

FORÊTS,
FAUNE ET
PARCS



2018-2025 Québec Fur-Bearing Animal Management Plan

Summary Document

ENSEMBLE 
on fait avancer le Québec

Québec  

The first of its kind in Québec!

IMPORTANT

The beaver reserves and the territories governed by the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) maintain their status. Trapping of fur-bearing animals continues to be an exclusive right of the Aboriginal people.

The hunting of certain fur-bearing animals and the control of intrusive fur-bearing animals will be included in the management plan at a later date.

Please refer to the website of the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (MFFP) for information on current trapping rules: mffp.gouv.qc.ca/english/publications/online/wildlife/trapping-regulations/index.asp

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Cover photos

Beaver: Nicolas Bradette

Canada lynx: Frédéric Halmai

Marten: Shutterstock

Coyote: Nicolas Bradette

Introduction

The sociocultural and economic importance of trapping fur-bearing animals

The trapping of fur-bearing animals has always been a central element in the history of Québec and Canada. In the early days of the colony, it was the most important economic motor in North America. Today, trapping generates annual revenues of nearly \$13 million¹ in direct economic benefits for Québec, excluding fur processing and the fur trade. It also continues to play an important sociocultural role by perpetuating traditions.

The first management plan for fur-bearing animals

In Québec, individual management plans drawn up by the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (MFFP) already exist for most of the species targeted by hunting and fishing. The Fur-Bearing Animal Management Plan is the first multi-species plan.

The development and implementation of the plan have provided an opportunity to take stock of the situation of the different fur-bearing species and to consider the measures needed to maintain populations and habitats and ensure that they are developed for the benefit of Québec's citizens. Planning must be meticulous and carried out in collaboration with all the stakeholders involved in the activity at the regional and provincial levels. The management plans outline the available wildlife harvests, determine the issues faced by the species concerned, and recommend trapping regulations adapted to the situation of Québec's various regions.

¹ Québec. MINISTÈRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE, DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS (2013). Economic benefits of hunting, fishing and trapping activities in Québec in 2012: Summary, study carried out by BCDM Conseil inc., Québec, 16 p.



Photo: Gaétan Fournier

Benefits of a management plan

Québec is currently preparing its first multi-species Fur-Bearing Animal Management Plan covering a period of eight (8) years, including a mid-term assessment. This new management plan will:

- simplify regulations for users while maintaining the fur-bearing animal management units (FAMU);
- limit technical violations (untargeted captures);
- improve data quality to ensure sound species management.

Harvest status overview of fur-bearing animals

Harvest status reports for different fur-bearing species were published in 2017 and are available on the MFFP website². They are based primarily on harvest data (fur transactions) and indirect indicators of population status. Overall, most species are faring well.

Increasing:

Coyote: Harvest and populations are increasing, mainly due to the expansion of the species' distribution range.

Grey wolf: Harvest is also increasing, particularly in the fir forest zone.

Stable:

River otter: Harvest is stable and generally in line with beaver harvest.

Canada lynx: Harvest is stable but the percentage of trapped animals exceeding the bag limit remains unknown.

Raccoon: Harvest is also stable for this species.

Red fox: Harvest is generally stable, but with significant variations from one year to the next.

American mink: Harvest is stable or increasing slightly in certain sectors in the south of the province.

Decreasing slightly:

American marten: Harvest varies significantly from one year to the next but is generally decreasing.

Fisher: Populations are expanding to the north but harvest is decreasing in the south of the province.

Muskrat: Harvest is down, particularly in the St-Lawrence corridor, where the most productive habitats have historically been located.

Special care will be taken to monitor the situations of these three species in the coming years.

² mffp.gouv.qc.ca/the-wildlife/hunting-fishing-trapping/provincial-fur-bearing-animal-harvest-status-reports-2014-2015/?lang=en



Partial harvest overview:

Weasels and ermine: Population size for these species varies greatly from one year to the next, depending on fluctuations in the abundance of prey. Harvest is partly influenced by efforts to trap other species such as marten and fisher. In addition, their fur is not always traded.

Beaver: Beaver harvest are declining due to falling fur prices. However, this does not denote a decline in population levels because trapping data do not include wildlife control operations carried out to address conflicts with humans.

