

# 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

## Summary

Mail questionnaires were sent to 530 trappers requesting harvest, recreational and socio-economic information for the 2004-05 trapping season. Survey results indicate that resident trappers are aging and that retention of younger trappers is low. The mean age of licensed trappers is 49.7 years. Trapping in New Jersey is a male dominated activity. Over three-quarters (77.1 percent) of licensed trappers are tradesmen (33.7 percent), professionals (22.9 percent) or are retired (20.5 percent). Resident trappers live in every county of the state and have a tendency to reside in rural areas. An estimated 277 trappers (45.4 percent) own a computer. The majority of licensed NJ trappers (63.4 percent) are affiliated with one or both statewide trapping organizations, although a substantial percentage (35.6) remains unaffiliated. Trapping is a lifelong activity and respondents had a mean 27.6 years of overall experience. Annual expenditures on trapping equipment and supplies are usually low, however overall investment is likely to be substantial. An estimated 11,849 conibear traps, 6,324 cable restraints, 873 box traps and 107 diver traps were in use during the 2004-05 season.

The number of active trappers was estimated at 478, with most trappers targeting muskrat (69.0 percent), raccoon (59.6 percent), red fox (50.8 percent) and beaver (39.1 percent). Based on the survey results, mandatory coyote reports and beaver-otter check station reports, trappers harvested 39,208 muskrat, 4,629 raccoons, 2,666 red fox, 220 gray fox, 621 opossum, 303 skunk, 897 mink, 579 beaver, 49 river otter, 46 coyote and 9 weasels. Active trappers each expended an average of 44.4 days a-field representing an estimated 21,217 recreation-days. The total estimated value of the 2004-05 fur harvest was \$210,143 at the local level. There is broad support for standardizing the statewide mink, muskrat and nutria trapping season format.

This survey was conducted as part of **Job III-B. Hunter and Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey**. This job is included within **Grant Number W-68-R-9, New Jersey Wildlife Research and Management: Project III. Upland Wildlife and Furbearers**.

## Methods

A total of 604 resident and 6 non-resident, trapping licenses were sold during calendar year 2003, however all licenses sold for that year were not available for use in constructing the survey database. Therefore an address corrected and edited 2003 Trapper Licenses database along with additions from the 2004-05 Beaver and Otter winner/losers list was used to generate the 2004-05 mailing list. A survey packet was mailed to 530 trappers by April 5, 2005 (Appendix 1). Twenty-eight questionnaires (5.3 percent) were returned by the postal authorities as undeliverable and 502 were delivered. Demographic and economic analyses are based on the 205 (40.8 percent) responses that were correctly completed and returned by May 15, 2005.

One hundred ninety-four respondents (38.6 percent) purchased a 2004 license, a 2005 license or both. Harvest data analysis is based on the one hundred sixty-one respondents (32.1 percent) that participated in the 2004-05 trapping season.

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

### Results

#### Age

The age class of licensed trappers is presented in Table 1. Respondent age ranged from 11 to 84 years, with a mean age of 49.7 years (n = 205, SD = 13.4) in 2004-05. The majority of 2004-05 respondents (17.6 percent) were between 40 and 45 years of age. Estimates of trapper numbers by age class for 2003-04 are presented for comparison purposes.

Table 1. Age class of respondents to the 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest Survey

| Age Class    | Number of 2004-05 respondents | Percent of 2004-05 respondents | Estimated number of trappers (2004-05) | Estimated number of trappers (2003-04) |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <16          | 2                             | 1.0%                           | 6                                      | 0                                      |
| 16 to 19     | 1                             | 0.5%                           | 3                                      | 6                                      |
| 20 to 24     | 6                             | 2.9%                           | 18                                     | 17                                     |
| 25 to 29     | 4                             | 2.0%                           | 12                                     | 12                                     |
| 30 to 34     | 7                             | 3.4%                           | 21                                     | 35                                     |
| 35 to 39     | 22                            | 10.7%                          | 65                                     | 86                                     |
| 40 to 44     | 36                            | 17.6%                          | 107                                    | 81                                     |
| 45 to 49     | 28                            | 13.7%                          | 83                                     | 101                                    |
| 50 to 54     | 23                            | 11.2%                          | 68                                     | 63                                     |
| 55 to 59     | 29                            | 14.1%                          | 86                                     | 81                                     |
| 60 to 64     | 19                            | 9.3%                           | 56                                     | 49                                     |
| 65+          | 27                            | 13.2%                          | 80                                     | 78                                     |
| Unknown      | 1                             | 0.5%                           | 3                                      | 3                                      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>205</b>                    | <b>100.0%</b>                  | <b>609</b>                             | <b>610</b>                             |

#### Gender

Survey respondents are overwhelmingly male (95.1 percent). Based on survey results, an estimated 586 males and 24 females were licensed trappers in 2004, compared to 593 males and 17 females licensed in 2003.

