

Furbearer Management Plan
Steering Committee / Subcommittees

Operational Charter

May 2019

1. Introduction

Comprehensive wildlife management and conservation planning was initiated in the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) in 1968 and has been continually refined and expanded over time. In 1989, MDIFW began using a formal public participation process to develop management goals and objectives for each species or group of species. This process included convening a Public Working Group to represent public desires for the management of each species, and to develop much of the content contained with the plans. At the same time, the Department implemented a new management system approach to document how the Department would meet the goals and objectives that were derived by the Public Working Group.

In 2014-15, MDIFW undertook a review of its planning process, and determined that some adjustments would make the plans more responsive to public desires and more adaptable to emerging scientific information. In particular, recent advancements in the field of human dimensions science provide new opportunities to engage with the public more broadly during the development of species plans.

Over the next 24 months, MDIFW will collaborate with Maine citizens to develop a new Furbearer Management Plan. This plan will combine all furbearer content in a single document. Rather than relying on members of a Public Working Group as the sole source of information on public perspectives towards the management of these species, MDIFW will contract to conduct a formal scientific survey of the general public, hunters, and landowners, and to host regional public meetings and focus groups. A steering committee will provide guidance and advice to MDIFW during the development of the plan. In addition, MDIFW will convene a subcommittee for each species, which will formulate draft goals, objectives, and management strategies based on the public survey information and the professional expertise contained with the subcommittee.

2. Statement of Purpose: Maine's Furbearer Management Plan

Maine's Furbearer Management Plan will guide the MDIFW's efforts to manage our harvested furbearer species (beaver, otter, muskrat, mink, fisher, marten, bobcat, coyote, red fox, grey fox, skunk, opossum, red squirrel, racoon, long-tailed weasel, short-tailed weasel) across the state. The plan will embody the shared vision of MDIFW and the public. The plan will

- Describes the history of each species in the state, including population trends and the regulatory framework
- Articulate clear goals and objectives for each species group, which are based on a thorough public process including scientific surveys and regional meetings
- Designate strategies to achieve goals and objectives over the next 10 years

- Identify challenges to meeting goals and objectives

3. Guiding Principles

As it develops the 2015 plan, MDIFW, the steering committee, and the species subcommittees will ensure that the plan

- is built on a foundation of sound scientific principles and is feasible,
- recognizes that the public has a genuine stake in the plan -- wildlife belongs to the public and is held in the public trust,
- is developed in an open, transparent, and inclusive process that encourages and facilitates the involvement of the public

4. Operational Guidance for the Steering Committee (5.1) and Species Subcommittees (5.2)

Meetings: MDIFW recognizes that travel expenses can be significant. It will keep the number of meetings to the minimum required to develop the plan. Committee members will be notified of meetings at least 14 days in advance, unless there is mutual agreement to meet with shorter notice.

Mutual Respect and Trust: the strength of the steering committee and the species subcommittees is the diverse knowledge and experience of their members. Committee members will base their work upon collective contributions and expect others to abide by the following

- encourage participation by all members,
- avoid hidden agendas and to be open about potential conflicts of interests,
- ensure all committee members are respected and treated fairly, respect all contributions and ideas, and direct critiques at the idea not the person,
- avoid speaking while others are speaking, avoid side-bar conversations, wait until there is an appropriate time to provide your comment,
- keep to the topic,
- avoid creating distractions, and
- place cell phones on silent mode, and if receiving a call, minimize disruption to the group.

Decision-making: Decisions by the steering committee or species subcommittees are advisory and represent recommendations to MDIFW. The steering committee and species subcommittees provide advice, input, and

guidance to MDIFW during the development of the plan. MDIFW and committee members will strive to be open-minded and creative. As differences arise, committee members will listen to other views and rationale. Committee members will make decisions based on the general “modified consensus” of those present (i.e., if a committee members disagrees with the rest of the group, he or she can nevertheless “live with” the decision and will not oppose the decision or stand in the way of moving it forward.)

If MDIFW decides not to accept a recommendation from the steering committee, it will provide an explanation for its decision.

Concurrence: Committee members agree to participate as specified in this charter.

Travel Expenses: Committee members are responsible for their travel expenses.

Acknowledgement: The 2019-2029 Plan will acknowledge and recognize the contributions of participating committee members and their organizations.

5. Process Structure

5.1. Steering Committee

The steering committee will guide the development of the plan.

MDIFW assembled a steering committee from the ranks of conservation partners. Membership was by invitation. The committee may recommend additional members, but their participation must be approved by MDIFW. The committee is limited to no more than fifteen members, not including MDIFW staff that participate in the meetings.

MDIFW recognizes that members have obligations to their agency or organization. MDIFW will strive to minimize members’ time commitment; however, it is expected that those who agree to participate will endeavor to attend meetings. The committee may meet either in person or by conference call.

The steering committee

- serves as the sounding board for MDIFW on both overall process and initial plan components and drafts,
- reviews and provides input on draft goals, objectives, and strategies that are developed by MDIFW and the species subcommittees,
- provides feedback to MDIFW on time-sensitive issues involving the development of the plan, and
- ensures that the process follows the charter’s statement of purpose (2.) and guiding principles (3.).

Members present during committee meetings or conference calls are encouraged to participate fully. Not all members may be able to attend and participate in all discussions. As decisions are made or conclusions reached, those not present agree to move forward as a team and not to retrace discussions or decisions.

Steering committee members will share tasks and responsibilities by

- volunteering for tasks, especially those for which they have special expertise or interests,
- providing information that can fill data gaps and advance ideas, and
- keeping current with the plan development, even if unable to attend all discussions.

5.2. Subcommittees

MDIFW has established a subcommittee for 6 species groups. These subcommittees function under the guidance of MDIFW and the steering committee.

MDIFW species specialist and special projects coordinator will chair each subcommittee. Subcommittee chairs report to the steering committee. Chairs will ensure that steering committee members receive information about the activities of their subcommittee, such as minutes and copies of pertinent correspondence.

Subcommittee chairs are responsible for coordinating their meetings and conference calls.

The responsibilities of each species subcommittee include:

- Identify management issues for the target species that should be addressed in the plan
- Provide input and feedback on draft public survey questions related to the management of the target species
- Identify areas of conflict or overlap between the target species and other species for consideration and discussion by the steering committee
- Solicit additional input and expertise on management issues as required (Using expertise within the subcommittee, outside expertise as required, and the public survey information, develop draft goals and objectives for the target species
- Refine goals and objectives based on feedback from the steering committee
- Develop draft strategies to achieve the goals and objectives
- Refine strategies based on feedback from the steering committee
- Review and revise plan content (including management history/assessment) related to the target species.

6. Evaluation

Previous sections of the charter guide the committees, and therefore, provide a basis to gauge success. The steering committee will evaluate periodically the progress of plan development and adherence to the

requirements of the charter. The steering committee will conduct the evaluation by a method that it deems appropriate. The steering committee will use the following attributes to evaluate success:

Participation: MDIFW staff and steering committee members are engaged in the plan update; they volunteer to assist with tasks, especially those for which they have special expertise or interest; they are proactive in providing information that fills data gaps and advances ideas; and they keep current with the planning process, even if they are unable to participate in all discussions.

Schedules: MDIFW staff and steering committee members develop new materials, provide existing resources, gather information, or complete other necessary tasks as requested and scheduled.

MDIFW provides regular updates to the steering committee and provides opportunities for broad participation by other organizations and citizens.

Subcommittees: Subcommittee chairs conduct meetings and accomplish assigned tasks as scheduled, report to the committee, and ensures that the steering committee is fully informed of its activities.