



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Wildlife Management and Regulated Trapping in Montana

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks information sheet in reference to proposed Ballot Initiative I-160

State law requires FWP to be responsible for the conservation of fish and wildlife populations.

- FWP has the responsibility to conserve, protect, and manage wildlife species, including animals that are hunted and trapped, for the long-term viability of their populations, while providing for responsible public use.
- Like other animals that are hunted, furbearers are trapped to manage for sustainable populations that are in balance with habitat conditions. Trapping does not endanger populations.

Furbearer trapping is regulated by state laws and FWP Commission rules in Montana.

- Similar to hunting or fishing, FWP requires a person to purchase a Montana trapping license and comply with trapping regulations that apply on both public and private land.
- The FWP Commission approves trapping regulations every two years through a public process and adopts harvest quotas for certain furbearers annually. These regulations are scientifically based and are strictly enforced. Trapping seasons are restricted to certain times of the year.

What animals are furbearers?

- FWP has management authority for animals that have been classified as furbearers and may be trapped. These species are beaver, otter, muskrat, mink, marten, fisher, wolverine and bobcat which have restricted trapping seasons and fall directly under FWP furbearer regulations.
- Other animals with fur value that are trapped include coyotes, weasels and skunks that are classified as predators and non-game animals such as raccoon, red fox, and badger. Certain general trapping regulations apply when trapping for these animals.

Trappers provide FWP with information that assists with wildlife management.

- For some furbearer species, trappers are required to present all harvested animals to FWP for the collection of information that includes harvest location, sex, age, and other biological samples. Furbearer trapper reports and annual trapper surveys for all species are used to help monitor species distribution and trends in population productivity.

Trapping takes place across the Montana landscape and provides multiple benefits

- Like hunting, trapping takes place on public and private lands across Montana. Trappers harvest furbearers, predators, and several non-game wildlife species across Montana to assist in population management, to protect livestock and prevent damage to agricultural lands, to receive economic value from pelts, and to pursue a legal outdoor recreational activity.
- Trappers are required to mark all traps with their license information on both public and private lands, regardless of what species they are trapping. Furbearer trappers must have permission to trap on private land and must follow additional restrictions on public land.
- The term “public lands” is considered to include federal and state lands. These include U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service federal lands. State lands are primarily FWP Wildlife Management Areas and Department of Natural Resources & Conservation School Trust Lands.

Furbearer trappers must follow existing regulations to trap on public and private lands.

- On public lands, trapping regulations govern how far away furbearer traps must be placed from trailheads, campgrounds and other public use areas. As long as furbearer trappers abide by these and other trap-type restrictions, they are allowed to trap on public and private land.
- Some local trapping closure areas exist. For example, furbearer trapping closures have been adopted by the FWP Commission that encompass about 40,000 acres in several high-use winter recreation areas around Missoula.
- FWP wildlife management areas have special regulations in place restricting the number of trappers and limiting trapping to specific time periods.
- Trapping on State School Trust land involves a permitting process and special regulations.

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FWP actions to minimize incidental captures when setting trapping regulations.

- Furbearer regulations, including types of traps that can be used and where they can be placed, exist to help prevent accidental captures of domestic pets and non-target wildlife species. If a domestic pet does get caught in a trap, trappers are required to report the incident.
- FWP has made informational materials available to trappers to help avoid or minimize the accidental capture of non-target animals.
- FWP also has educational information available for dog-owners and other recreationists that provide an overview of trapping in Montana, what to expect when a trap is encountered, and how to respond in the chance of an accidental capture.

How often must traps be checked?

- Montana does not have a mandatory requirement on how often traps must be checked, but state law requires that trappers must attend traps in a manner that does not waste furbearing animals and that traps must be removed when the furbearer trapping season is completed.

Trapper education programs are offered in Montana.

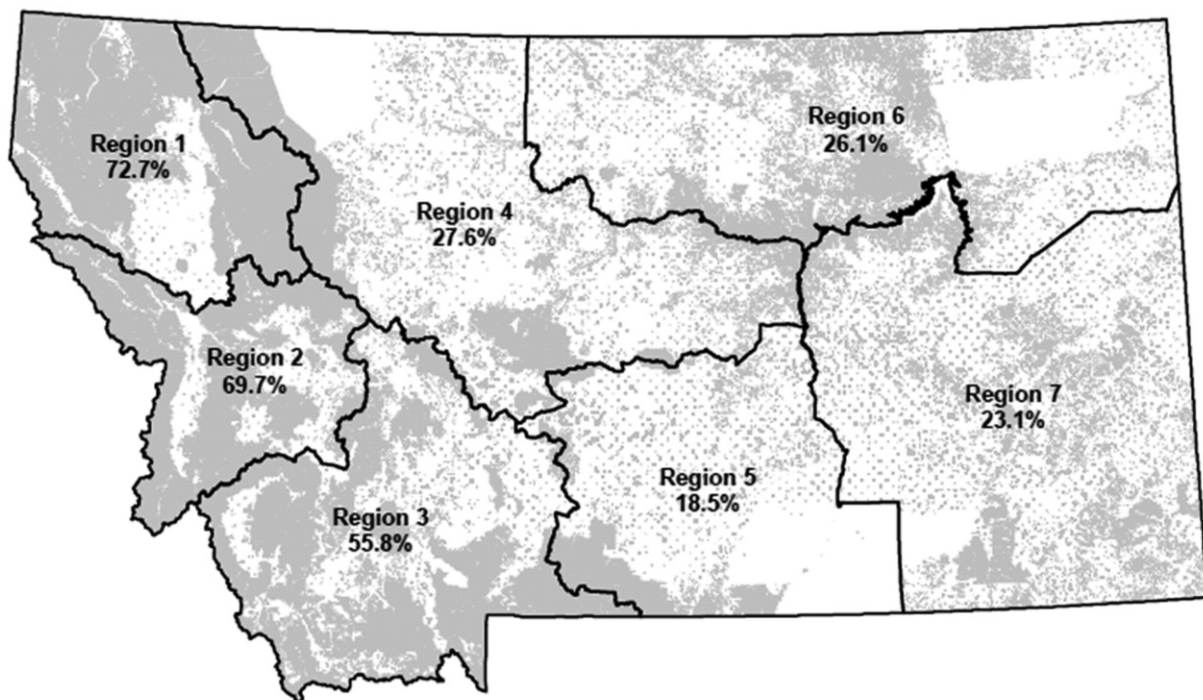
- Voluntary trapper safety and education courses are offered each year around the state and are coordinated by volunteer instructors from the state trapper's association with regular participation by FWP staff.
- Trapper safety and education is also provided during the annual Youth Trapper Camp that is a cooperative effort between the Montana Trapper's Association, FWP and Montana 4-H.

Distribution of Public and Private Lands in Montana

- Landownership patterns vary significantly across the state when shown as the percent of public land by FWP administrative region displayed in Figure 1. While these percentages are weighted more heavily to public ownership in western Montana, the map does depict mixed ownership patterns occurring across the eastern two-thirds of the state. This ownership pattern and the distribution of wildlife species across both public and private lands have direct implications to effective wildlife management and associated opportunities.

Figure 1. Landownership Patterns across Montana

Shaded areas represent public lands (and percentage) by FWP region.



► Visit FWP's Web site at fwp.mt.gov for more management and trapping information. Click "Hunting," and then select "Trapping."