



CURRENT CAMPAIGNS & ACTIONS

Resolutions from the 37th Annual General Meeting of Newfoundland and Labrador Trappers Association

Resolution #37-1: that the season opening date for fur-trapping in Newfoundland be moved from October 20 to November 1.

Rationale: Considerable value is being lost in our overall fur production since most fur is either unprimed or part-prime in October. Better quality fur of higher value is harvested in November. Although any trapper is free to decide when to harvest fur, there is usually trapping competition and those who delay their harvest often lose out on their overall production because of this. Further, the NLTA is cognizant of concerns from hunters with dogs regarding accidental capture. We feel that a season opening of November 1 would be a conciliatory concession on our part to allow concern-free hunting with dogs during October. Similarly, the February 1 close of our predator season offers concern-free hunting during February.

Resolution #37-2: that the beaver and muskrat season be extended to April 15.

Rationale: the value of beaver pelts continues to struggle, especially for small and medium sizes. Meanwhile, fox, mink, otter, lynx and some coyotes fetch a much higher financial return with less effort. Trappers spend the fall season targeting these more valuable species, while expending less effort at beaver. Beaver and muskrat are late priming species that do not reach peak fur density until mid-winter, from mid December to mid April. At this time watercourses are frozen, so again the harvest effort is reduced. All of these factors contribute to an under-harvest of beaver in Newfoundland. Further, Newfoundland has the earliest closure date for these species of all Canadian provinces and territories. Extending the season by one month to April 15 would allow a late-winter harvest at a time when trappers are not otherwise involved in trapping other species. It is anticipated that this late harvest will also help to reduce incidences of problem beavers through such a concentrated effort. It is acknowledged that there may be occasional accidental captures of otter and mink; however these pelts are still saleable at this time of year. We are not advocating for an extension of the otter and mink seasons, however we feel that the number of accidentals will be low and not of adverse consequence to overall population health of these species. We therefore suggest that trappers be permitted to retain and market these accidentals after first reporting the capture to the Wildlife Division.

Resolution #37-3: that measures be examined and implemented to reduce the “saturation” trapping effort of marten in the population hub areas of Labrador.

Rationale: Labrador Vice-President Frank Phillips gave a backgrounder on the extremely heavy marten trapping effort in the Goose Bay/Happy Valley and Lab West regions. Given the high price of marten and the relative ease of trapping and preparing their pelts, many people have entered in the marten harvest to the detriment of regular trappers in the area. It was suggested that some measures be put in place to resolve this, whether by capping the number of licences in a geographical region (similar to

how moose management is undertaken), or by other management strategies. Additional elaboration on this resolution has been provided from the Labrador executive as follows:

“That trapping pressure in Areas 53 and 48 be reduced through an attrition process of licence holders and that serious discussions be initiated regarding more long term solutions.

Background: Roughly two thirds of Labrador residents live in Upper Lake Melville (Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Sheshashit, North West River and Mud Lake) and Labrador West (Labrador City and Wabush) with populations in both areas increasing with the current industrial boom. Concurrent with this are extremely high marten and muskrat prices and increasing and quite respectable fox and lynx prices. Never has trapping pressure been as heavy as it was last season in Areas 53 and 48, with the coming season quite predictably going to be worse. Contributing further to the problem is the, by Labrador standards, quite widespread fall access available via the numerous highways, woods roads, and other trails and roads in Areas 53 and 48. Both areas are increasingly super saturated with trapping gear.

For several years now, the more professional and long term local trappers have been noticing with concern this increasing super saturation of Areas 53 and 48 with marten boxes and lynx and fox gear. It has gotten to the point overall where for a few years now the black joke in both Areas 53 and 48 for tying on marten, fox and lynx gear has been to bring your own tree. Equally true for Area 53, spring muskrat trapping effort is on the increase in the very limited spring accessible areas of that region. Again the situation is only getting worse with an increasing human population, new physical access routes and increasing fur prices. Fiscal viability of professional trapping in areas 53 and 48 is being severely compromised by the gold rush mentality of new entrants and those with previously dormant licences. Trapping certification instructors resident in Areas 53 and 48 are almost all, if not all, refusing to give further courses as they feel they would only be fuelling the problem. They are further quite displeased if someone comes in from elsewhere in NL to give a course. Per capita trapper licence holder may be the highest in the province in both areas and should be compared for current sales versus sales over the last 10 years. Coming 2013/14 season sales should be very instructive versus years previous.

The province put licence holder caps on moose and caribou, and we limit and separate outfitters, so we have precedent for at least some sort of interim action on the above problem. Similarly federal fisheries, through a process of attrition, reduced the number of lobster licence holders to the point where fiscal viability of remaining licence holders has greatly improved.

