

FEASIBILITY STATEMENTS FOR RACCOON MANAGEMENT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

*Prepared by: James M. Connolly
1986*

Goal: Maintain raccoon population at 1985 levels, through 1990.

Abundance Objective: Maintain an average statewide raccoon population near 1985 levels (currently estimated at 78,800 to 162,400 raccoons), while allowing for fluctuations between WMU's through 1990.

Harvest Objective: Maintain current user opportunity (season length and timing) through 1990, and minimize the mortality due to nuisance control outside of season.

Desirability: These objectives may be desirable to hunters and trappers because of continued opportunity to pursue raccoons. Nonconsumptive users will appreciate the continued opportunity to view raccoons. However, homeowners in developed areas may find current raccoon population levels are creating unacceptable levels of nuisance and disease transmission problems. In addition, agricultural interests may feel that current management is not controlling raccoon populations, and that nuisance complaints and crop damage are excessive. People living in areas of the State with few raccoons or areas with declining harvests due in part to distemper may find these objectives undesirable. These people may feel that raccoon numbers should be increased statewide.

Feasibility: Maintaining an average statewide raccoon population at 1985 levels is possible as long as distemper does not spread beyond current levels. Should the current canine distemper outbreak spread, raccoon population levels will be reduced, especially in the most heavily utilized areas of the State (WMU's 4, 7, and 8). The harvest objective can be accomplished under current raccoon harvest regulations.

Capability of Habitat: Raccoon habitat throughout Maine is capable of supporting raccoon densities at 1985 levels through 1990.

Possible Consequences: Current raccoon population levels in urban areas may present potential disease transmission problems that could adversely affect raccoon and other furbearer populations statewide. However, a reduction in the raccoon population resulting from distemper could reduce the

Raccoon Feasibility Statements

spread or severity of a rabies outbreak in Maine in the future. A rabies outbreak in Maine similar to the one being experienced presently in the mid-Atlantic states would have serious health and financial implications for the people of Maine. A reduction in the raccoon population should also lead to lower harvest levels during a portion of the 5-year planning period. This temporary harvest reduction could lead to the perception by hunters and trappers that MDIFW is not concerned about raccoons, and result in legislative intervention in the management process.

Current or increased raccoon nuisance levels may be unacceptable to urban landowners and agricultural interests. This could lead to an increase in the extralegal kill of raccoons. Should present levels of hunting and trapping prove ineffective in controlling raccoon populations in populated areas, the Department may be forced to intensify its animal damage control efforts, or provide opportunities for the harvest of these populations.

Users in areas of the State where raccoon populations are either historically low or where disease has populations reduced, populations may be unsatisfied with maintaining the status quo. They may pressure the Department to take action to encourage higher populations levels. Should the Department's response prove unsatisfactory, these people may seek legislative action to accomplish their goals.