CHARACTERISTICS OF U.S. TRAPPERS
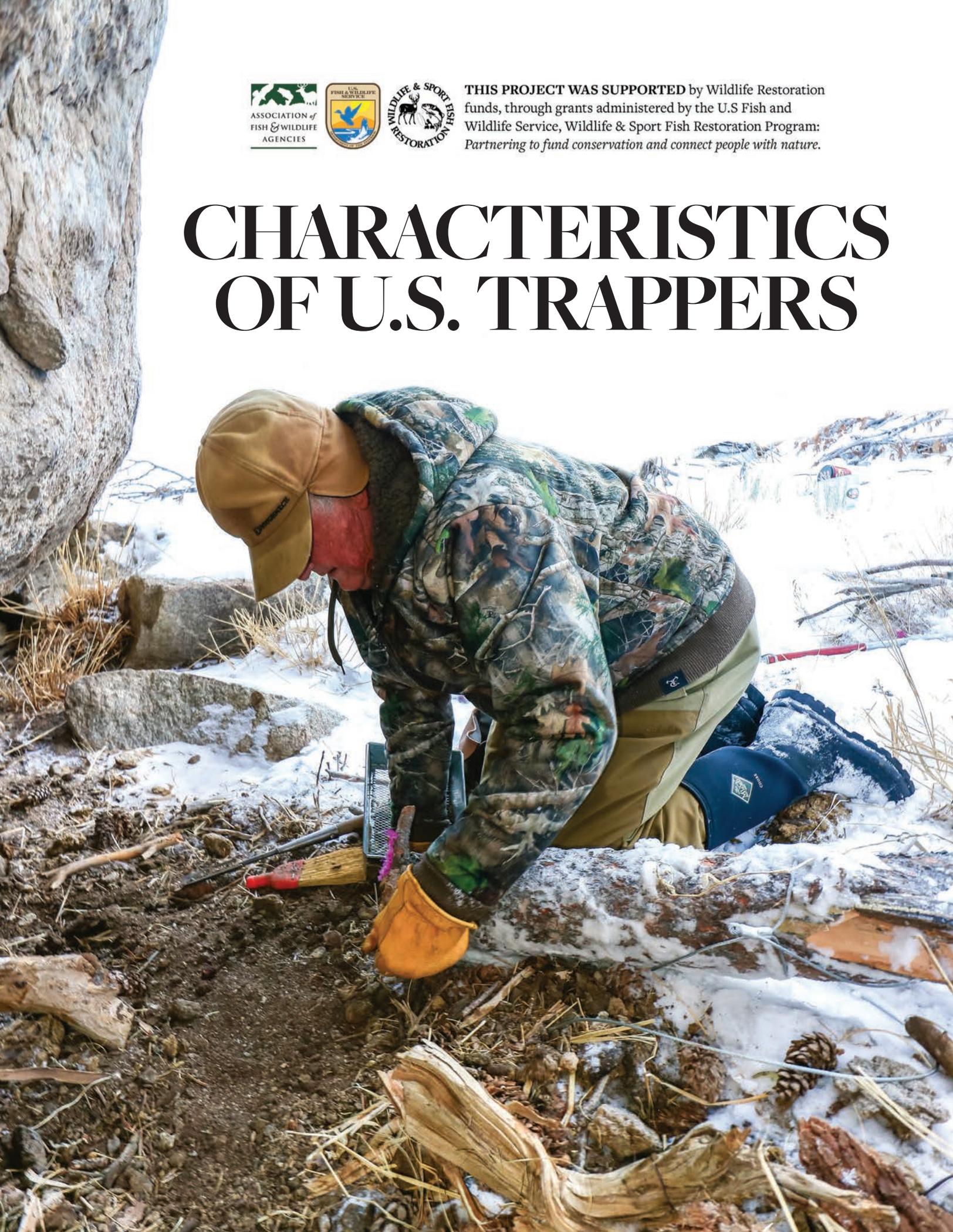
Introduction

REGULATED TRAPPING IN THE UNITED STATES IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL for managing numerous wildlife species and habitats, protecting public and private property, protecting endangered and threatened wildlife, and restoring wildlife populations. In addition, as a state-sanctioned sustainable use of wildlife resources, regulated trapping provides opportunities for harvest of wildlife and "locavore" lifestyles. It is also important to individuals and families as a way of connecting with the outdoors and providing seasonal sustainable income.

