

# FEASIBILITY STATEMENTS FOR MUSKRAT MANAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

*Prepared by: John H. Hunt  
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**Goal:** Allow muskrat population to fluctuate naturally.

**Abundance Objective:** Allow muskrat densities to fluctuate naturally in all WMUs through 1990.

**Harvest Objective 1:** Increase harvest opportunity (season length) by 10% in WMU's 1, 2, 5, and 6 and maintain harvest opportunity at current levels in the remainder of the State by 1990.

**Harvest Objective 2:** Maintain harvest opportunity (season length) at current levels statewide through 1990.

**Desirability:** The goal and abundance objective may be desirable to trappers throughout the State. However, the alternative harvest objectives reflect regional differences in desires of muskrat trappers. Some trappers residing in northern and eastern Maine would welcome increased opportunity to take muskrats, as they believe the current fall water trapping season dates are too restrictive. However, many southern Maine trappers are concerned that additional trapping opportunity may lead to over-harvest of muskrats, and are opposed to a spring trapping season. They believe the benefits of spring trapping would be outweighed by the potential for catching damaged muskrats, and are concerned about trapping losses to waterfowl populations.

**Feasibility:** No changes in harvest regulations are required to accomplish the goal and abundance objective, and to maintain harvest opportunity (Harvest Objective 2). However, an increase in season length (harvest opportunity, associated with Habitat Objective 2) in parts of the State will require a change in the Department's rules for harvesting muskrats.

**Capability of Habitat:** Muskrat habitat throughout Maine is capable of supporting fluctuating muskrat populations. Although local variations in muskrat numbers may cause declines in habitat quality, habitat conditions will not be affected on a regional basis.

## *Muskrat Feasibility Statements*

Possible Consequences: Regional differences in the attitudes of trappers regarding muskrat trapping will result in continued trapper dissatisfaction with harvest opportunity regardless of the harvest objective selected. This dissatisfaction may only be overcome by regional management strategies and harvest regulations. However, the level of trapper dissatisfaction will probably not be intense, and legislative intervention in the management process is unlikely. Large fluctuations in pelt price may impact harvest pressure, but a drastic increase in the market value of muskrat would be necessary to increase trapping pressure to levels which impact muskrat populations.