

Fisher estimates remain below goals



Photo by Stan Tekiela

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Ashland, Wis. — Fisher population estimates continue to fall below goals throughout most of the state, prompting the DNR's Furbearer Advisory Committee to recommend only minor changes to this year's harvest quota from last fall.

Last year 811 fishers were registered statewide from an original harvest goal of 815. Of those animals, 623 were part of the state harvest, 118 were via tribal harvest (104 off-reservation and 14 on-reservation), and 70 fishers were reported as incidental catches.

Based on that information, the DNR approved a total fisher harvest of 840 for this fall, broken down as follows: Zone A, 150; Zone B, 75; Zone C, 60; Zone D, 75; Zone E, 220; Zone F, 260.

Quotas are down almost 40 percent from the 2011 levels of 1,175 in order to get population estimates back in line with goals. Tribal declarations are also expected to be declared in Zone A and Zone B again this fall.

Looking at the fisher numbers zone by zone gives a good indicator of why the quotas were set as follows this year, according to John Olson, DNR furbearer ecologist.

Zone A — Last year produced harvest results that were slightly below the quota levels. The population model indicates there are 1,888 fishers in Zone A and the population goal is 1,700. Biologists are cautious, though, since track surveys and reports are indicating a decline in fisher activity. Due to this, the DNR recommended only a slight increase to 150 in order

to continue growing the population toward the goal.

Zone B — The 2013 harvest of 63 was considerably less than the harvest goal of 100. The population estimate of 2,029 falls well below the goal of 3,200, prompting a decrease in the harvest quota to 75. Olson is hopeful for a gradual population increase with this quota.

Zone C — The harvest goal will remain the same as last year, at 60, which will allow for the population to increase. The population estimate is currently at 1,185 with a goal of 1,600.

Zone D — Last year, there was a harvest goal of 50 and it was exceeded by 15 after non-trapping mortalities were taken into account. Although the population estimate is 1,722 and the goal is 2,700, there will be a slight harvest goal increase to 75.

Zone E — Harvest began in 2000 and the DNR continues to build a population model for this zone by collecting carcasses working with trapping success rates. With a success rate of 27.9 percent last year, down from 31 percent and 35 percent for 2012 and 2011, respectively, the DNR recommended a harvest goal of 220 fishers, which is slightly lower than the goal of 225 for 2013. Only 200 fishers were harvested last year.

Zone F — There is also no population estimate for this zone since it first opened in 2004. Success rates have increased since 2007 with the highest on record, 17.3 percent, for this zone noted in 2013. This prompted an increase to the harvest goal to 260 fishers for this year. A total of 264 were registered last year.