#### Occupation

Survey recipients were asked to provide their occupation. Responses were categorized and summarized in Table 2 below. Occupations for 77.1 percent of respondents could be categorized into three of the nine groupings: Trade (33.7 percent); Professional (22.9 percent) and Retired (20.5 percent). These three groups constituted 68.2 percent of the 2003-04 responses.

#### Residency

The estimated number of resident trappers by county (2004 v. 2003) is presented in Table 3. Resident trappers live in every county of the state and have a tendency to reside in predominantly rural areas. The majority (54.2 percent) of New Jersey's resident trappers live in Burlington, Cumberland, Hunterdon, Salem, Sussex and Warren Counties. Less than half of respondents (45.4 percent) indicated having an e-mail address.

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

Table 2. Occupation of New Jersey's licensed trappers

| Category       | Number of<br>2004-05<br>respondents | Percent of<br>2004-05<br>respondents | Estimated<br>number of<br>trappers<br>(2004-05) | Estimated<br>number of<br>trappers<br>(2003-04) |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Animal Control | 5                                   | 2.4%                                 | 15  | 23  |
| Farmer         | 11                                  | 5.4%                                 | 33  | 32  |
| Military       | 2                                   | 1.0%                                 | 6   | 0   |
| Professional   | 47                                  | 22.9%                                | 140   | 98  |
| Retired        | 42                                  | 20.5%                                | 125   | 124   |
| Self-employed  | 7                                   | 3.4%                                 | 21  | 81  |
| Student        | 4                                   | 2.0%                                 | 12  | 12  |
| Trade          | 69                                  | 33.7%                                | 205   | 224   |
| Unemployed     | 5                                   | 2.4%                                 | 15  | 12  |
| Unknown        | 13                                  | 6.3%                                 | 39  | 5   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>205</b>                          | <b>100.0%</b>                        | <b>609</b>                                      | <b>610</b>                                      |

Table 3. Estimated number of resident trappers in New Jersey, by county

| County       | 2004-05<br>database | Percent of 2004-<br>05 database | Estimated number of<br>trappers (2004-05) | Estimated number of<br>trappers (2003-04) | Percent change<br>in 2004 |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| Atlantic     | 16                  | 3.0%                            | 18  | 25  | -27.2%                    |
| Bergen       | 21                  | 4.0%                            | 24  | 23  | 5.6%                      |
| Burlington   | 29                  | 5.5%                            | 33  | 33  | -1.0%                     |
| Camden       | 20                  | 3.8%                            | 23  | 24  | -4.4%                     |
| Cape May     | 21                  | 4.0%                            | 24  | 27  | -12.7%                    |
| Cumberland   | 54                  | 10.2%                           | 61  | 57  | 7.5%                      |
| Essex        | 2                   | 0.4%                            | 2   | 7   | -68.1%                    |
| Gloucester   | 32                  | 6.1%                            | 36  | 42  | -12.6%                    |
| Hudson       | 1                   | 0.2%                            | 1   | 4   | -68.1%                    |
| Hunterdon    | 29                  | 5.5%                            | 33  | 30  | 10.9%                     |
| Mercer       | 18                  | 3.4%                            | 20  | 20  | 1.2%                      |
| Middlesex    | 20                  | 3.8%                            | 23  | 15  | 47.0%                     |
| Monmouth     | 14                  | 2.7%                            | 16  | 11  | 48.7%                     |
| Morris       | 32                  | 6.1%                            | 36  | 36  | 1.9%                      |
| Ocean        | 18                  | 3.4%                            | 20  | 21  | -4.4%                     |
| Passaic      | 17                  | 3.2%                            | 19  | 19  | 1.5%                      |
| Salem        | 65                  | 12.3%                           | 74  | 73  | 1.8%                      |
| Somerset     | 8                   | 1.5%                            | 9   | 8   | 9.2%                      |
| Sussex       | 67                  | 12.7%                           | 76  | 74  | 3.3%                      |
| Union        | 2                   | 0.4%                            | 2   | 4   | -36.3%                    |
| Warren       | 42                  | 8.0%                            | 48  | 52  | -8.8%                     |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>528</b>          | <b>100.0%</b>                   | <b>600</b>                                | <b>604</b>                                | <b>-0.7%</b>              |

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

### Affiliation

New Jersey has two statewide trapping organizations, the New Jersey Fur Harvesters (NJFH) and the New Jersey Trappers Association (NJTA). Affiliation of respondents in either organization is presented in Table 4. The majority (63.9 percent) of survey respondents is affiliated with one (42.0 percent NJTA, 10.2 percent NJFH) or both (11.2 percent) of these organizations. Affiliation is more prevalent among female respondents (75.0 percent) than male respondents (64.4 percent). A large percentage (34.1) of respondents is unaffiliated or only affiliated with a national organization (National Trappers Association) (1.5 percent). Based on survey results, an estimated 323 trappers were NJTA members, 130 trappers were NJFH members and 217 trappers were unaffiliated in 2004. The reported membership of the NJTA and NJFH is 275 and 120, respectively in 2005 (New Jersey Trappers Association 2005 and Mounier 2005). It should be noted that each organization lists members who may not be licensed to trap in New Jersey or family memberships that include more than one licensed trapper.