The survey discussed in this brochure was conducted by Responsive Management during 2015, for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). The goal of the survey was to collect updated information and trend data regarding the use of traps nationally, regionally, and by state. Trappers from 48 states participated in the survey. Because Hawaii does not issue trapping licenses or furbearer privileges and Delaware could not supply a sample of trappers, those states did not participate in the study.

Throughout this report, findings of the survey are reported at a 95% confidence interval. For the entire sample of 6,668 licensed trappers, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 1.18 percentage points.

## SAMPLING ERRORS, NATIONALLY AND BY REGION

REGION	SAMPLE SIZE	POPULATION SIZE	SAMPLING ERROR
NATIONAL	*6,668	*172,407	1.18
Alaska (by itself)	105	6,560	9.49
West (AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, TX, UT, WA, WY)	1,563	18,486	2.37
Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, OK, SD, WI)	2,315	95,318	2.01
South (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	1,544	29,894	2.43
Northeast (CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	1,141	22,149	2.83

*In the analyses, Texas was removed from national and regional results because it had too few respondents; thus, the total sample is 6,668 licensed trappers and the total population is 172,407 for the sampling error equation.

TRAPPING STUDY REGIONS

- ■ ALASKA
- ■ WEST
- ■ MIDWEST
- ■ SOUTH
- ■ NORTHEAST

Hawaii is not included in the study because the state does not issue trapping licenses or furbearer privileges; Delaware was not included in the study because the state could not provide a sample of trappers.
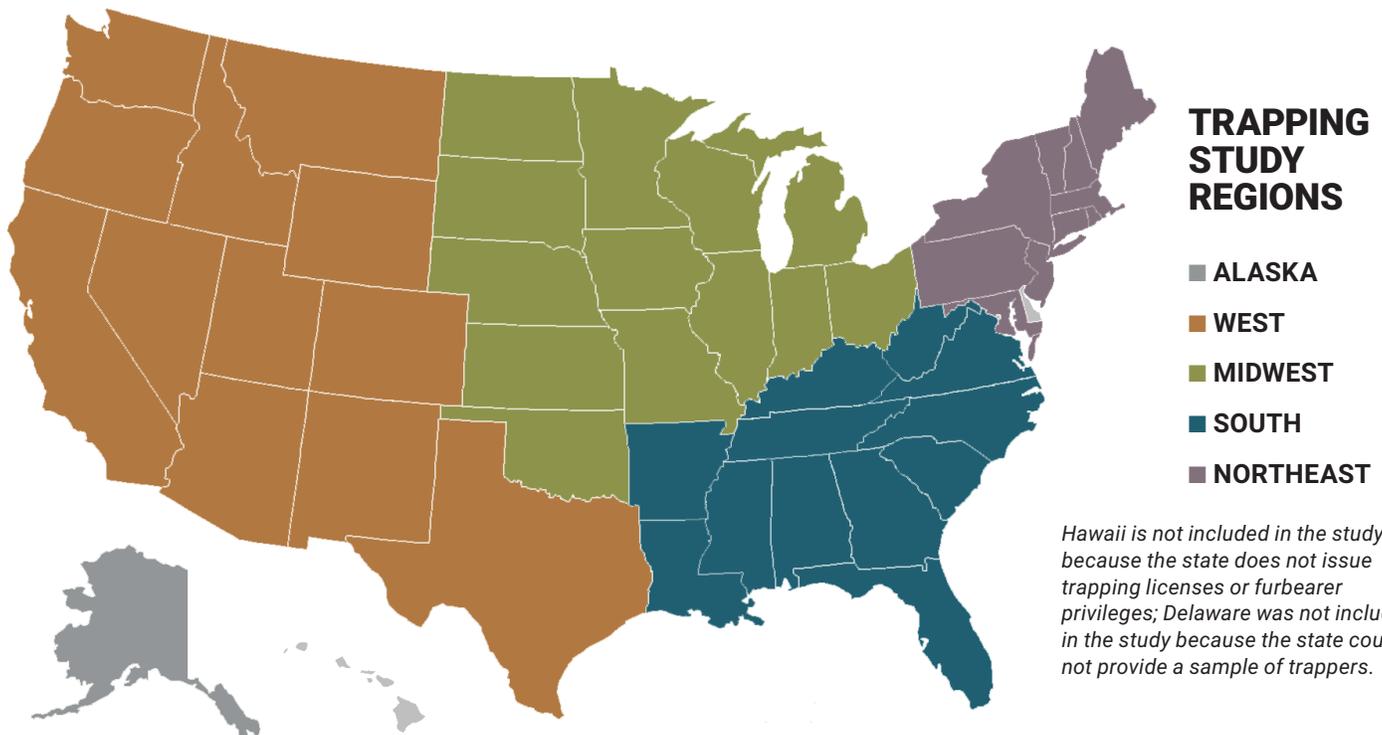
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF LICENSED TRAPPERS (2014-2015)

