

# Fisher Harvest

## 2020

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### **Abstract**

Wisconsin had 745 fisher registered with the state during the 2020 season, including 699 taken with DNR issued authorizations, 46 taken off reservation by native trappers, none taken on reservations or reported as incidentals. The harvest consisted of 389 males, and 355 females. The five leading counties of harvest were Marathon (62), Dunn (49), Burnett (48), Clark (36) and Polk (34) counties.

### **Background**

Dhuey, et al. (2020) described the results of the 2019 fisher trapping season. Kohn et.al. (1994) described the events leading up to the establishment of Wisconsin's first fisher trapping season in 1985 and summarized fisher harvests and regulations through 1992. During this period the fisher trapping season was lengthened, numbers of harvest authorizations increased, and the area open to fisher trapping expanded as the fisher population continued to grow rapidly.

The consolidation of Fisher Management Zones (FMZ) from six to two occurred in 2018 with the 2020 season being the third year since this change (Fig 1). The new FMZ's are the same as the other limited take furbearers (bobcat and otter) management zones, with highway 64 dividing the state into the Northern and Southern zones. Fisher harvest goals were set for each of the new FMZ's based upon population size and/or harvest success rates (FMZ A – D for the north and FMZ E & F for the south). The numbers of harvest authorizations issued was based on the average trapper success rate in the previous zones during the previous three years. Negotiated amounts of harvest in each zone within the ceded territory are allotted to Native American (Ojibwe) trappers. This is the third expansion of FMZ's. Previous expansions occurred in 1996, and 2000. There has been some amount of regulated statewide trapping for fisher since 2004.

An adjustment to the fisher season closing dates was made in 2018. This was done to synchronize the closing dates for several hunted and trapped species. The final date of the season was move from the 31<sup>st</sup> of December to the Sunday closest to the 6<sup>th</sup> of January.

### **Methods**

Non-Ojibwe trappers were required to apply for fisher harvest authorizations by 1 August and designate which management zone they would like to trap. The application fee for a fisher authorization is \$3.00, (included in the Patron license fee), with successful applicants selected at random.

Trappers were required to report all fisher to the DNR within 24 hours of harvest via the web or a 1-800 number. All fishers must also be registered in person with authorized DNR personnel. The date and area (county and game management unit) of kill, sex of the animal, type of trap used, and the trapper's name and address were recorded for each fisher registered. Similar information from the off-reservation Ojibwe harvest was compiled by Tanya Aldred of the Great

Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, and provided to the DNR for use in this report. These data were entered into the DNR production server by field personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

## **Results**

The 2020 fisher season ran from 17 October-3 January for non-Ojibwe trappers and from 17 October 2020 - 31 March 2021 for Ojibwe trappers. There was a total of 9,337 applicants for a total of 5,440 fisher harvest authorizations (Table 1). Another 10,244 applicants applied for a preference point only. The number of authorizations available for the 2020 season was more than in 2019 when 19,204 applicants were issued 4,550 authorizations. A threshold agreement was developed for tribal harvest of 15% of the non-native harvest for each respective zone in the ceded territory. When tribal harvest exceeds the 15% threshold for a specific zone, a declaration is required in that zone for the following harvest season. No tribal declarations were required in 2020.

During 2020 season a total of 745 fisher were registered. These included 699 fisher harvested with state issued authorizations and 46 fisher harvested off-reservation by Ojibwe trappers (Table 2). No fisher were harvested on reservations in Wisconsin or as being fisher that were either trapped incidental to other trapping activities, found dead, or a road kill. Trapper success averaged 12.9% statewide in 2020; an increase from the 2019 season (11.8%).

Most fisher (423) were trapped in the southern FMZ, that is where the most authorizations were issued (Table 3, Fig. 1). Fisher harvests were highest in Marathon (62), Dunn (49), Burnett (48), Clark (36) and Polk (34) counties (Table 4, Fig.1), and in Game Management Units 59B (46), 11 and 22A (22), and 59A (25) (Table 5, Fig. 2). Males comprised 52% of the harvest, while females made up 48%.