Red squirrel: Populations are stable or increasing slightly, but harvest is stable or decreasing slightly. The species is not often targeted by trappers, and the furs do not always end up on the market. In addition, control harvest is not reported even if it have been carried out for this species.

Bobcat: Harvest appears to have been stable since trapping was re-opened in 2012. Monitoring will nonetheless continue in the next few years to see how the populations respond to pressure from trapping.

Striped skunk: The species is of little interest to trappers. Generally speaking, it is not targeted, and the number of pelts prepared for and sold on the market probably depends on market prices.

Arctic fox: Harvest has declined significantly, and there is evidence to suggest that this is more the result of a decrease in trapping activity or fur sales rather than of a decline in population levels.





2018-2025 Fur-Bearing Animal Management Plan issues

Photo: Nicolas Bradette

Before adopting this first management plan, the MFFP made a number of findings and identified the following issues for the management of 19 fur-bearing animal species harvested in Québec:

1. Absence of a management framework specifically for fur-bearing animals

- No systematic assessment of the species' status
- Piecemeal regulatory amendments

2. Increasing complexity of trapping rules

- Time-related: more seasons for the same species
- Spatial: different seasons for adjacent FAMUs
- Simultaneous changes to bag limits and seasons

3. Inappropriate management scale

- Insufficient data relating to FAMUs (harvest, number of trapper's notebooks) to establish the species' status
- Regulatory amendments recommended only for FAMUs where data are available
- Data quality is sometimes deficient (exact catch locations, incorrect species)

Photo: Antoine Martineau-Rousseau



Photo: Antoine Martineau-Rousseau

4. **Deficient Canada lynx and bobcat management using bag limits. For example, the 1995 Canada lynx management plan was difficult to apply**
 - No trapping closures for the last 20 years
 - Lack of cycles for the species' primary prey (hares) in certain regions, or cycle monitoring difficulties
 - Difficulty adjusting bag limits and inadequate regulatory reaction times following variations in Canada lynx populations
 - Difficulty respecting the bag limit due to untargeted captures in traps set for other species
5. **Need to alleviate the risk of incidental captures of other species (deer, birds of prey, etc.) to preserve the image of trapping**
6. **Importance of reducing the risk of technical violations (untargeted captures of fur-bearing animals outside the trapping seasons) to improve the trapper experience**



Photo: Nicolas Bradette

Broad lines of the management plan

1. Harmonize trapping seasons over large sectors

The management plan recommends grouping the FAMUs into large, single block sectors sharing the same trapping seasons. The aims of this are:

- to simplify the regulations;
- to improve information quality by using a scale for which sufficient data are available.

The MFFP is pursuing this line while preserving the FAMU as the basic unit for recording fur transactions and with due regard for regional variations. It will be possible to readjust the groupings over time if necessary.

2. Assess population status in each large sector

The MFFP intends to use the large sectors with the same trapping seasons (i.e. the same management conditions) to produce the population status reports. These reports will be produced every four (4) years for all species except Canada lynx and bobcat, for which reports will be produced every two (2) years. In addition, adapted tools will be created to facilitate the situation assessment and management of the species.

3. Focus fur-bearing animal management activities on trapping seasons

This involves eliminating the use of Canada lynx and bobcat bag limits. For trapping purposes, a bag limit is a restrictive measure that should be applied for exceptional reasons only (e.g. major species conservation problem). The current context (low prices, healthy populations) is favourable to the elimination of bag limits.

The management plan also recommends the same trapping seasons for species trapped using the same devices. The aims of this are:

