

Regional Director, Boston, Mass.

October 24, 1961

Missisquoi Refuge, Swanton, Vermont

MGT. - Animals (Trapping Program, 1961-62) - Missisquoi Refuge

With reference to Mr. Radway's memo of 10/13/61 regarding the submission of proposed trapping programs for the 1961-62 season, the following proposals are made:

Normally, we await ice conditions during the winter before making proposals concerning the trapping of fur animals (usually muskrats) as our trapping is always done in the spring; we can best estimate our muskrat populations by conducting house counts on the ice. However, this year the situation is somewhat different: During this past fall and winter (1960-61), local muskrat populations suffered heavy mortality due to disease and severe cold weather. Apparently there was a heavy die-off from disease (Errington's Disease); those that managed to survive the disease were subjected to bad ice conditions. Most of the local marshes (including the refuge marshes) froze solidly to the bottom, thereby causing many muskrats to die from cold, starvation, predation, etc.

All of this was evident after ice-out this past spring when very few muskrats were to be found. As a result, most trappers around here did not bother to trap. Our trapping program (share trapping) also pointed out this same situation: very few muskrats were in evidence, except along the dikes. Observations throughout the summer and early fall also tend to support the theory that muskrat populations are low.

While we will again make our house counts during the winter, it is felt that our muskrat population should not be disturbed by conducting a trapping program this year. It will be best to allow the current population to remain and build up again to normal numbers. This is important since they effect vegetation control in those portions of our marshes where more open water is needed for waterfowl utilization. Without a larger population than is now suspected as being present, many water areas will again be filled with vegetation, thereby creating a loss of waterfowl habitat.

With regard to the beaver situation, it is once again recommended that a small number of beaver be removed. It is estimated that we have as many as 60 beaver on the refuge and more on adjacent areas. We were unable to get any beaver removed during the last beaver season and it is desirable to remove approximately 15 beaver from those areas where they are creating a nuisance: felling trees along the creeks and river where there is heavy boat travel or esthetic values (as along the Public Fishing Area on the narrow bank between the river and Route 78) and in those areas where we must travel by truck. Some areas are being denuded by these animals and damaging animals should be removed. Repellents

have been tried without success; woven-wire guards work in small areas, but are expensive. It is desirable to leave the bulk of the beaver population unmolested, but, as mentioned above, nuisance beaver should be removed.

It is not known for certain from one year to another whether or not an open season on beaver will be allowed, but with their numbers increasing in this section of the State, it is very probable that an open season will be declared for the months of February and March 1962. Since trappers must locate lodges and bank dens, pre-bait and locate trap sites, etc., it is requested that early consideration of an open season on beaver on the refuge be made.

Recommendations

Muskrats: No share trapping for the 1961-62 season is recommended due to its current low population. It is recommended that refuge personnel conduct control of muskrats along the dikes during the spring season as soon as the ice begins to leave the marshes.

Vermont season: October 25, 1961 thru April 19, 1962.

Beaver: It is recommended that 15 beaver be removed from colonies designated by the Refuge Manager as being the sources of the most damage. Trapping to be done on a share basis- 50% each to the trapper and to the Government- with the carcasses accruing to the trapper. Season not yet set, but if it is, it will be for the months of February and March 1962. By State law, such season must be published at least 10 days prior to the opening of said season.

Fox, Raccoon: Continue as maintenance project throughout the year by refuge personnel.

Other: No trapping is recommended for other species as their numbers are too low to warrant removal. Any animals, other than beaver, that are trapped accidentally, are to accrue to the Government.

Edwin H. Chandler
Refuge Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: REFUGE MANAGERS (indicated below)

FROM: Acting Regional Refuge Supervisor, Boston, Mass.

SUBJECT: MGT. - Animals (Fur Trapping, 1961-62 Season) - Refuges

October 13, 1961

This is a reminder for the preparation and submission of your proposed trapping programs for the coming 1961-62 season.

The preparation of your program should be in line with your basic trapping plan which should be revised if necessary and closely correlated, especially in muskrat removal with the management of habitat for waterfowl. Your program should also be coordinated, especially with regard to time schedule with your water management program. Your proposals should include a clear and concise evaluation of conditions with objective justification for your recommendations.

Let us have a negative statement where no program is proposed. Proposed programs should reach this office sufficiently in advance of the season to provide for adequate review.

Merton Radway

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Copies to:

Bombay Hook (& Killcohook)
✓ Brigantine
✓ Missisquoi
Monomoy
Morton
Oak Orchard