



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

5410 Grosvenor Lane • Bethesda, MD 20814-2197

Tel: (301) 897-9770 • Fax: (301) 530-2471

E-mail: tws@wildlife.org

Final TWS Position Statement

Traps, Trapping, and Furbearer Management (9)

Internationally accepted principles of natural resources conservation stipulate that resource management activities must maintain essential ecological processes, preserve genetic diversity, and ensure continued existence of species and ecosystems. Regulated trapping in North America is consistent with all three criteria and is a versatile, safe, effective, and ecologically sound method of harvesting and managing furbearers.

Trapping is part of our cultural heritage that provides income, recreation, and an outdoor lifestyle for many citizens through use of a renewable natural resource. It is often vital to the subsistence or self-sufficiency of peoples in remote regions who have few other economic alternatives. Trapping is a primary tool of most animal damage control programs and an important technique in wildlife research. In some situations, trapping is important in furbearer management and the management of other species and can be effective in reducing or suppressing wildlife diseases.

Despite the values of trapping, portions of the public oppose it, or at least perceive problems with some aspects of it. Some object only to certain trapping methods, particularly foothold traps on land, but others have moral objections to killing animals. Much opposition to trapping is associated with urban-oriented cultures, particularly those dominated by tertiary (service-oriented) employment. Those who approve of, practice, or benefit from trapping are primarily from rural cultures or are from areas where primary (land-based) employment predominates. This dichotomy of lifestyles and values, combined with a general lack of objective information about trapping, creates barriers to understanding and resolving controversial issues associated with trapping.

The policy of The Wildlife Society in regard to trapping is to:

1. Support the use of regulated trapping for sustained harvest of some species of furbearers as an effective method of managing or studying furbearers, controlling damage caused by furbearers, and at times reducing the spread of harmful diseases, and for economic benefit, subsistence, and as a legitimate recreational activity.
2. Recognize that regulated trapping is an important component of the lifestyle of many people who desire to live close to the land, derive as much of their sustenance from the land as possible, and take personal responsibility for their uses of animals.
3. Recognize that regulated trapping is a safe, efficient, and practical means of capturing individual animals without impairing the survival of furbearer populations or damaging the environment.
4. Recognize that animals can be injured by some traps and trapping systems, and that animal welfare is enhanced by using traps that kill animals quickly or capture and restrain animals in systems that reduce or eliminate injuries. This can be accomplished through: (a) regulatory and educational programs, (b) research that evaluates trap performance, and (c) implementing acceptable and effective improvements in trapping technology as identified through research, resulting in further reductions in injury to captured animals while maintaining acceptable trapping efficiency and safety to users.

5. Recognize that significant opposition to trapping exists, both in North America and abroad, and that a comprehensive solution to trapping issues will require application of well-designed and sensitive research, management, and outreach programs.
6. Promote development of improved traps, trapping systems, and additional methods of taking furbearing animals. Support the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping in the United States, under the auspices of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and encourage state wildlife agencies to promote the use of BMPs in state furbearer management and trapper outreach programs. Support the sustainable use of furbearer resources in carefully regulated management programs.
7. Urge use of trapping devices and systems that kill quickly or reduce injury and stress to captured animals, whichever is appropriate, and that are selective, efficient, and safe to use.
8. Promote programs of trapper education that cover appropriate trapping techniques, proper fur handling, and furbearer management.
9. Advocate research on furbearers, trappers, trapping methods, and attitudes of publics toward trapping to advance understanding and facilitate resolution of controversial issues and problems associated with furbearer management.
10. Promote programs that inform the public about values and benefits of properly regulated, sustained use of renewable natural resources, including furbearers.
11. Encourage appropriate regulation of trapping and rigorous enforcement of trapping laws by responsible agencies to assure that optimum furbearer populations are perpetuated and that populations of other species, including rare and endangered wildlife, are not threatened.

(This policy will expire in 2008.)