Table 4. Affiliation in New Jersey trapping organizations

| Affiliation             | Percent survey respondents (2005) | Estimated number of trappers (2004) | Estimated number of trappers (2003) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| NJ Fur Harvesters       | 10.2%                             | 62                                  | 77                                  |
| NJ Trappers Association | 42.0%                             | 255                                 | 233                                 |
| Both NJFH and NJTA      | 11.2%                             | 68                                  | 52                                  |
| <b>Subtotal</b>         | <b>63.4%</b>                      | <b>386</b>                          | <b>362</b>                          |
| Unaffiliated in NJ      | 35.6%                             | 217                                 | 236                                 |
| <b>Subtotal</b>         | <b>99.0%</b>                      | <b>603</b>                          | <b>598</b>                          |
| Unknown                 | 1.0%                              | 6                                   | 12                                  |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>N = 205</b>                    | <b>609 licensees</b>                | <b>610 licensees</b>                |

### Prior Experience

Prior to the 1972-73 season, it was unlawful to trap any fur-bearing animal without possessing a Trapping and Firearm Hunting License. This requirement did not apply to occupant farmers and their immediate family members and to bona fide residents of the State under 14 years that required no license to trap according to state law. A separate Trapping License was provided for residents (age 12 and older) and non-residents (age 14 and older) in 1972. A previous year's license or a certificate showing successful completion in a trapper education course has been required since 1978. Junior Trapping Licenses were required for residents between the ages of 12 and 15, inclusive, from 1980 through 1999. Since 2000, trapping licenses are required for all persons age 16 year or older. Survey respondents indicated years of trapping experience prior to the 2004-05 season ranging from 1 to 70 years, with a mean 28.6 years of experience (n = 194, SD = 19.1). Male respondents were more experienced (29.1 years, n = 187, SD = 18.9) than females (8.2 years, n = 5, SD = 4.7). Seven respondents (4M:3F) were new to the sport in 2004-05.

### License Buyers

Survey recipients, who were licensed to trap in 2003, were asked whether they purchased a trapping license for the current season. The majority of 2005 survey respondents purchased trapping licenses for 2004 (93.7 percent) and 2005 (80.5 percent). Ten of the 205

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

respondents (4.9 percent) indicated not purchasing either a 2004 or 2005 trapping license. Reasons given for non-purchase included no time (30.0 percent) and farmer-exempt, low fur value, license not locally available, only trap beaver and poor health (10.0 percent each, respectively). Twenty percent of non-license buying respondents did not provide a reason.

### Active Trappers

One hundred sixty-one (83.0 percent) of the licensed respondents participated in trapping activities during the 121-day, 2004-05 season that began November 15, 2004 and concluded March 15, 2005. Active 2005 respondents are slightly younger (mean 48.9 years, SD = 13.2) with slightly less experienced (mean 27.4 years, SD = 19.5) compared to all respondents (mean age 49.7 years and mean experience 28.6 years). Based on active respondents (161), 478 trappers expended 21,217 recreation-days with a mean expenditure of 44.4 days afield during 2004-05 compared to 498 trappers, 22,282 recreation-days and a mean 45.0 days afield during 2003-04.

### Trap Types

Steel-jawed leghold, or coil spring, traps have been prohibited in New Jersey since 1985. Box traps, conibear traps, diver traps and body-gripping cable restraints are currently legal for use, and active trappers seldom utilize one trap type to the exclusion of all others (Table 5). Conibear traps were used by the majority of active respondents (85.7 percent), followed by cable restraints (69.6 percent), box traps (54.0 percent) and diver traps (20.5 percent).

Table 5. Trap types utilized by active respondents in New Jersey during 2004-05

| Trap type                                | Number of<br>2004-05<br>respondents | Percent<br>2004-05<br>respondents | Estimated number<br>of active trappers<br>(2004-05) | Estimated number<br>of active trappers<br>(2003-04) |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Box only                                 | 2                                   | 1.2%                              | 6   | 12  |
| Box and conibear                         | 14                                  | 8.7%                              | 42  | 52  |
| Box, conibear and diver                  | 1                                   | 0.6%                              | 3   | 3   |
| Box, conibear, diver and cable restraint | 23                                  | 14.3%                             | 68  | 83  |
| Box, conibear and cable restraint        | 41                                  | 25.5%                             | 122   | 89  |
| Box and cable restraint                  | 6                                   | 3.7%                              | 18  | 35  |
| Conibear only                            | 25                                  | 15.5%                             | 74  | 78  |
| Conibear and diver                       | 5                                   | 3.1%                              | 15  | 14  |
| Conibear, diver and cable restraint      | 3                                   | 1.9%                              | 9   | 29  |
| Conibear and cable restraint             | 24                                  | 14.9%                             | 71  | 63  |
| Conibear, cable restraint and other      | 1                                   | 0.6%                              | 3   | 0   |
| Diver only                               | 1                                   | 0.6%                              | 3   | 3   |
| Diver and cable restraint                | 0                                   | 0.0%                              | 0   | 3   |
| Cable restraint only                     | 14                                  | 8.7%                              | 42  | 29  |
| Other only                               | 0                                   | 0.0%                              | 0   | 0   |
| No response                              | 1                                   | 0.6%                              | 3   | 6   |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>161</b>                          | <b>100.0%</b>                     | <b>478</b>  | <b>498</b>  |