Through a combination of data provided by the states and data provided by the survey, Responsive Management estimates that there were **176,573 LICENSED TRAPPERS** in the United States in the 2014-2015 seasons. The tabulation shows the estimates in the regions; the Midwest leads the nation in number of licensed trappers.

TOTAL: 176,573

22,149

95,318

22,652

29,894

6,560

- ◼ ALASKA
- ◼ WEST
- ◼ MIDWEST
- ◼ SOUTH
- ◼ NORTHEAST
Excludes Delaware
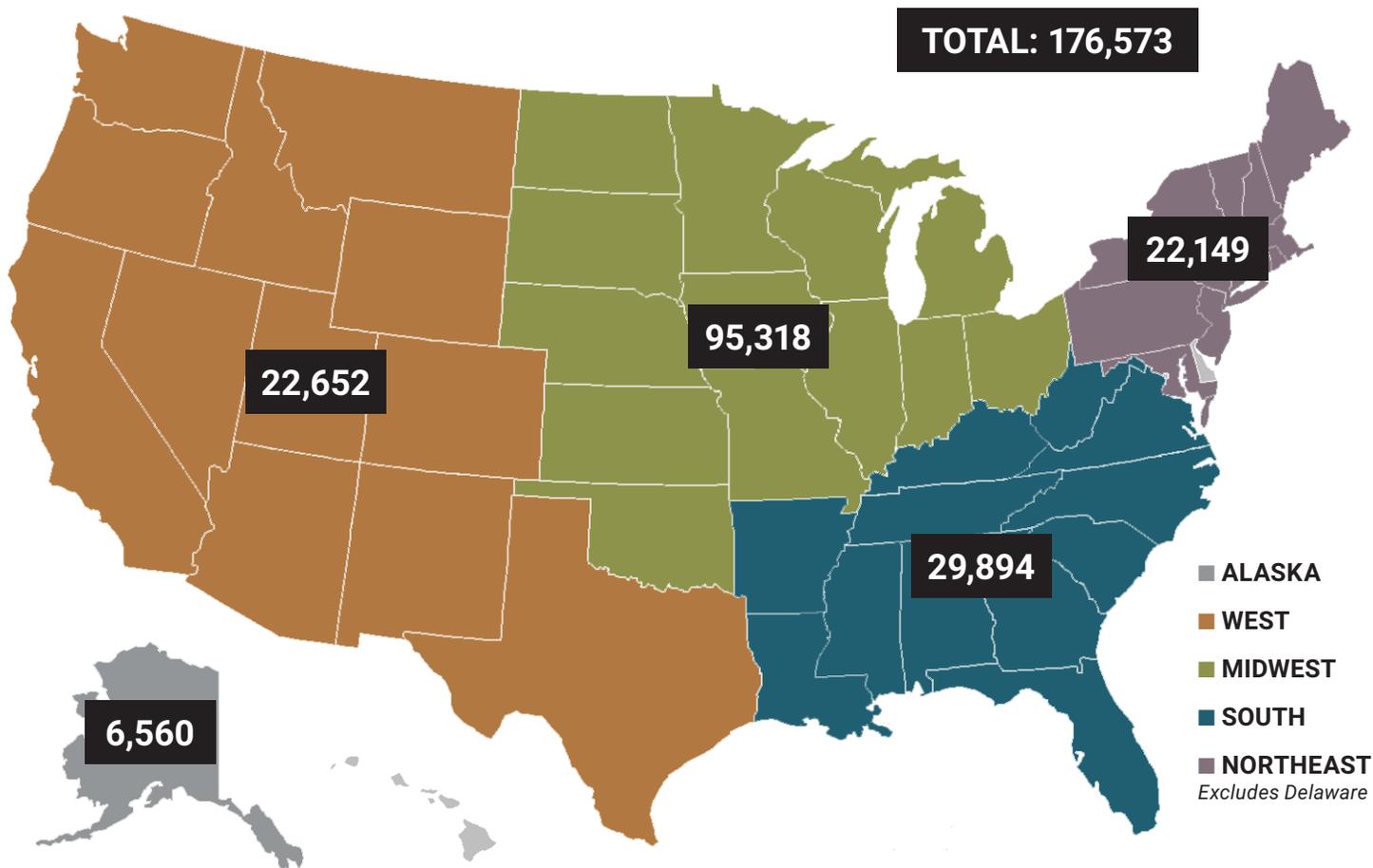
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF LICENSED TRAPPERS (2003-2004)