Fisher pelt prices change from year to year but have generally fallen from prices paid in mid 2000's and from the record highs of the mid to late 1980's (Table 6, Fig. 4). International marketing and changes in fur use has now balanced fur values between male and female fisher. The average price for all fisher pelts was \$20.31 in 2020 and ranged from \$13.33 to \$50. This was an increase over last year's price of \$18.86.

In 2020, 81.5% of the fisher harvested were captured with body-gripping traps and 13.4% were trapped with foothold traps, 4.7% in cage or box traps, and 0.2% unspecified trap type. In 2019, 86.6% of the fishers were caught in body-gripping traps, 9.3% in foothold traps, 4% in cage or box traps, and 0.2% unspecified trap type.

The total harvest of fishers in 2020 of 745 was lower than in 2019 (555). While the new zone structure allowed more flexibility of where trappers could pursue fisher, the overall density of fisher harvest has not changed dramatically. For the past several years fisher populations have been declining or stable in the northern FMZ and expanding and increasing in the southern FMZ. Harvest data by game management unit showed that harvest was still mostly in areas of the state that had high harvest densities under the previous FMZ structure.

Weather during the fisher season was above average for temperature and below for participation. Snow fall in the northern 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the state was somewhat limited and may have

effected trappers ability to locate and pursue fisher. The southern 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the state was probably average for trapping conditions.

The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee has recommended a statewide harvest goal of 900 fisher in the 2021 season, the same level as 2020. The harvest goals for 2021 are: Northern 300 and Southern 600.

**Literature Cited**

Kohn, B.E., N.F. Payne, J.E. Ashbrenner, W.A. Creed. 1993. The Fisher in Wisconsin. Wis. Dep. Nat. Resour. Tech. Bull. 24pp.

Dhuey B. and S. Rossler. 2020. Fisher Harvest, 2019. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report, August 2020. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Madison, WI 53716

**Table 1.** Numbers of state issued fisher trapping authorizations, number of fisher trapped, harvest quota, and authorization success for the 2020 season.

Zone	State Issued Authorizations	State Applicants	State Tags/ Applicant	State Fisher Trapped	State Harvest Goal	State Authorization Success
Northern	1,595	4,711	0.34	277	300	17.4%
Southern	3,845	4,626	0.83	422	600	11.0%
Total	5,440	9,337	0.58	699	900	12.9%

**Table 2.** The 2020 Tribal off-reservation treaty fisher harvest.

Zone	Sex			Total Trapped
	Female	Male	Unknown	
Northern	16	28	1	45
Southern	0	1	0	1
Total	16	29	1	46

**Table 3.** Reported 2020 fisher harvest (Non-Tribal, Tribal ceded territory, Tribal reservation, and Incidental take).

Zone	Non-Tribal Harvest	Tribal Ceded Territory Harvest	Tribal Reservation Harvest	Incidental Take	Total Harvest
Northern	277	45	0	0	322
Southern	422	1	0	0	423
Total	699	46	0	0	745