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

### Expenditures and Investment

Information on expenditures (excluding license and permit fees) by active 2005 respondents is presented in Tables 6 and 7. The majority of active respondents (65.2 percent) spent less than \$200 on trapping equipment and supplies during 2004-05. Nearly one-half (49.7 percent) have an overall investment exceeding \$1,000. Based on survey responses, there were an estimated 873 box, 11,849 conibear, 107 diver and 6,324 cable restraints in operation during the 2004-05 season. The NJDFW received \$21,305 in revenue from license sales in calendar year 2004.

Table 6. Expenditures on trapping equipment and supplies by active respondents, 2003-04

| <b>2004-05 Expenditures (US\$)</b> | <b>Number of 2004-05 respondents</b> | <b>Percent 2004-05 active respondents</b> | <b>Estimated number of active trappers (2004-05)</b> | <b>Estimated number of active trappers (2003-04)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| \$1-100                            | 54                                   | 33.5%                                     | 160  | 176  |
| \$101-200                          | 51                                   | 31.7%                                     | 151  | 115  |
| \$201-300                          | 25                                   | 15.5%                                     | 74   | 95   |
| \$301-400                          | 17                                   | 10.6%                                     | 50   | 40   |
| \$401-500                          | 3                                    | 1.9%                                      | 9  | 20   |
| \$501+                             | 9                                    | 5.6%                                      | 27   | 43   |
| No response                        | 2                                    | 1.2%                                      | 6  | 9  |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>161</b>                           | <b>100.0%</b>                             | <b>478</b>   | <b>498</b>   |

Table 7. Total investment in trapping equipment and supplies

| <b>Total investment (US\$)</b> | <b>Number of 2004-05 respondents</b> | <b>Percent 2004-05 active respondents</b> | <b>Estimated number of active trappers (2004-05)</b> | <b>Estimated number of active trappers (2003-04)</b> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| \$1-500                        | 43                                   | 26.7%                                     | 128  | 121  |
| \$501-1,000                    | 36                                   | 22.4%                                     | 107  | 89   |
| \$1,001-1,500                  | 14                                   | 8.7%                                      | 42   | 81   |
| \$1,501-2,000                  | 24                                   | 14.9%                                     | 71   | 55   |
| \$2,001-2,500                  | 8                                    | 5.0%                                      | 24   | 26   |
| \$2,501+                       | 34                                   | 21.1%                                     | 101  | 115  |
| No response                    | 2                                    | 1.2%                                      | 6  | 11   |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>161</b>                           | <b>100.0%</b>                             | <b>478</b>   | <b>498</b>   |

### 2004-05 Fur Harvest

A summary of the 2004-05 fur harvest is presented in Table 8. A total 49,209 animals from eleven game species open for trapping was harvested. No nutrias were reported by survey respondents. Nearly all (94.5 percent) of the animals harvested consisted of muskrat (79.7 percent), raccoon (9.4 percent) and red fox (5.4 percent). The fur value of these three species represents 86.5 percent of the total fur value, estimated at \$210,143 at the local level. Information by species is also presented.