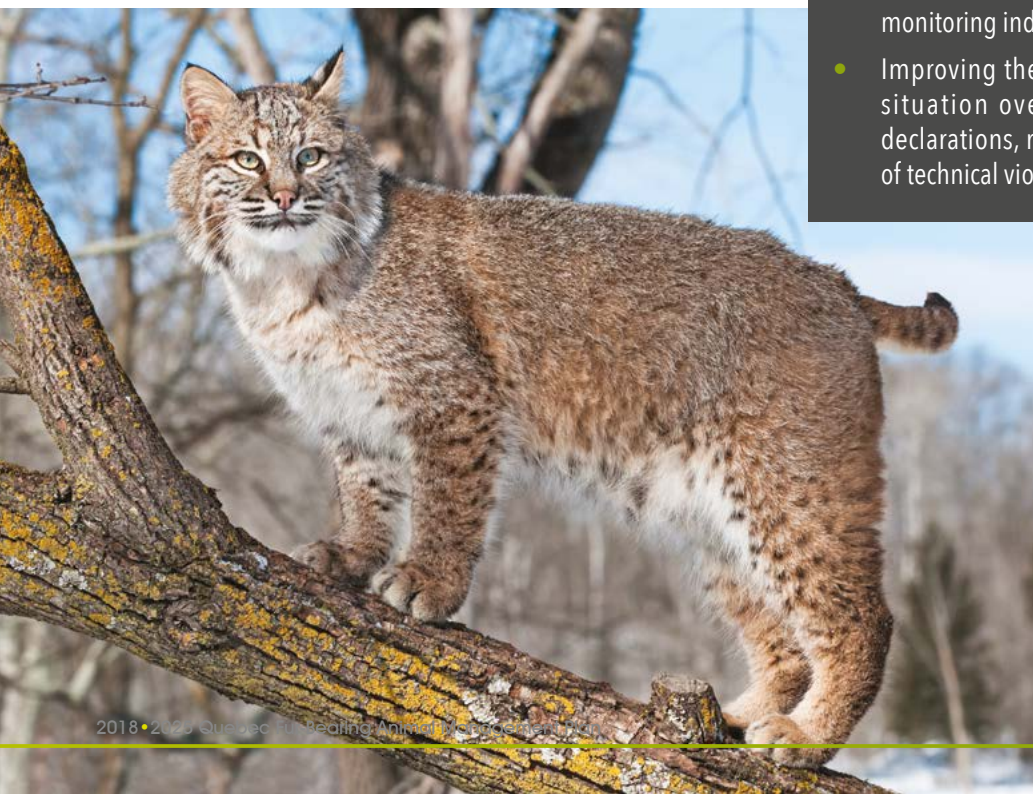
- to reduce technical violations (captures out of season) for species that have commercial value;
- to improve data quality (accurate overview) by reducing untargeted captures;
- to address the imperfect selectivity of trapping devices and techniques;
- to allow the trapping and sale of rare species in order to understand the potential expansion of their natural range.



◀ Canada lynx

Closer lynx and bobcat monitoring

- Producing harvest status reports for Canada lynx and bobcat every two (2) years
- Improving the monitoring system (expedite harvest data entry to avoid reaction delays, use effective monitoring indicators)
- Improving the reliability of the situation overview (accurate declarations, reduced incidence of technical violations)



