitoring techniques
  - Bowhunter surveys
  - Track counts
  - Trapper/hunter harvest surveys
  - Others (e.g., golden eagle cameras, etc.)
- Furbearer monitoring techniques
  - Wisconsin's Review of Furbearer Monitoring Techniques
  - Are trapper harvest surveys useful?
  - New monitoring techniques
  - Role of citizen science
- Ecology & management of predators
  - Michigan's predator-prey project
  - Virginia coyote study
- Cable device regulations, break-away requirements and compliance testing
- Fur boom and busts: management implications and concerns

State furbearer biologists also shared results of harvest and population surveys during the preceding year. The workshop provided a good venue for discussing issues that affect multiple state agencies. Summaries of these issues are presented as Director Information Items.

#### **DIRECTOR ACTION ITEMS**

None

#### **DIRECTOR INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. AFWAs Sustainable Use of Wildlife Committee (SUW) recently requested that their Fur Resources Technical Working Group (FRTWG) develop a "Phase 2 Ten-Year Plan" for activities associated with the development of trapping BMPs. A substantial amount of trap testing and associated outreach has been conducted over the last 15 years, making the program the largest ever undertaken in the U.S. Trapping BMPs have been developed for all but 2 species (Arctic fox, wolverine) for which the program was focused. Although a key intent of the program is to address national concerns about trapping in order to sustain trapping as a wildlife management tool, the year 2016 also marks a key point for the relevance of BMPs at the international level. At that time, the U.S. is expected to have met its' commitments as stated in the non-binding "Agreed Minute" signed by the U.S. and EU in order to ensure furs from the U.S. can be exported into the EU, Canada, and Russia (signatories of the legally-binding AIHTS).

Given the substantial amount of progress made, the impending international deadline, and the importance of maintaining ‘institutional memory’ as we move forward, the SUW committee determined that the time was right for developing an action plan to help guide the activities of the FRTWG in upcoming years. At the National Fur Workshop in Ohio, furbearer biologists were notified of the need for plan development and priority topics were solicited. Development of an initial BMP for Arctic fox and wolverine will remain a high priority leading up to the international meetings in 2016. Other ideas discussed included, but were not limited to: 1) conducting another national trap ownership and use survey (including assessment of trappers knowledge/use/support of BMPs); 2) further development of quick and user-friendly ‘tools’ or ‘apps’ for trappers, trap manufacturers, agency biologists, and outreach professionals to use in searching results of BMP trap testing and in developing public and trapper outreach programs; 3) a survey of state agencies to determine how they are using/implementing BMPs and associated outreach tools in their trapper and public education efforts; 4) assessing cost-effective and scientifically defensible alternatives for determining trap performance in the future (e.g., trap modeling, expert panels to determine ‘trap similarity’, etc.); 5) continuing professional development opportunities for agency staff involved in trapping-related outreach; 6) completion of a white paper on bodygrip traps and methods to improve their selectivity; 7) a review of all existing BMPs to identify any trap research gaps to fill; and 8) completing various trap research ‘side studies’ identified over the years (e.g., ways to improve selectivity without compromising efficiency, effects of individual trap components on overall trap performance, etc.).

Ideas for the Plan will continue to be solicited and Agency Directors and outreach personnel are encouraged to work with their furbearer biologists to identify what they see as critical needs for the future. A draft plan is to be submitted to AFWA at their annual meeting in September 2014. Suggestions for the 10-year plan can be submitted directly to Bryant White with AFWA, or to the Midwest representatives on the FRTWG (John Olson [WI], John Erb [MN], and Matt Peek [KS]).

2. The FRTWG of AFWA has submitted a LOI (funding request) under the approved NCN “Protecting State Fish and Wildlife Agencies Ability and Authority to Manage and Conserve Furbearers through Regulated Trapping Programs.” If funded, the project is proposed for 2 years and would include completion of another national Trap Ownership and Use Survey (last one done in 2004) and a survey of state agencies to assess how they are using/implementing BMPs in trapping-related outreach and education. Another LOI was submitted by Max McGraw Foundation to the same NCN that, if funded, will provide workshops for agency professionals to understand and better communicate the benefits of regulated trapping and the many ways in which it contributes to wildlife management programs. Details of both proposals were discussed at the meeting in Ohio.
3. The annual meeting of delegates from Canada, EU, and Russia provided updates and progress reports regarding their implementation of the AIHTS (Agreement on

International Humane Trapping Standards). The U.S. is not a signatory to that binding treaty, but does have “observer status” at the official JMC meetings. John Olson and others attended last year’s meeting in Siberia. A report of the JMC meeting in Siberia was provided by at the Furbearer Workshop by John Olson.

