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# On Target

The Official Publication of the PFSC  
November/December 2018

Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources.  
Ensuring the protection and advancement of our outdoor heritage, natural resources and  
2nd Amendment Rights.



# On Target

PFSC On Target November/December 2018

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The mission of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc. is to protect and conserve Pennsylvania's natural resources, outdoor heritage and 2nd Amendment Rights.



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### Cover Photo:

Fishing Creek... about 2 miles north of the town of Benton in Columbia County

By Chuck Musitano





## Trapping Is.....

By: Todd Strohecker, PTA VP East

**Be Responsible!**  
**Be Respectful!**  
**Be Ethical!**

Trapping is often referred to as a “sport”, but it is of my opinion that the term “sport” does not describe trapping very well. Recreational hunters and anglers are called sportsmen because they practice the sport of hunting and fishing. Even though all are outdoor activities and involve the consumptive use of wildlife, trapping differs from recreational hunting and fishing. The game that hunters and anglers take is utilized for private consumption. Trappers, on the other hand, harvest animals for their pelt, and most of those pelts become part on the global fur market. The fact that the trapper practices their craft to produce pelts for the fur trade is where trapping differs from recreational hunting and fishing. Hunters and anglers prepare wild game and fish for the table so they, their family, and friends can enjoy.

Trapping requires a commitment of time and resources, and depressed fur prices make it extremely difficult to turn even a small profit. Because the furbearer resource is abundant and trappers are few in number, trappers should be afforded the opportunity to harvest common furbearers in the most efficient way possible. This ensures the activity approaches profitability for the trapper and also reduces the surplus animal populations. Laws and regulations regarding trapping should be put in place to protect the furbearer resource and to ensure the activity does not unnecessarily affect the non-trapping public and/or non-target species. This is why we do not see daily or season limits or the number of devices that can be used for common furbearers similar to the limits placed on even the most abundant game and fish species. I once heard a hunter say that trappers were lazy because they drive to their sets, and the traps do the

work for them. Nothing could be further from the truth! He was simply ignorant about trapping and how it is conducted. One cannot look at trapping from a hunting mindset since they are different in so many ways. Thankfully, most hunters want to learn about trappers and trapping and do not jump to uninformed conclusions like the ignorant individual above.

That being said, even though trappers are given the opportunity to harvest furbearers at the utmost efficiently, they are also obligated to harvest them in the most ethical way possible. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has been working in conjunction with state wildlife agencies, trappers’ organizations, and individual trappers to establish Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Trapping in the United States. Part of the BMP process was the extensive testing of traps, trap features, and techniques to identify which were practical for use based on efficiency, animal welfare, selectivity, practicality, and safety. Agencies provide the results as recommendations to trappers.

Trapping is a public service and a wildlife management tool. Trapping serves the public in a multitude of positive ways. From controlling predators that are killing livestock to removing beavers that flood agricultural or residential property, trappers are needed to aid in the removal of these surplus furbearers. Humans and wildlife must coexist, but when furbearer populations start to exceed the carrying capacity for the habitat available, conflicts between humans and wildlife often occur. To state agencies who manage wildlife, trappers are tools who are utilized to manage furbearer populations and to collect valuable data used in management decisions. Most trap-

pers are also familiar with the importance of trappers and the foothold trap in regards to restoration of many species of furbearers.

Trapping is our heritage. A deceased friend of mine, outstanding trapper, and PTA Hall of Famer John Hummel once told me that “trapping and prostitution are two of the world’s oldest professions, but one pays MUCH better than the other”. While he said that in jest, the truth is that trapping is an important part of world history and is an integral piece in the story of America. The role the fur trade played in the building of this country and the mountain men played in aiding westward expansion is well documented. Since that time, trapping has entrenched itself as part of the rural lifestyle for generations. If one removed the fur trade and trapping from the American history you would no longer have America. The same could be said for firearm ownership, but that’s another subject.

Today, over 50 percent of the world’s population lives in urban areas, and it is expected to be over 2/3rds by the year 2050. The skills that were once essential for life in America are being lost with each passing year. Many do not have the knowledge of how to raise their own food anymore, but the sad reality is many do not even know where their food comes from. Trapping is no different. One can be proud to be part of that tiny fraction of a percent of the world population who have the knowledge, skill, and ability to set traps and harvest furbearers. Trapping is an activity that requires skill to produce a product, which fits the definition of a craft. I personally feel that because of the individuality of trappers, trapping could be considered an art as well. Every trapper puts their indi-

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vidual spin on common sets and adds their own flare to pelts during the fur handling process.

Before you refer to trapping a sport, take the time to think about what trapping really is and what it truly means. Trapping

is the harvest of fur for the world market. Trapping is a public service because licensed fur trappers are the most cost effective and efficient way to remove surplus furbearers. Trapping is a wildlife management tool, and state and federal agencies

take full advantage of trappers to achieve their management goals. Trapping is a skilled craft, an art that fosters individuality, and an integral and unique part of our American heritage. Trapping is a lot of things, but it's not a sport. *PTA*

# PENNSYLVANIA TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION

## State Banquet

Hosted by PTA District #4



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