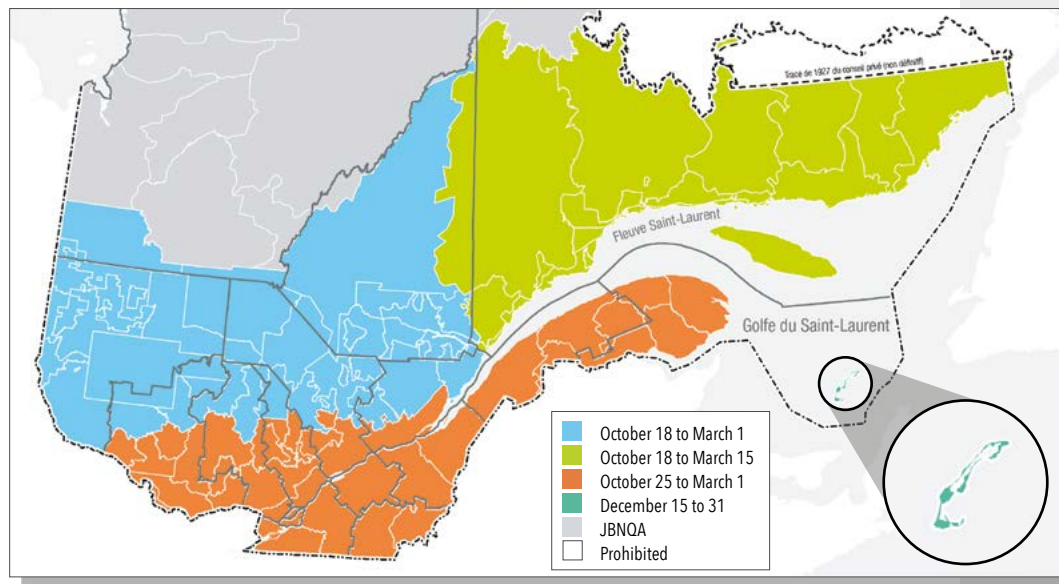
◀ Bobcat



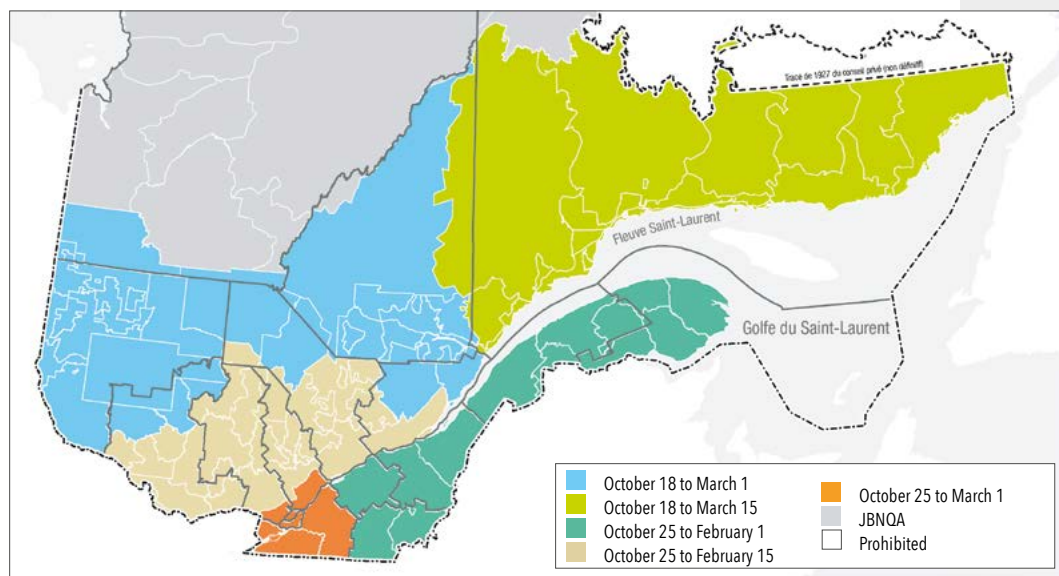
2018-2025 FBAMP harvest rules

The following maps present the trapping sectors and seasons for the different fur-bearing animal species for the duration of the 2018-2025 management plan.

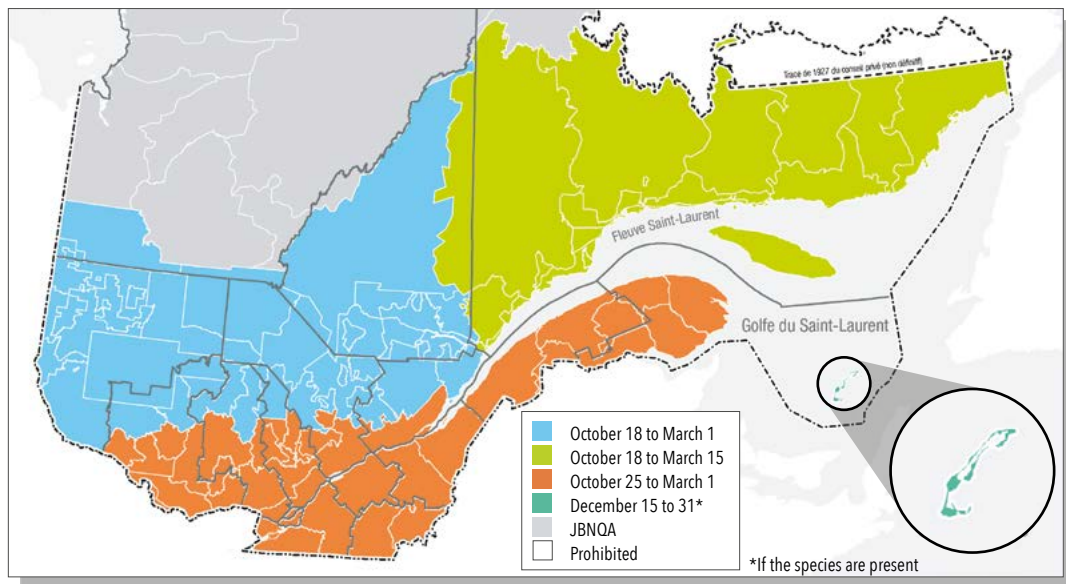
Trapping sectors and seasons - grey wolf, coyote, red fox and Arctic fox