4. The furbearer biologists of the Midwest Furbearer Group would like to acknowledge and thank Joe Kramer for the support we have received from him during his years as Midwest Directors Representative to the Furbearer Group. He has always recognized the significance of furbearer issues relative to agency missions, he has supported our efforts to keep furbearer issues prominent in the view of the Directors, and he has been a strong advocate for the recommendations of the Group, recognizing the cumulative experience and expertise of the Group as a whole. We wish Joe the very best in his retirement, and hope this gives him time to find his way back to his roots as a fur trapper.

#### **TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

Shawn Rossler of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, agreed to host the next workshop. It will likely occur in late April or early May, as usual. A complete list of past host states is available in Appendix 4.

#### **APPENDICES**

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## Appendix 1. 2014 Furbearer Workshop Attendees

| Name                   | Affiliation  |
|------------------------|--|
| Jerry Belant           | Mississippi State University   |
| Jeff Beringer          | Missouri Department of Conservation  |
| Chris Bernier          | Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department   |
| Charles Brown          | Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife                                       |
| Andrew Burnett         | New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife   |
| Jay Butfiloski         | South Carolina Department of Natural Resources                                   |
| Andrew Butler          | Fort Drum Fish and Wildlife Program  |
| Tom Decker             | US Fish & Wildlife Service   |
| John DePue             | Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife                                |
| John Erb               | Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  |
| Mike Fies              | Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries                                 |
| Brian Flock            | Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency  |
| Jake Fries             | Wisconsin DNR  |
| Tom Hardisky           | Pennsylvania Game Commission   |
| Jennifer Hogue Manuel  | Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries                                   |
| Eric Householder       | USDA Wildlife Services   |
| Al Lecount             | Ohio Division of Wildlife  |
| Dave Linkhart          | National Trappers Association  |
| Karen Stewart-Linkhart | National Trappers Association  |
| Matt Lovallo           | Pennsylvania Game Commission   |
| Cheryl Mollohan        | Ohio Division of Wildlife  |
| Dana Morin             | Virginia Tech  |
| Colleen Olfenbutt      | North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Division of Wildlife Management    |
| Ron Ollis              | Ohio Division of Wildlife  |
| John Olson             | Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Wildlife Management         |
| Laura Palmer           | Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources                               |
| Matt Peek              | Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism                                |
| Suzie Prange           | Ohio Division of Wildlife  |
| Paul Rego              | Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection; Wildlife Division |
| Nathan Roberts         | Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  |
| Rich Rogers            | West Virginia Division of Natural Resources                                      |
| Christa Rose           | Native Species Support   |
| Shawn Rossler          | Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife           |
| Blake Sasse            | Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  |
| John Siekierski        | Ohio Division of Wildlife  |
| Harry Spiker           | Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service          |
| Brian Stemper          | US Fish & Wildlife Service   |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Patrick Tate     | New Hampshire Fish and Game Department            |
| Rio Throm        | Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission |
| Stephanie Tucker | North Dakota Game and Fish Department             |
| Eric Ucker       | Ohio State Trappers Association                   |
| Greg Wasilewski  | Ohio Division of Wildlife                         |
| Greg Waters      | Georgia DNR, Game Management                      |
| David Wilckens   | South Dakota State University                     |
| Sam Wilson       | Nebraska Game and Parks Commission                |
| Joe Young        | Ohio State Trappers Association                   |

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## **Appendix 2. Midwest Furbearer Biologists – Contact Information**

### **Illinois**

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### Appendix 3. 2014 Midwest Furbearer Workshop - Agenda



North America Furbearer Joint Workshop  
Salt Fork Lodge and Conference Center  
East Cambridge, OH  
May 5-9, 2014

### Monday, May 5 (Travel Day)

Arrival and check-in at lodge – Registration desk open at 3:00 pm

|         |                |
|---------|----------------|
| 6:30 pm | Dinner         |
| 8:00 pm | Evening Social |

*Tuesday, May 6*

**Speaker**

7:00 – 9:00 am Breakfast

9:00 am Opening remarks, house-keeping and introductions

9:15 am Regional reports from chairs

*(Each chair provide 5-10 minutes summary of the top 3 issues in their region)*

9:45 am BMP update Matt Lovallo (PA)

10:15 am Break

10:30 am BMP future testing needs

John Erb (MN) &amp; B. White

11:00 am CITES update

Carolyn Caldwell (OH)

11:20 am EU threats on wild fur trade & other present threats  
discussion

John Olson (WI) &amp;