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

Table 8. New Jersey fur harvest results for 2004-05

| Species            | Number of<br>2004-05<br>active<br>respondents | Estimated<br>number of<br>active<br>trappers | Mean<br>experience<br>(years) | Mean<br>days<br>trapped | Mean effort<br>(traps / day) | Estimated<br>harvest | Estimated<br>value (US\$) |
|--------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Beaver</b>      | 63  | 187  | 11.4                          | 15.5                    | 4.4                          | 579                  | \$ 9,333                  |
| <b>Coyote</b>      | 32  | 95   | 10.7                          | 27.6                    | 13.8                         | 46                   | \$ 764                    |
| <b>Gray fox</b>    | 33  | 98   | 19.9                          | 29.9                    | 20.7                         | 220                  | \$ 2,449                  |
| <b>Mink</b>        | 47  | 140  | 18.9                          | 32.1                    | 15.3                         | 897                  | \$ 9,345                  |
| <b>Muskrat</b>     | 111   | 330  | 28.0                          | 29.9                    | 37.8                         | 39,208               | \$ 99,496                 |
| <b>Nutria</b>      | 0   | Unknown                                      | 0.0                           | 0.0                     | 0.0                          | 0                    | \$ -                      |
| <b>Opossum</b>     | 20  | 59   | 19.9                          | 35.5                    | 9.2                          | 621                  | \$ 1,300                  |
| <b>Raccoon</b>     | 96  | 285  | 23.6                          | 31.4                    | 14.5                         | 4,629                | \$ 44,104                 |
| <b>Red fox</b>     | 82  | 243  | 18.1                          | 35.8                    | 21.8                         | 2,666                | \$ 37,965                 |
| <b>River otter</b> | 33  | 98   | 12.9                          | 11.5                    | 2.1                          | 49                   | \$ 4,207                  |
| <b>Skunk</b>       | 14  | 42   | 23.1                          | 26.4                    | 6.8                          | 303                  | \$ 1,157                  |
| <b>Weasel</b>      | 5   | 15   | 14.8                          | 21.4                    | 5.2                          | 9                    | \$ 24                     |
| <b>Total</b>       | 161   | 478  | 27.4                          | 44.4                    |                              | 49,226               | \$ 210,143                |

### **Beaver** (*Castor canadensis*)

The beaver trapping season was January 1 – February 9, 2005 (40 days) and was open only for holders of a special trapping permit. Two hundred four applications were received for the 186 available permits and 182 permits were issued. Seventy-eight permit holders (42.9 percent) did not participate during the 2005 beaver season. One hundred four trappers (57.1 percent) were successful in harvesting at least one beaver and 38 trappers (20.9 percent) were successful in harvesting the permit bag limit of eight beavers. Successful trappers were required to present their beaver pelts for examination at regional check stations on Saturday, February 12, 2005. Permit holders harvested 546 beavers. Twelve site-specific permits were issued and resulted in the harvest of 33 beavers, bringing the total 2005 harvest to 579. Additional information on the 2005 beaver harvest may be found in Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Report W-68-R-9 Job III-C entitled Beaver Distribution and Population Trends and River Otter Harvest.

Based on active survey respondents (n = 63), there are 187 beaver trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (92.1 percent), ranging in age from 13 to 74 years of age with a mean age of 47.2 years, and having a mean 11.4 years experience in beaver trapping. Active respondents trapped a mean 15.5 days using a mean 4.4 traps per day. The reported mean price per pelt received by active respondents was \$16.12 and the estimated value of the 2005 beaver harvest was \$9,333 at the local level.

### **Coyote** (*Canis latrans*)

The eastern coyote trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). State regulations require successful trappers to report their harvest to a regional Division law enforcement office within 24 hours. A harvest of 46

## **2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey**

coyotes were reported by trappers in 2004-05. Additional information on coyotes may be found in Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Report W-68-R-9 Job III-D entitled Occurrence and Distribution of the Eastern Coyote in New Jersey.

Based on active survey respondents (n = 32), there are 95 coyote trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (93.7 percent), ranging in age from 20 to 62 years of age with a mean age of 46.8 years, and having a mean 10.7 years experience in coyote trapping. Active respondents trapped a mean 27.6 days using a mean 13.8 traps per day. The reported mean price per pelt received by active respondents was \$16.60 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 coyote harvest was \$764 at the local level.

### **Gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)**

The gray fox trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). Based on active survey respondents (n = 33), there are 98 gray fox trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (97.0 percent), ranging in age from 20 to 77 years of age with a mean age of 47.0 years, and having a mean 19.9 years experience trapping gray fox. Active respondents trapped a mean 29.9 days using a mean 20.7 traps per day. An estimated 220 gray fox were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$11.11 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 gray fox harvest was \$2,449 at the local level.

### **Mink (*Mustela vison*)**

The mink trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days) in the Northern Zone, December 1, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (105 days) in the Southern Zone, and January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days) on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas. Based on active survey respondents (n = 47), there are 140 mink trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents were predominantly male (97.9 percent), ranging in age from 13 to 74 years of age with a mean age of 47.0 years, and having a mean 18.9 years experience trapping mink. Active respondents trapped a mean 32.1 days using a mean 15.3 traps per day. An estimated 897 mink were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$10.42 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 mink harvest was \$9,345 at the local level.

### **Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)**

The muskrat trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days) in the Northern Zone, December 1, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (105 days) in the Southern Zone, and January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days) on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas. Based on active survey respondents (n = 111), there are 330 muskrat trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents were predominantly male (97.3 percent), ranging in age from 13 to 84 years of age with a mean age of 48.6 years, and having a mean 28.0 years experience trapping muskrat. Active respondents trapped a mean 29.9 days using a mean 37.8 traps per day. An estimated 39,208 muskrat were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$2.54 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 mink harvest was \$99,496 at the local level.