TOTAL: 142,287
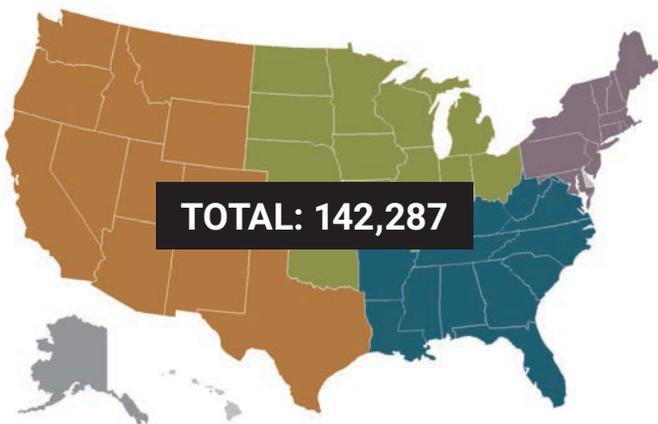
In 2003-2004, over half of all U.S. trappers (75,685) were in the Midwest.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF LICENSED TRAPPERS (1989-1990)

TOTAL: 158,752
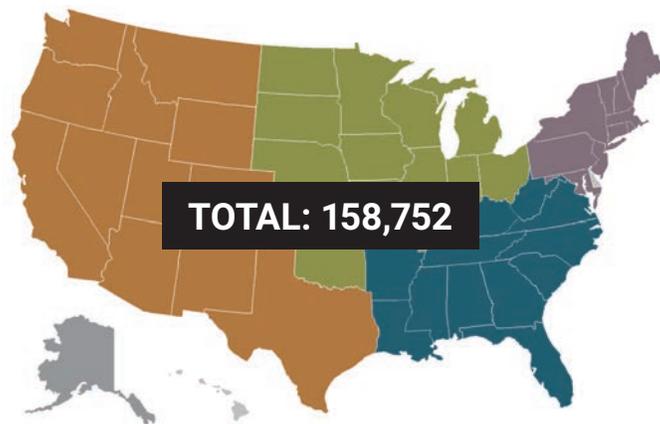
In 1989-1990, about half of all U.S. trappers (78,919) were in the Midwest.

Selected Findings

GENERAL TRAPPING INFORMATION

36.7

The mean number of days participants trapped Trappers in the West and the South had the highest mean days of trapping (44.9 and 43.5 days, respectively).

49%

During the past 15 years, just under half of respondents trapped no more than 5 of the 15 years. The mean number of years trapped in the past 15 years is 7.4 years.

99.6%

Nearly all trappers responded that they trap in their home state during a typical trapping season. A small percentage of trappers trap outside their home state (3%).


ISTOCKPHOTO

60%

Trappers who had been contacted by a landowner to trap nuisance wildlife. For 70% of trappers, removal of nuisance wildlife plays some part in their trapping, although typically only about a quarter of their trapping involves nuisance wildlife removal.

30%

Percentage of Alaska trappers who say that removal of nuisance wildlife plays some part in their trapping, compared with 68%-74% in the regions in the lower 48 states.

PRIVATE LAND PREDOMINATES IN TRAPPING OVERALL.
Conversely, in the Alaska region, public land predominates, with **61**% using public land mostly and **94**% using public land at least half the time.