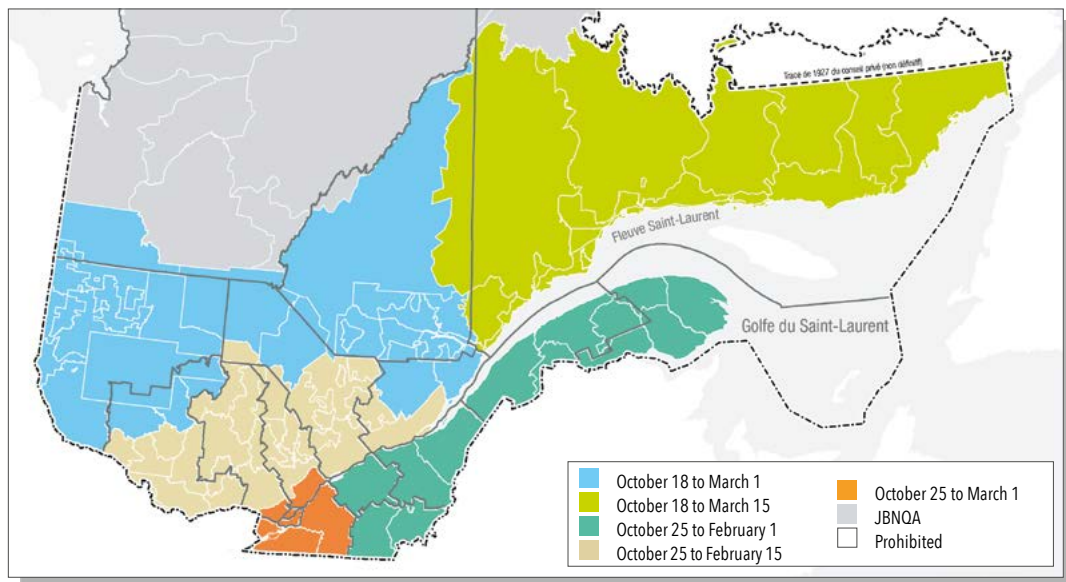
Trapping sectors and seasons - American marten, fisher, long-tailed weasel, least weasel, ermine, red and grey squirrels



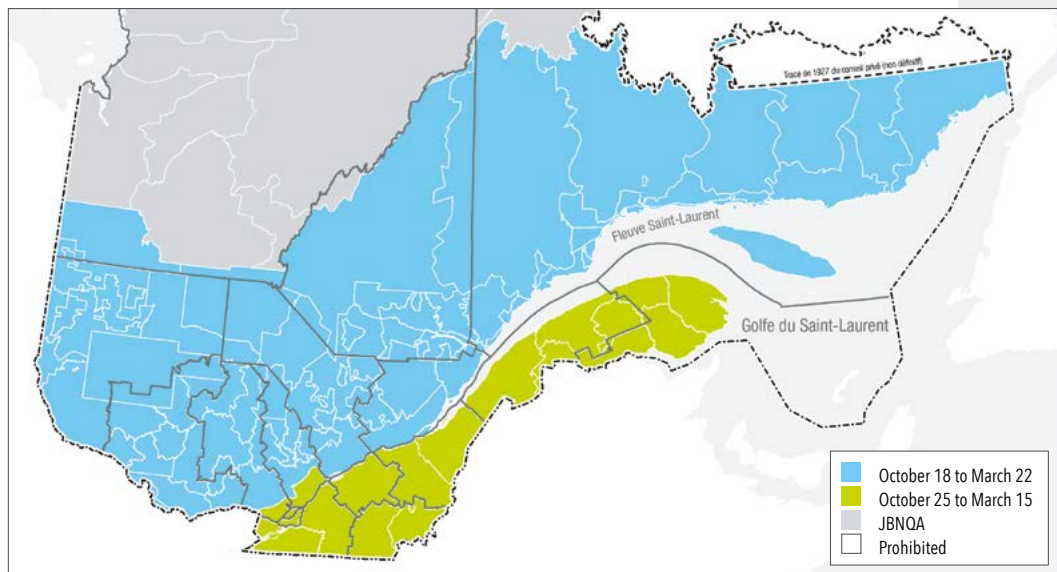
Trapping sectors and seasons - Canada lynx and bobcat