- Need and funding for an every 10 yr. trap ownership & use survey

12:00 pm Break for lunch

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| 1:00 pm | Muskrat Workshop  |  |
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1:00-1:30 pm: Current status in each region</li> <li>1:30-2:00 pm: Current data collection in each region</li> <li>2:00-2:30 pm: Muskrats on the Upper Mississippi</li> </ul>  | Regional Chairs<br>Rich Rogers (WV)<br>Brian Stemper (MN/WI) |
| 2:30 pm | Break   |  |
| 3:00 pm | Muskrat Workshop continued...   |  |
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3:00-3:30 pm: Comparisons of muskrat trapping efficiency</li> <li>3:30- 4:00 pm: Factors influencing muskrat populations</li> <li>4:00-5:00 pm: Needed research/study designs/opportunities for regional research</li> </ul> | North Dakota<br>Group discussion<br>Group discussion         |
| 5:00 pm | Break before dinner   |  |
| 7:30 pm | “Shoot from the hip” Evening social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trap-Alert™ demonstration</li> <li>Remote trap monitoring systems</li> </ul>   | Group discussion<br>Todd Moan                                |

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### Wednesday, May 7

7:00 – 9:00 am Breakfast

### Speaker

|          |   |                    |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| 9:00 am  | Bobcat and otter population modeling  | Jeff Beringer (MO) |
| 9:30 am  | Update on petition to list Prairie Fox & Eastern Spotted Skunk                              | Blake Sasse (AR)   |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts of listing and state agency input</li> </ul> | Group Discussion   |
| 10:00 am | Missouri’s gray fox genetics project  | Jeff Beringer (MO) |

10:30 am Break

|          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| 10:45 am | Status of fox populations  |   |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ohio gray fox population trend &amp; status</li> <li>Current research</li> <li>Monitoring techniques               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bowhunter surveys</li> <li>Track counts</li> <li>Trapper/Hunter harvest surveys</li> <li>Others (e.g., golden eagle cameras)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | Suzie Prange (OH)<br>Group discussion<br>Group discussion |

12:00 pm Break for lunch

1:00 pm Furbearer Monitoring Techniques

- 1:00-1:30 pm: Wisconsin's Review of Furbearer Monitoring Techniques Nathan Roberts (WI)
- 1:30-2:15 pm: Group discussion Group discussion
  - Are trapper harvest surveys useful?
  - New monitoring techniques
  - Role of citizen science

2:30 pm Coyotes, bobcats and other predators

- 2:30-3:00 pm: Michigan's Predator-Prey Project Jerry Belant (MSU)

3:00 pm Break

- 3:30-4:00 pm: Virginia Coyote Study Dana Morin (Virginia Tech)
- 4:00-5:00 pm: Ecology & Management of predators Group Discussion

5:00 pm Break before dinner

7:30 pm Evening social

Shoot from the hip discussions:

- Cable device regulations, break-away requirements and compliance testing.
- Fur boom and busts: management implications and concerns

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## Thursday, May 8

7:00 – 9:00 am Breakfast

9:00 am Regional furbearer working group meetings

12:00 pm Break for lunch

1:00 pm Regional furbearer working group meetings continued...

5:00 pm Break before dinner

7:30 pm Evening social

## Friday, May 9 (Travel Day)

**Adjourn-Have a safe trip home!**

#### Appendix 4. Host States of Midwest Furbearer Workshops

| Year | State         |
|------|---------------|
| 1979 | Kansas        |
| 1983 | Wisconsin     |
| 1984 | Illinois      |
| 1985 | Iowa          |
| 1987 | Minnesota     |
| 1988 | Indiana       |
| 1989 | Missouri      |
| 1990 | Nebraska      |
| 1991 | South Dakota  |
| 1992 | Ohio          |
| 1993 | Oklahoma      |
| 1994 | North Dakota  |
| 1995 | West Virginia |
| 1996 | Michigan      |
| 1997 | Illinois      |
| 1998 | Kansas        |
| 1999 | Wisconsin     |
| 2000 | Missouri      |
| 2001 | Ohio          |
| 2002 | Iowa          |
| 2003 | Minnesota     |
| 2004 | Illinois      |
| 2005 | North Dakota  |
| 2006 | Michigan      |
| 2007 | Nebraska      |
| 2008 | Kansas        |
| 2009 | Kentucky      |
| 2010 | South Dakota  |
| 2011 | Wisconsin     |
| 2012 | Missouri      |
| 2013 | Illinois      |
| 2014 | Ohio          |