64% Use private land primarily

25% Use public/ private land equally

11% Use public land primarily
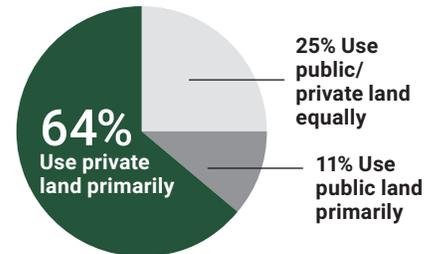
AVERAGE TRAPPING EXPENDITURES

For 2016, trappers were asked about their expenses in the previous 12 months. On average, trappers spend ...

$246.36
On traps and lures

$149.24
On other equipment, such as tools, skinning knives, etc.

$344.86
On travel

$730.85
On major trapping-related items, such as 4-wheelers, snowmobiles, boats, and motors

$1,694.24
Overall expenditures

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPS)

42% of trappers have heard of BMPs for trapping

Of those who have heard of BMPs, **64%** know *a great deal* or a *moderate amount*

OVERALL, DO YOU SUPPORT OR OPPOSE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES?

- **4%** Don't know
- **2%** Moderately oppose
- **1%** Strongly oppose
- **37%** Strongly support
- **36%** Moderately support
- **19%** Neither support/oppose
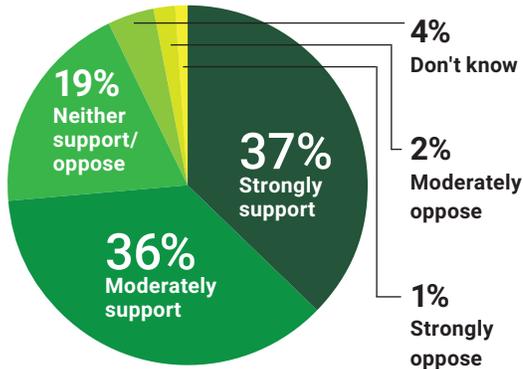
Among trappers who support BMPs, the most common reasons given for this support are for **HUMANE / ETHICAL/ANIMAL WELFARE REASONS (34%),** that it is **GOOD FOR ANIMAL POPULATIONS (24%)**, that it is **GOOD FOR THE FUTURE OF TRAPPING (20%),** that it is **GOOD TO HAVE GUIDELINES (20%),** and that it is **GOOD TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC/IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF TRAPPING (17%).**

Among trappers who oppose BMPs, the most common reason given for this opposition is that there is **TOO MUCH REGULATION OR THE REGULATION IS TOO UNIVERSAL (51%)** — by far the top response. Both of these questions were open-ended and allowed multiple responses to be given.

Among trappers who have heard of BMPs, **66%** currently use them and plan to continue

TRAPPER EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

39% Took trapper education nationally
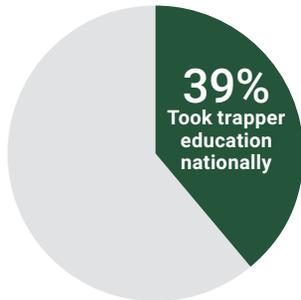
RESPONDENTS MOST OFTEN TOOK TRAPPER EDUCATION COURSES in the Northeast: **79%** did so, which far exceeds any other region (from 20% to 37%).

NATIONWIDE, 32% OF TRAPPERS belong to a trapper organization: **26%** belong to a state trapper association in their state of residence and **2%** belong to a state trapper association not in their state of residence. **11%** belong to the National Trappers Association, and **4%** belong to Fur Takers of America.

TRAPPER ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP RATES are highest in the Northeast region **(42%)** and the West region **(37%)** and are lowest in the Alaska region **(24%)**.

49% took a course sponsored by a state agency

35% took one sponsored by a state trapper association

9% other

7% AFWA

PHOTOS BY SAMARA TRUSSO, PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION

Wildlife Biologist Cory Mosby, of the Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife, familiarizes workshop participants with regulated trapping methods used in and around lakes and streams for the capture of aquatic mammals.