**Table 4.** *The 2020 fisher take by county and sex.*

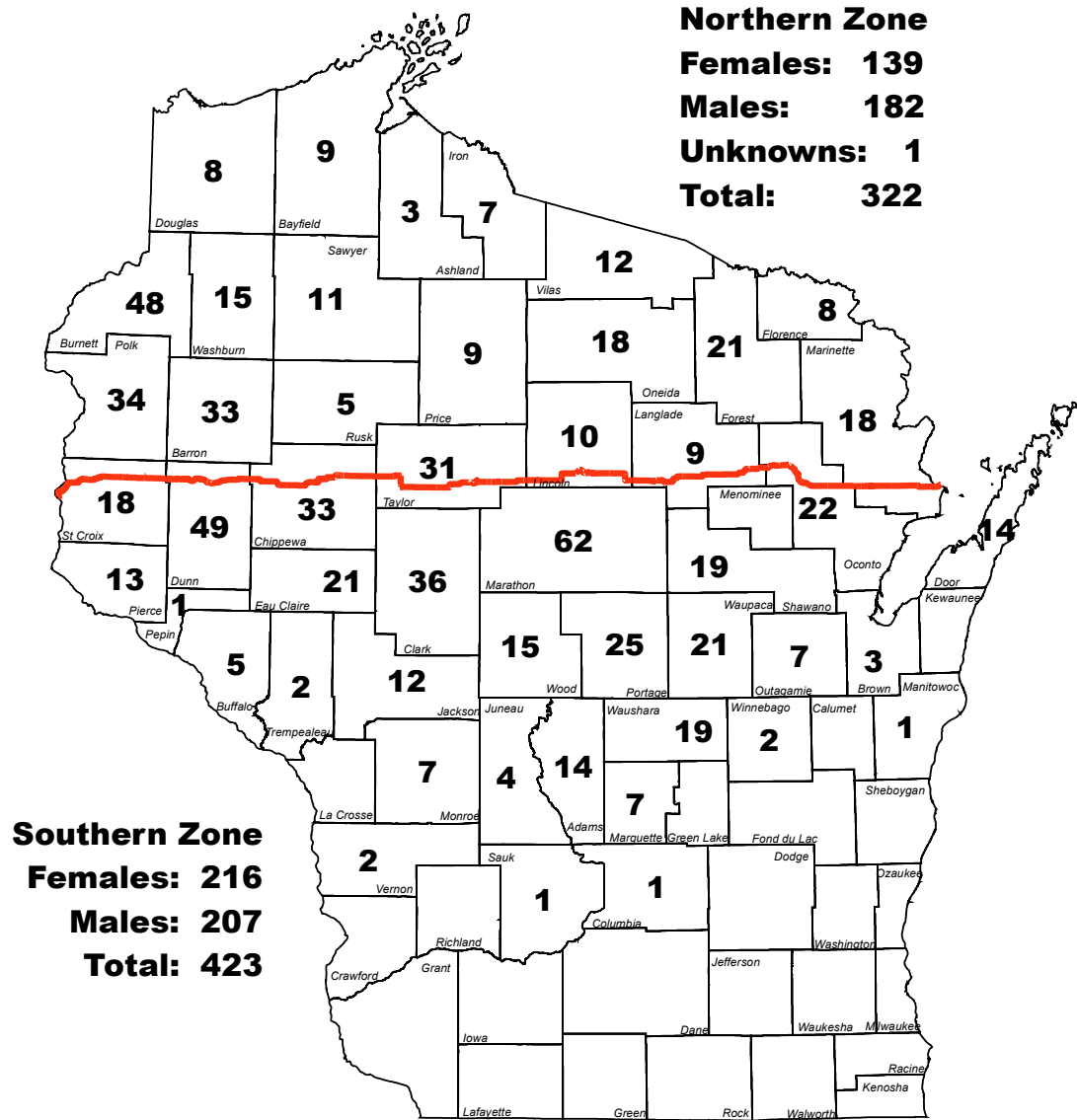
County	Females	Males	Unk	Total	County	Females	Males	Unk	Total
Adams	14	.		14	Monroe	3	4		7
Ashland	.	3		3	Oconto	11	11		22
Barron	20	13		33	Oneida	5	13		18
Bayfield	3	6		9	Outagamie	3	4		7
Brown	2	1		3	Pepin	1	.		1
Buffalo	1	4		5	Pierce	3	10		13
Burnett	20	28		48	Polk	16	18		34
Chippewa	15	18		33	Portage	13	12		25
Clark	16	20		36	Price	4	5		9
Columbia	1	.		1	Rusk	4	1		5
Door	6	8		14	Sauk	1	.		1
Douglas	2	6		8	Sawyer	3	8		11
Dunn	23	26		49	Shawano	13	6		19
Eau Claire	13	8		21	St Croix	7	11		18
Florence	4	4		8	Taylor	14	17		31
Forest	8	13		21	Trempealeau	1	1		2
Iron	1	6		7	Vernon	1	1		2
Jackson	6	6		12	Vilas	4	8		12
Juneau	3	1		4	Washburn	6	8	1	15
Langlade	2	7		9	Waupaca	16	5		21
Lincoln	4	6		10	Waushara	10	9		19
Manitowoc	1	.		1	Winnebago	1	1		2
Marathon	28	34		62	Wood	6	9		15
Marinette	12	6		18					
Marquette	4	3		7	<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>745</b>

\* Includes tribal, on reservation, and incidentally taken fisher.

