

FOOTLOOSE MONTANA

Promoting trap-free public lands for people, pets & wildlife

July 2008

www.footloosemontana.org

In this issue:

- ***** THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO SENT A COMMENT ABOUT TRAPPING!
- ***** FWP COMMISSION MEETINGS: FINAL DECISIONS ABOUT OUR WILDLIFE AND LESSONS LEARNED
- ***** CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH UPCOMING RAFFLE TO BENEFIT FOOTLOOSE MONTANA!
- ***** SAVE THE DATE: 2ND ANNUAL FUNDRAISER FOR FOOTLOOSE MONTANA ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO SENT A COMMENT ABOUT TRAPPING!

Thank you everyone who sent a comment to the FWP commission about the trapping of our wildlife! Together, by voicing our disapproval of trapping on public lands, we created a tide of huge pressure on FWP to either make changes or to get rid of the "Furbearer Trapping Program" (September – May). And though we did not succeed in achieving significant changes to help our wild animals, we have unequivocally signaled to FWP that we are no longer willing to let trappers kill our wildlife for profit and fun! See next newsletter item for a breakdown of the public momentum we all created! We wanted to inform you first-hand of the final decisions hence the delay in sending out this month's newsletter.

FINAL DECISIONS ABOUT WILDLIFE AND LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Trappers must from now on report the capture of dogs** to FWP within 48 hours. Although, a seemingly well-intended proposal by commissioner Dan Vermillion, it is extremely doubtful that trappers are going to report these incidents as these reports would ultimately indicate that trapping causes a problem with dogs! Furthermore, since there is no mandatory trap check in Montana, a dog -- if s/he survives the trap incident -- could spend several days and nights in a trap before the trapper even returns to his trapline.
- **Five wolverines can be trapped and killed by trophy-seeking trappers;** the quota was reduced from a proposed nine to five individuals. There is a sub quota of one female wolverine in each of the three "wolverine management units" (regions), which means that if a trapper kills one female in an area, the season supposedly closes for that area. Unfortunately, we do not know if trappers report their "catch," particularly in light of the fact that they consider wolverines "trophy" animals.
- Bobcat fur market values are incredibly high (\$450) thus the FWP commission responded to an increase in trapper numbers and approved another increase of bobcat quota by 125 in Region 6 and 7 (Havre/Glasgow and Miles City area respectively). The total number of individuals that can be killed during the upcoming season is going to be a whopping **2,480 bobcats**.
- **Setbacks of traps from trailheads:**
No ground traps and snares designed to kill within 1000' of trailheads for ground traps and snares designed to kill;
No ground traps and snares that "just" grip a part of an animal's body (e.g. foothold traps) within 300'
- **No change in the trails setback:** Ground sets 7 x 7 inches or larger can be set 30 feet away from the centerline of a public road and ground sets including snares require a 50-foot setback from public land roads and trails. Note: These setbacks apply ONLY to furbearer traps. FWP does not regulate the trapping of certain predators (coyotes, weasels and skunk) or nongame with commercial value (badger, raccoon or red fox) thus traps for these animals can be set ANYWHERE.
- **Take hardware for releasing your pet when walking in an unfamiliar area.**

Lessons learned from the past two FWP commission meetings (June and August):

- FWP's catering to trappers, a small interest group, trumps everything else (science, public comments, common sense and compassion).
- The decision to allow the trapping of five token wolverines did NOT consider the most recent scientific findings pointing to the importance of an effective population size, (34 individuals) versus the estimated total population size of wolverines of 200 individuals. Effective population size indicates the number of individuals within a population that carry enough genetic variants, which in turn is correlated with the fitness and long-term survival of the species.
- FWP officials had no idea how many fishers there are in the state of Montana yet they allow the trapping of six members of this rare species.
- Commissioner Vic Workman, who doesn't believe in pepper spray to defend himself against grizzlies, also doesn't believe in climate change (which ultimately threatens the wolverines...) and he insisted that increasing setbacks around trailheads "doesn't make sense because there aren't any people around trailheads in the winter"!!!
- Kudos to Steve Doherty, the chair of the FWP commission, who was the only one to openly state that he is not comfortable with the trapping quota of fishers or of the wolverines (not even five).

Here's the breakdown of public comments that the FWP agency received pertaining to the furbearer trapping:

- 132 comments by individuals voicing their opposition against (wolverine) trapping
- 254 form letters (which only count as one letter in the FWP staff's and commissioners' mind) against (wolverine) trapping. Form letters are those offered for people to sign and submit electronically by organizations like Defenders of Wildlife or the Humane Society of the United States.
- 23 individuals asking to change trapping regulations to strengthen them
- Joint letter submitted by Defenders of Wildlife on behalf of 7 organizations, including Footloose Montana
- A letter by Hellgate Hunters and Anglers against wolverine trapping
- A letter by American Wildlands against trapping
- A letter by the Animal Welfare Institute against trapping
- Out of all comments, 27 people asked for a setback of at least 300 – 1000 feet from trailheads AND trails
- 55 comments (mostly by trappers) in support of trapping and keep the regulations as they are.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH UPCOMING RAFFLE TO BENEFIT FOOTLOOSE MONTANA!!!

PLEASE help Lonnie Gribnau with organizing a raffle at a dog agility trial in Missoula on September 13. Lonnie needs people to help with picking up donations from stores and individuals as well as volunteers to staff the raffle on September 13. Please call Lonnie at: 360-4288. Thank You!!!

SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 25, 2008 IS THE 2ND ANNUAL FUNDRAISER FOR FOOTLOOSE MONTANA!!!

We had so much fun at our first fundraiser at Connie's and Andy's Ten Spoon Winery last year that we want to do it again! We need items for our auction and creative volunteers to be part of a fundraising committee and make it possible. Call Anja at 549-6663 or e-mail us at our website: info@footlosemontana.org if you're interested in helping out getting a fabulous and footloose fundraising event on its feet!

For a compassionate and footloose 2008,
Your friends at Footloose Montana