PRIMARY TARGET SPECIES

Nationally, when asked to name the top four species most important to their trapping, trappers most often selected:

62%
RACCOON

55%
COYOTE

37%
MUSKRAT

33%
BEAVER

30%
RED FOX

27%
BOBCAT

Regionally, the four most important species were:

ALASKA
Marten, Beaver, Canada Lynx, Wolverine

NORTHEAST
Red Fox, Raccoon/ Coyote, Muskrat, Beaver

MIDWEST
Raccoon, Coyote, Muskrat, Beaver

WEST
Bobcat, Coyote, Beaver, Red Fox

SOUTH
Coyote, Raccoon, Bobcat, Gray Fox

MOST COMMONLY USED TRAP TYPES (NATIONALLY)
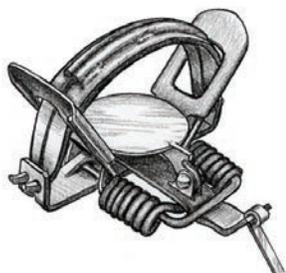
86%
of trappers use **FOOTHOLD** traps
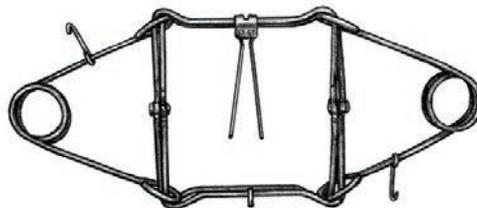
60%
of trappers use **BODYGRIP** traps

TRAP ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE GOODMAN

REGIONAL TRAP PREFERENCES FOR MOST COMMON SPECIES

MIDWEST REGION: MOST COMMONLY USED TRAP TYPES

SPECIES	NO. 1 TRAP	NO. 2 TRAP	NO. 3 TRAP	NO. 4 TRAP
RACCOON (at left)	Dog proof*	1 coil-spring	220 bodygrip	Cage
COYOTE	2 coil-spring	Snare or cable restraint	3 coil-spring	1.75 and MB-550
MUSKRAT	110 bodygrip	Colony and 1 coil-spring	1 longspring	1 stop-loss or guard trap
BEAVER	330 bodygrip	Snare or cable restraint	4 coil-spring	MB-750

SOUTH REGION: MOST COMMONLY USED TRAP TYPES

SPECIES	NO. 1 TRAP	NO. 2 TRAP	NO. 3 TRAP	NO. 4 TRAP
COYOTE (at left)	2 coil-spring	3 coil-spring	MB-550	Snare or cable restraint
RACCOON	Dog proof*	1.5 coil-spring	Cage	2 coil-spring
BOBCAT	2 coil-spring	3 coil-spring	MB-550	1.75 coil-spring
GRAY FOX	2 coil-spring	1.5 coil-spring	1.75 coil-spring	3 coil-spring

WEST REGION: MOST COMMONLY USED TRAP TYPES

SPECIES	NO. 1 TRAP	NO. 2 TRAP	NO. 3 TRAP	NO. 4 TRAP
BOBCAT (at left)	3 coil-spring	2 coil-spring	Cage	3 longspring
COYOTE	3 coil-spring	2 coil-spring	Snare/ Cable restraint	4 coil-spring
BEAVER	330 bodygrip	3 coil-spring	4 coil-spring	Snare or cable restraint
RED FOX	2 coil-spring	Snare or cable restraint	3 coil-spring	1.75 coil-spring

NORTHEAST REGION: MOST COMMONLY USED TRAP TYPES

SPECIES	NO. 1 TRAP	NO. 2 TRAP	NO. 3 TRAP	NO. 4 TRAP
RED FOX (at left)	1.75 coil-spring	1.5 coil-spring	2 coil-spring	Snare or cable restraint
RACCOON/ COYOTE	Dog proof*/ 2 coil-spring	1.5 coil-spring / 1.75 coil-spring	Cage / MB-550	220 bodygrip and 2 coil-spring / 3 coil-spring
MUSKRAT	110 bodygrip	1 longspring	1.5 coil-spring	1 coil-spring
BEAVER	330 bodygrip	MB750 and 3 coil-spring	4 coil-spring	n/a

ALASKA REGION: MOST COMMONLY USED TRAP TYPES

SPECIES	NO. 1 TRAP	NO. 2 TRAP	NO. 3 TRAP	NO. 4 TRAP
MARTEN (at left)	No. 1 longspring/120 bodygrip	110 bodygrip	220 bodygrip/No. 1 coil-spring/ No. 1½ longspring	n/a
BEAVER	330 bodygrip	Cable device	No. 4 longspring	220 bodygrip/No. 4 coil-spring
CANADA LYNX	Cable Device	No. 4 coil-spring	No. 4 longspring	No. 3 coil-spring
WOLVERINE	330 bodygrip	Cable device	MB 750/No. 4 coil-spring	n/a