## **2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey**

### **Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginianus*)**

The Virginia opossum trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). Based on active survey respondents (n = 20), there are 59 opossum trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (90.0 percent), ranging in age from 20 to 63 years of age with a mean age of 44.2 years, and having a mean 19.9 years experience trapping opossum. Active respondents trapped a mean 35.5 days using a mean 9.2 traps per day. An estimated 621 opossum were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$2.09 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 opossum harvest was \$1,300 at the local level.

### **Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)**

The raccoon trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). Based on active survey respondents (n = 96), there are 285 raccoon trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (96.9 percent), ranging in age from 13 to 77 years of age with a mean age of 46.6 years, and having a mean 23.6 years experience trapping raccoon. Active respondents trapped a mean 31.4 days using a mean 14.5 traps per day. An estimated 4,629 raccoons were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$9.53 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 raccoon harvest was \$44,104 at the local level.

### **Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)**

The red fox trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). Based on active survey respondents (n = 82), there are 243 red fox trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (95.1 percent), ranging in age from 13 to 77 years of age with a mean age of 45.7 years, and having a mean 18.9 years experience trapping red fox. Active respondents trapped a mean 35.8 days using a mean 21.8 traps per day. An estimated 2,666 red fox were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$14.24 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 red fox harvest was \$37,965 at the local level.

### **River otter (*Lutra canadensis*)**

The river otter trapping season was January 1 – February 9, 2005 (40 days) and was open only for holders of a special trapping permit. One hundred eighty-one applications were received for the 106 available permits and all permits were issued. Forty-nine trappers (46.2 percent) were successful in harvesting the season bag limit of one otter. Successful trappers were required to present their otter pelts for examination at regional check stations on Saturday, February 12, 2005. Additional information on the 2005 river otter harvest may be found in Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Report W-68-R-9 Job III-C entitled Beaver Distribution and Population Trends and River Otter Harvest.

Based on active survey respondents (n = 33), there are 98 otter trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (94.1 percent), ranging in age from 13 to 70 years of age with a mean age of 45.4 years, and having a mean 12.9 years experience in otter

## **2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey**

trapping. Active respondents trapped a mean 11.5 days using a mean 2.1 traps per day. The reported mean price per pelt received by active respondents was \$85.86 and the estimated value of the 2005 otter harvest was \$4,207 at the local level.

### **Striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)**

The striped skunk trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). Based on active survey respondents (n = 14), there are 42 skunk trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are predominantly male (92.9 percent), ranging in age from 20 to 56 years of age with a mean age of 44.0 years, and having a mean 23.1 years experience trapping skunk. Active respondents trapped a mean 26.4 days using a mean 6.8 traps per day. An estimated 303 skunks were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$3.82 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 skunk harvest was \$1,157 at the local level.

### **Long-tail (*Mustela frenata*) and Short-tail (*M. erminea*) weasel**

The weasel trapping season was November 15, 2004 – March 15, 2005 (121 days), except on State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas where trapping was permitted January 1 – March 15, 2005 (74 days). Based on active survey respondents (n = 5), there are 15 weasel trappers in New Jersey. Active respondents are exclusively male, ranging in age from 28 to 54 years of age with a mean age of 46.0 years, and having a mean 14.8 years experience trapping weasel. Active respondents trapped a mean 21.4 days using a mean 5.2 traps per day. An estimated 9 weasels were taken by trappers, the reported mean price per pelt received was \$2.75 and the estimated value of the 2004-05 weasel harvest was \$24 at the local level.

### **Proposals**

Current state regulations (adopted for the 1964-65 season) divide the state into two zones for the purposes of trapping mink, muskrat and nutria. The boundary is defined as that section of New Jersey situated north (or south) of a line starting at the intersection of U.S. Route 1 and the Pennsylvania border at Trenton, then northeast along Route 1 to its intersection with Interstate Route 287 in Middlesex County, then east along I-287 to its intersection with the New York state line. Mink, muskrat and nutria trapping in the northern zone opens annually on November 15 and on December 1 annually in the southern zone. Trapping on all state Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) is currently prohibited until January 1 annually. The NJ Fish and Game Council has proposed changes for the 2005-06 season that would permit earlier trapping seasons on selected WMA in order to enhance recreational opportunity, enhance management efforts and simplify regulations.

Active respondents were asked their opinion on: (1) standardizing the statewide mink, muskrat and nutria trapping season; and, (2) which date is most preferable. Although an opinion was not solicited from non-participants, the majority of survey respondents (85.9 percent) provided an opinion to both proposals. Response data are presented in Tables 9 and 10. Based on survey responses, broad support was implied for standardizing the statewide opening date for mink, muskrat and nutria trapping (75.6 percent). However, date preference of survey respondents favoring a standard season format was less pronounced and appeared to conform to the geographic boundaries.