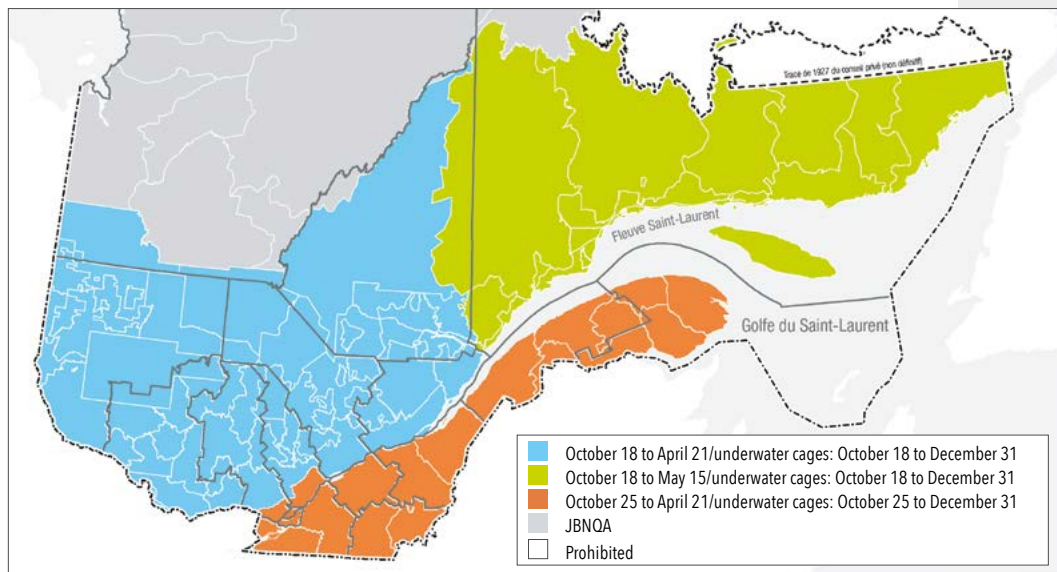
Trapping sectors and seasons - raccoon and striped skunk