Resolution: As an interim measure, immediately cap trapping licence validations for Areas 53 and 48 to those who are both currently resident in each respective area and who hold existing provincial trapper certification. Future licences for persons currently resident elsewhere in NL who are now certified or those resident anywhere in NL, including Areas 53 and 48, who may be certified in the future will be valid province wide except Areas 53 and 48. Current licence holders who cease to be resident in areas 53 and 48 will have their licences revert to valid other than areas 53 and 48. Through a process of attrition trapping pressure will be reduced in Areas 53 and 48.

For the long term, serious discussion has to take place regarding how trapping is conducted in other areas of Canada that are primarily on Crown Land (i.e. registered traplines) and how the best of the various registered trapline systems across the country may be applied to Areas 53 and 48 and possibly other areas over time. We take the position that we cannot continue to manage fur bearers and trapping like we manage small game (i.e. - anyone who pays \$100 and sits down to a day course can become a

trapper).

The Areas 53 and 48 problem is difficult for NF residents to visualize so the following example may help. Imagine if NF mink averaged \$170 - \$180 pelt and, like marten, were not greasy and smelly to handle. A novice trapper can produce a quality pelt without grease or smell in less than 10 minutes. Now imagine the trapping pressure, and resultant chaos, that would result in NF (where currently better mink trappers can produce 50 - 100 pelts annually). Fur and trap theft and altercations with other producers would result, and the probability of over-harvest is likely. This essentially is the current situation in Areas 53 and 48 for marten, with spill over pressure on fox, lynx and in area 53, limited access muskrat.”

Resolution #37-4: that the Wildlife Division reconsider the present 24 hour mandatory live holding set check requirement Labrador, with a view toward implementing a longer duration check requirement.

Rationale: currently mandatory live holding sets province-wide are required to be checked daily. Across Canada mandatory check requirements (MCR) vary from every 24 hours to no mandatory live holding set check requirement within the trapping season. In the northern sparsely populated areas like Labrador check requirements vary from 72 hours to none whatsoever. For example the Yukon and Northern Sask. have 5 day MCR, while Northern Ontario, Quebec and Nunavut have none.

It appears that Labrador was not considered when the province wide check requirement was put in place. It is quite impractical/uneconomical for barren area fox trappers and lynx trappers especially. We recommend a weekly check requirement for live holding sets for Labrador fox, lynx, and possibly wolf - all other species are readily taken in kill type sets, which consequently do not require a specific check interval. Given the extremes of distance Labrador trappers travel and the climate conditions they often have to endure, this is the only practical/economical way for trappers to trap those species with traps. Of course, the use of AIHTS approved restraint traps would be a requirement. Resolution: We recommend a weekly check requirement for live holding sets for Labrador fox and lynx.

Resolution #37-5: that the Wildlife Division ensures that there is consistent application of policy on problem beaver removal throughout the province.

Rationale: several members related concerns in the way Department of Natural Resources administers problem beaver situations. The approach ranged from telling a trapper that he was obligated to remove problem beaver out of season or risk having his licence taken away, to other cases where DNR went in themselves and removed the beaver without consulting with the trapper. In one such latter case, in the opinion of the trapper, a beaver baffler could have been installed and would have eliminated the need to remove those beavers. There was also mention of rumors suggesting that some wildlife enforcement officers had in the past shot problem beavers rather than relocate them. One member suggested that there is compensation available to trappers under the Municipalities Act to trap problem beaver within municipalities in the off season. It appears to NLTA that policy is not being adhered to by DNR. NLTA contends that no beaver should be killed during the off-season unless as a last resort. In problem beaver complaints not involving public water supply areas, efforts should be undertaken to allow the beaver to remain, such as by the installation of beaver bafflers or encouraging property owners to fence ornamental trees. Where beavers must be removed, they should be relocated to an appropriate alternate location on the same trapline. Beavers should not be kill-trapped before the opening of the trapping season or any later than April 30. NLTA requests a copy of the current problem beaver policy so that we can inform members of their obligations in this regard.

In addition to the above 5 resolutions arising from the 37th AGM, we also present the following additional 3 recommendations which were discussed during the 36th AGM.

#36 – 1: That the .17 cal. HMR be legalized for humane dispatch of trapped furbearers.

#36 – 2: That each beaver trapper be entitled to have one designated to assist on the trapline.

#37 – 3: That all neck snares set for predators be equipped with some form of standard breakaway device to allow for escape of hoofstock.