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

Table 9. Response to proposal to standardize statewide mink/muskrat season dates

| Response                              | Number of 2004-05 survey respondents |                    |                    | Total      | Percent of total |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|------------------|
|                                       | North <sup>1</sup>                   | South <sup>2</sup> | Other <sup>3</sup> |            |                  |
| Strongly Agree                        | 34                                   | 41                 | 5                  | 80         | 45.5%            |
| Agree                                 | 27                                   | 26                 | 0                  | 53         | 30.1%            |
| No opinion                            | 10                                   | 13                 | 1                  | 24         | 13.6%            |
| Disagree                              | 8                                    | 8                  | 0                  | 16         | 9.1%             |
| Strongly Disagree                     | 0                                    | 3                  | 0                  | 3          | 1.7%             |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>79</b>                            | <b>91</b>          | <b>6</b>           | <b>176</b> | <b>100.0%</b>    |
| Combined Strongly Agree + Agree       |                                      |                    |                    | 133        | 75.6%            |
| No opinion                            |                                      |                    |                    | 24         | 13.6%            |
| Combined Disagree + Strongly Disagree |                                      |                    |                    | 19         | 10.8%            |

Table 10. Preferred, standardized mink/muskrat/nutria opening date based on responses to the 2004-05 NJ Trapper Harvest Survey

| Preferred date                          | Number and percent of 2004-05 survey respondents |               |                |               |              |               |                  |               |
|---|--|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
|   | North (n)  | Pct. of North | South (n)      | Pct. of South | Other (n)    | Pct. of Other | Total (n)        | Pct. of Total |
| Nov. 15 – Strongly Agree                | 28   | 35.4%         | 22             | 24.2%         | 4            | 66.7%         | 54               | 30.7%         |
| Nov. 15 – Agree                         | 23   | 29.1%         | 14             | 15.4%         | 0            |               | 37               | 21.0%         |
| Dec. 1 – Strongly Agree                 | 6  | 7.6%          | 19             | 20.9%         | 1            | 16.7%         | 26               | 14.8%         |
| Dec. 1 – Agree                          | 4  | 5.1%          | 12             | 13.2%         | 0            |               | 16               | 9.1%          |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>61 / 79</b>                                   | <b>77.2%</b>  | <b>67 / 91</b> | <b>73.6%</b>  | <b>5 / 6</b> | <b>83.3%</b>  | <b>133 / 176</b> | <b>75.6%</b>  |
| Combined Strongly Agree + Agree Nov. 15 |  |               |                |               |              |               | 91               | 51.7%         |
| Combined Strongly Agree + Agree Dec. 1  |  |               |                |               |              |               | 42               | 23.9%         |

### Comments

The survey included space for recipient comments. Most respondents that provided input limited their comments to one topic, many gave two and a few provided as many as four comments. Comments totaled 191 and were categorized as follows: trapping regulations (42 percent), economics (24 percent), species populations (12 percent), beaver/otter (12 percent) and miscellaneous (11 percent). The majority of the regulatory comments were directed toward body gripping cable restraints for coyotes, season lengths (particularly for beaver), increasing access (particularly on state Wildlife Management Areas) and trap types. Economic comments were generally informational (fur not sold or check not yet received, reasons for not trapping and general satisfaction). Species abundance may be influenced by local conditions, but most commentators noted low fox, muskrat or weasel populations. Beaver/otter comments were generally directed toward the permit system (regular as well as

<sup>1</sup> Respondents residing in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren Counties.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents residing in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Salem Counties.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents from other states or whose resident counties are unknown.

## **2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey**

site-specific) and included suggestions on how the system might be improved (earlier mailings, more otter permits, waterproof transportation tags).

### **Remarks**

Occupant, qualified farmers are exempt from licensing requirements on their own property and consequently are not included in the mailing database. Licenses are otherwise required. Eleven licensed farmers (5.4 percent of respondents) were included in this year's survey. The presence of farmers in the survey underscores the need to acquire information from the predominantly non-licensed, farming community.

# **2004-05 NEW JERSEY TRAPPER HARVEST SURVEY**

Dear Fellow Trapper:

This is a copy of the 2004-05 Trapper Harvest Survey. This survey contains questions about your trapping activities in New Jersey this past season. Kindly take a moment now to complete this survey and return it in the self-addressed envelope provided. The information you provide is anonymous.

The information we receive in this survey will be used in evaluating, planning and improving trapping seasons in New Jersey and for determining harvest levels and trends for several species. For example, information provided last year was used in support of positive changes to cable restraint regulations (thicker cable sizes, increased loop diameters and increased height from the walking surface). Your reply is important to us even if you **did not** trap or even if you **were not successful harvesting any game this year**.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, and for promptly returning it in the envelope provided.