Trapping sectors and seasons - beaver and river otter

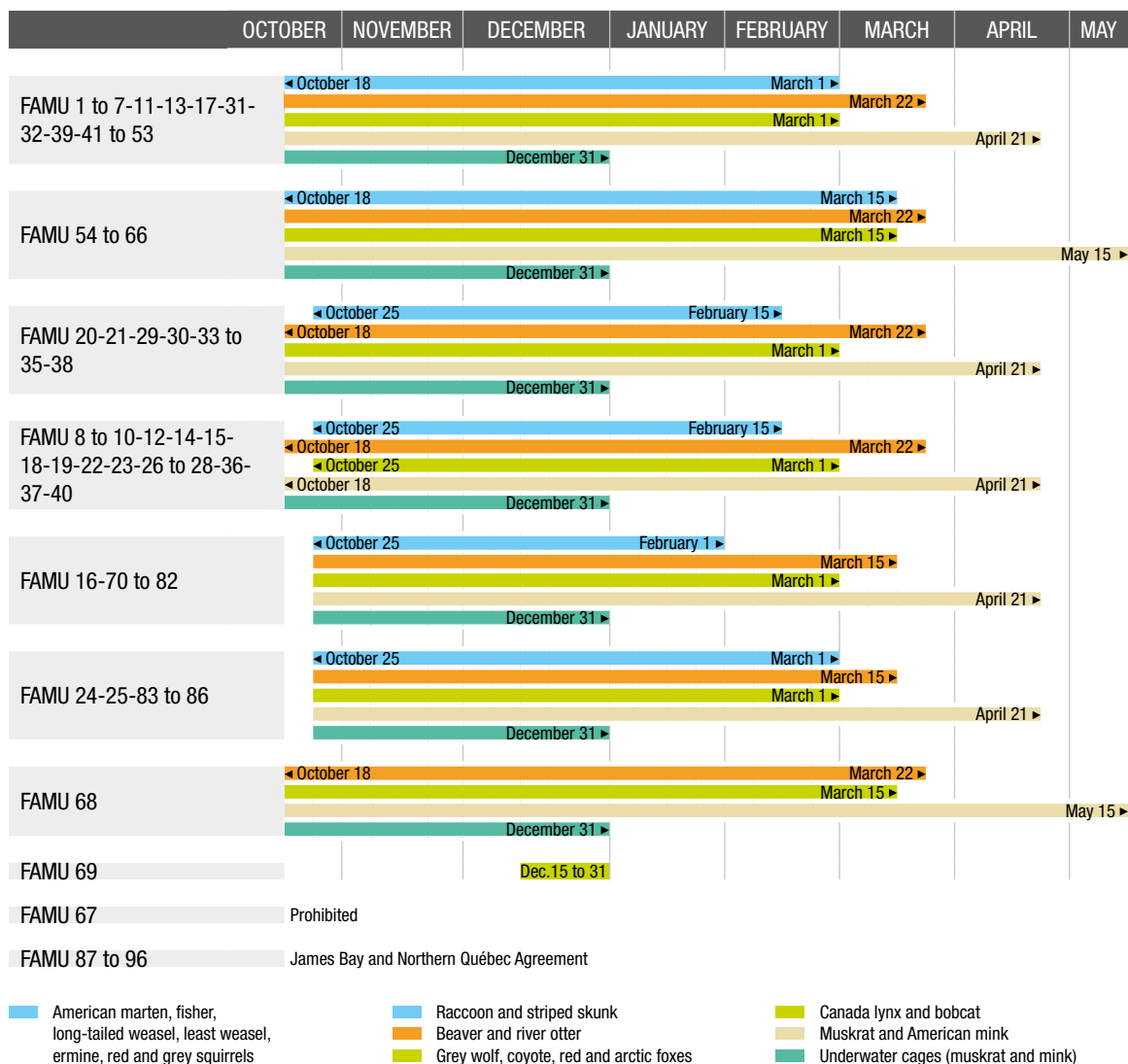


Trapping sectors and seasons - muskrat and American mink



Synchronization of trapping seasons

A special effort has been made to synchronize the opening dates for trapping of most species. However, closing dates are often harmonized with the individual species' birthing periods.



Trappers: Valuable collaborators in the management of fur-bearing animals

Trappers have traditionally regulated their trapping activities and pressure to ensure sound, responsible harvesting of fur-bearing animals. These approaches and techniques are still taught to new trappers as part of the “Trapping and Management of Fur-Bearing Animals (PGAF)” training program.

Trappers can also play an active role by helping to:

- collect population status data;
- control animal populations;
- mitigate conflicts between humans and wildlife by maintaining populations at socially acceptable levels;
- establish accurate profiles to assess populations by providing essential data.





How can you help the MFFP to manage fur-bearing animals in Québec?

Play an active role!

- If we ask you to complete a trapper's notebook, please provide all the requested details (number of devices, captures dates, observations, etc.) and return it to the MFFP (to the regional office concerned).
- Submit detailed, accurate declarations of fur transactions (purchase and consign form for undressed wild furs [ML-414]), including the exact location (FUMA) at which each animal was harvested and the specific species (e.g., wolf or coyote). In doing so, you will help to clarify the species' status overview.
- Declare captures of the following species to a wildlife protection officer: wolverine, grey fox and American possum.
- Take part in surveys, questionnaires and special studies (field work, sample and specimen collection).

For additional information on trapping regulations for fur-bearing animals, please visit:

mffp.gouv.qc.ca/english/publications/online/wildlife/trapping-regulations/index.asp