*also known as foot enclosing traps, foot-encapsulating traps or encapsulated-foothold traps

TOP 4 MOST COMMONLY USED TRAPS AND % OF USE NATIONALLY BY SPECIES

CS= COIL-SPRING TRAP   BG= BODYGRIP TRAP   LS= LONGSPRING TRAP

BADGER
3 CS/34%

2 CS/31%

Snare or Cable/14%

1.75 CS and Cage or box/11%

BEAVER
330 BG/78%

Snare or cable restraint/13%

MB-750 and 4 CS/9%

3 CS/8%

BOBCAT
2 CS/32%

3 CS/28%

1.75 CS/MB-550/Snare or Cable restraint/Cage or box 11%

1.5 CS/7%

COYOTE
2 CS/35%

3 CS/25%

Snare or Cable Restraint/24%

1.75 CS/15%

FISHER
220 BG/46%

160 BG/35%

2 CS/10%

Cage or box/9%

GRAY FOX
2 CS/32%

1.5 CS/31%

1.75 CS/25%

3 CS/9%

KIT & SWIFT FOX
2 CS/33%

1.75 CS/21%

1.5 CS and 3 CS/ 14%

Cage or box/12%

LYNX
Snare or Cable Restraint/39%

4 CS/24%

4 LS/15%

3 CS/13%

CS= COIL-SPRING TRAP   BG= BODYGRIP TRAP   LS= LONGSPRING TRAP

MARTEN
120 BG/33%

110 BG/25%

1 LS/15%

220 BG/8%

MINK
110 BG/55%

1.5 CS/37%

120 BG and 1 CS/ 13%

1 LS/9%

MUSKRAT
110 BG/69%

1.5 CS/18%

1 LS/17%

Colony/15%

NUTRIA
11 LS/21%

1.5 CS/15%

2 CS/13%

220 and 330 BG, 1 CS and 2 LS 8%

OPOSSUM
Cage or box trap/45%

Dog proof/26%

1.5 CS/17%

2 CS/13%

RACCOON
Dog proof/54%

1.5 CS/32%

Cage or box/16%

220 BG/15%

RED FOX
2 CS/34%

1.5 CS/32%

1.75/25%

Snare or Cable Restraint/17%

RINGTAIL (WEST ONLY)
1.75 CS/27%

Cage or box/21%

1.5 CS/18%

2 CS and 3 CS/12%

CS= COIL-SPRING TRAP   BG= BODYGRIP TRAP   LS= LONGSPRING TRAP

RIVER OTTER

330 BG/58%

220 BG/32%

280 BG/16%

3 CS/7%

SKUNK

Cage or box/58%

1.5 CS/14%

Dog proof/10%

160 BG/8%

WEASEL

Other/36%

1 LS/21%

Cage or box/20%

1 CS/16%

WOLF

Snare or Cable Restraint/35%

MB-750/30%

MB-650/15%

Other/12%

WOLVERINE

330 BG/58%

Snare or Cable restraint/27%

MB-750 and 4 CS/14%

4 LS/7%

NOTE: Arctic Fox sample size was too small for accurate estimate. Photos from Wikimedia Commons, AFWA

DEMOGRAPHICS

98%

of trappers are male. This corresponds to previous years: 99% of trappers were male in the 2004 study.

47.7

The mean age of trappers. There are few trappers in the < 24 years age group; 90% of all trappers are over 24 years old.

$40,000 to $59,999

The average household income (pre-tax) of respondents most often falls in this range (18% gave a response in this range).

TRAPPING INCOME

21%

Trappers who responded that their trapping has been a **very** or **somewhat important** source of income over the past 3 years.

TRAPPERS MOST OFTEN SAID THEY SELL FURS using a local fur dealer (**48**%), at a Canadian auction (**17**%), or at an in-state auction (**13**%); note that **23**% have not sold furs. Local fur traders were the most commonly used means of selling furs in every region.

ASSOCIATION *of* **FISH** & **WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

Our Purpose

AFWA'S FURBEARER MANAGEMENT AND BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR TRAPPING PROGRAM (**BMPs**) aims to improve regulated trapping by evaluating trapping devices and techniques used for the capture of furbearers and educating those who use traps about the most humane, safe, selective, efficient and practical devices.

Traps are evaluated using standards and protocols developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

LEARN MORE

www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/furbearer-management
furbearermanagement.com