Sincerely,

**Larry Herrighty**

Larry Herrighty, Chief  
Bureau of Wildlife Management  
NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife

## **HOW TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY**

1. Please answer all applicable questions. Answer this questionnaire even if you did not trap or if you did not harvest any game during the past season.
2. Estimate the number of days trapped or game harvested if you don't recall the exact number. Please list specific numbers where they're asked for in days; please don't write in "week" or "month".
3. Please report only the game taken by **you**, not the entire trapping party, if more than one trapper shared a line. For example, if you were trapping with a friend who snared two red fox while you snared only one, you would report 1 red fox.
4. Record your answers in the space provided after each question.
5. After completing the questionnaire, return it in the envelope provided.

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

If you would like a copy of the survey results emailed to you, send a request to Wildlife Biologist Andrew Burnett at [Andrew.Burnett@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:Andrew.Burnett@dep.state.nj.us) and type "Trapper Survey Results" in the subject bar.

### 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your age in years? \_\_\_\_\_ years
2. In which COUNTY do you reside? (if non-resident, enter state) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your sex (Check **one**)  MALE       FEMALE
4. Do you belong to a New Jersey trapping organization? (Check **one**)  YES       NO
5. If you answered YES to Question 4, which organization(s)?  NJFH       NJTA  
 OTHER  \_\_\_\_\_
6. Prior to the 2004-05 season, how long have you been trapping (in general)? \_\_\_\_\_ years
7. What is your occupation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you have an e-mail address? (Check **one**)  YES       NO
9. Did you have a 2004 New Jersey trapping license? (Check **one**)  YES       NO
10. Do you have a 2005 New Jersey trapping license? (Check **one**)  YES       NO

**If you answered YES to either Question 9 or Question 10, please go on to Question 12.**

11. If you answered **NO** to Question 9 **and** Question 10, please list the **single most important** reason why you did not purchase a trapping license:  
\_\_\_\_\_.

If you answered **NO** to Question 9 **and** Question 10, **STOP HERE**. Thank you for participating in this year's Trapper Harvest Survey. Kindly return the survey in the self-addressed envelope provided. The NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife values your input and the information you provided.

12. If you answered **YES** to either Question #10 or Question #11, please provide the following information:

| Trapping Period  | A. Number of Days Trapping | B. First County Trapped | C. 2nd County Trapped | D. 3rd County Trapped |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 15 Nov – 31 Dec 2004<br>(47 days North, 31 days South) |                            |                         |                       |                       |
| 01 Jan – 15 Mar 2005<br>(74 days)                      |                            |                         |                       |                       |

13. Please indicate the type(s) and number of traps used during the 2004-05 trapping season (check **all** that apply):

- A. Box \_\_\_\_\_     B. Conibear \_\_\_\_\_     C. Diver \_\_\_\_\_     D. Snare \_\_\_\_\_     F. Other

14. Please respond to the following: *Mink/muskrat trapping should open on the same date, statewide* (Check **one**)

- A. Strongly agree     B. Agree       C. No opinion       D. Disagree       F. Strongly disagree

15. If you agree that mink/muskrat should open on the same date, which date would you prefer? (Check **one**)

- November 15                       December 1

## **2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey**

## 2004-05 New Jersey Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey

Please provide the harvest information requested for each species taken **by you** from *November 15, 2004 through March 15, 2005* on the following table. There are several questions for each species, so please take your time completing this portion of the survey.

| Species      | A. Trapped specifically for species? | B. If 'Yes', years of experience? | C. Primary county trapped in? | D. Number of days trapped for? | E. Number of traps set per day? | F. Total harvest | G. Average \$ per pelt paid |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
|              | (Yes or No)                          | (Years)                           | (list one)                    | (days)                         |                                 |                  | (\$ US)                     |
| 16. Beaver   |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 17. Otter    |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 18. Mink     |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 19. Muskrat  |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 20. Nutria   |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 21. Coyote   |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 22. Gray fox |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 23. Red fox  |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 24. Opossum  |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 25. Raccoon  |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 26. Skunk    |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |
| 27. Weasel   |                                      |                                   |                               |                                |                                 |                  |                             |

28. During the past season, did you trap *primarily* on: (Check **one**)

- Privately owned land                     
  Publicly owned land                     
  Both private and public lands

29. Excluding license and permit fees, how much money would you estimate spending on trapping equipment and supplies during the past season only? (Check **one**)

- A. \$1-100     
  B. \$101-200     
  C. \$201-300     
  D. \$301-400     
  E. \$401-500     
  F. Over \$500

30. Excluding license and permit fees, how much money would you estimate you have invested in trapping equipment and supplies overall? (Check **one**)

- A. \$1-500     
  B. \$501-1000     
  C. \$1001-1500     
  D. \$1501-2000     
  E. \$2001-2500     
  F. Over \$2500

**The survey is now complete.** Thank you for participating in this year's Trapper Harvest Survey. The NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife values your input and the information you provided. Kindly return the survey with any comments or concerns you wish to share in the self-addressed envelope by **MAY 1**.

**Comments** (additional room on back):

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |