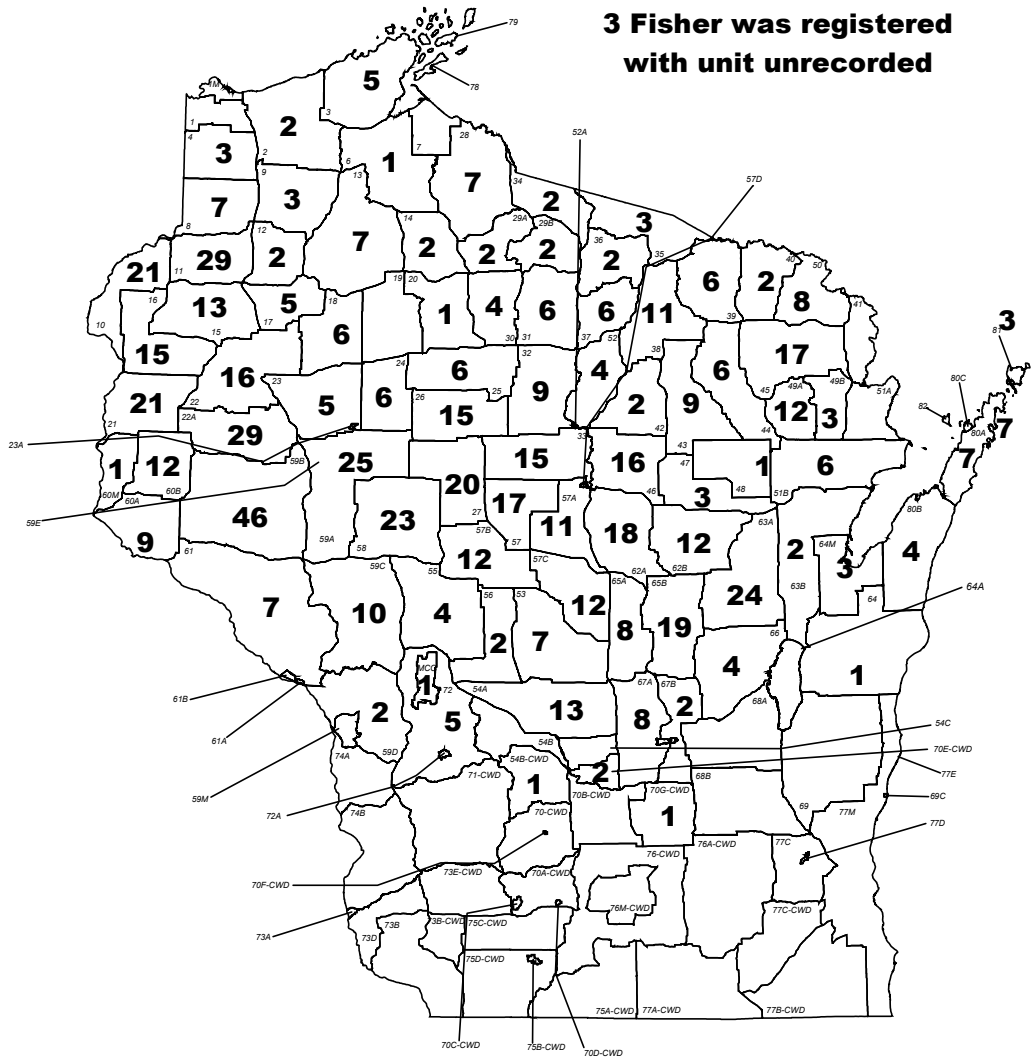
**Table 5.** The 2020 fisher take by game management unit and sex.

Unit	Female	Male	Unk	Total	Unit	Female	Male	Unk	Total
2	1	1		2	48	1			1
3	1	4		5	49A	6	6		12
4	1	2		3	49B	3			3
6	1			1	50	4	4		8
8	3	4		7	51B	5	1		6
9		3		3	52		4		4
10	11	10		21	53	5	2		7
11	10	19		29	54A	13			13
12	1	1		2	54B-CWD	1			1
13	1	6		7	55	1	3		4
14		2		2	56		2		2
15	8	5		13	57	10	7		17
16	8	7		15	57A	4	7		11
17	2	2	1	5	57B	4	8		12
18	4	2		6	57C	7	5		12
20	1			1	58	15	8		23
21	10	11		21	59A	11	14		25
22	7	9		16	59B	21	25		46
22A	16	13		29	59C	6	4		10
23	3	2		5	59D	2			2
24	2	4		6	60A	2	7		9
25	5	1		6	60B	3	9		12
26	6	9		15	60M		1		1
27	8	12		20	61	2	5		7
28	1	6		7	62A	10	8		18
29A	1	1		2	62B	8	4		12
29B	1	1		2	63A	14	10		24
30		4		4	63B	1	1		2
31	1	5		6	64	1			1
32	5	4		9	64M	2	1		3
33	5	10		15	65A	3	5		8
34	1	1		2	65B	12	7		19
35	2	1		3	66	2	2		4
36		2		2	67A	7	1		8
37	2	4		6	67B		2		2
38	4	7		11	70E-CWD	1	1		2
39	3	3		6	70G-CWD	1			1
40	1	1		2	72	2	3		5
42		2		2	80A	3	4		7
43	3	6		9	80B	1	3		4
44	1	5		6	81	2	1		3
45	8	9		17	Unk	2	1		3
46	5	11		16	Ft. MCC		1		1
47	3			3	<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>745</b>

\* Includes tribal, on reservation, and incidentally taken fisher.



**Figure 1.** The 2020 fisher take by management zone and county (includes tribal, on and off reservation, and incidentally taken fisher).



**Figure 2.** The 2020 fisher take by game management unit (includes tribal, on reservation, and incidentally taken fisher).

**Table 6.** *Historical fisher take, pelt price and leading counties.*

<b>Year<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Trapped Harvest</b>	<b>Average Pelt Value</b>	<b>Leading Counties</b>
1985	38	\$135.00	Bayfield, Price, Sawyer, Iron
1986	98	\$109.00	Bayfield, Iron, Price
1987	308	\$109.42	Bayfield, Iron, Price, Sawyer
1988	260	\$83.28	Bayfield, Price, Iron, Oneida
1989	334	\$91.82	Bayfield, Forest, Sawyer, Oneida, Price
1990	339	\$27.38	Bayfield, Sawyer, Oneida, Price, Iron
1991	204	\$16.37	Bayfield, Oneida, Price, Iron, Sawyer
1992	1,647	\$23.29	Price, Sawyer, Langlade, Oneida, Bayfield
1993	1,564	\$22.12	Price, Bayfield, Oneida, Sawyer, Forest
1994	2,085	\$27.22	Oneida, Langlade, Forest, Bayfield, Price
1995	1,360	\$20.88	Oneida, Sawyer, Lincoln, Langlade, Rusk
1996	1,388	\$30.73	Bayfield, Price, Sawyer, Oneida, Forest
1997	3,644	\$33.05	Oneida, Sawyer, Price, Rusk, Vilas
1998	496	\$20.93	Sawyer, Bayfield, Forest, Vilas, Oneida
1999	721	\$17.60	Vilas, Oneida, Bayfield, Price, Rusk
2000	684	\$19.67	Oneida, Lincoln, Vilas, Rusk, Bayfield
2001	1,702	\$23.14	Rusk, Sawyer, Oneida, Price, Lincoln
2002	1,803	\$23.89	Bayfield, Rusk, Oneida, Sawyer, Vilas
2003	1,126	\$28.25	Oneida, Sawyer, Lincoln, Rusk, Burnett
2004	1,560	\$26.91	Washburn, Burnett, Oneida, Rusk, Sawyer
2005	1,896	\$44.95	Washburn, Rusk, Sawyer, Marathon, Burnett
2006	2,450	\$66.96	Washburn, Rusk, Sawyer, Marathon, Burnett
2007	1,385	\$64.42	Marathon, Burnett, Washburn, Taylor, Sawyer
2008	1,539	\$35.71	Marathon, Burnett, Rusk, Taylor, Polk
2009	1,424	\$36.16	Marathon, Burnett, Taylor, Rusk, Sawyer
2010	1,633	\$38.96	Burnett, Polk, Marathon, Washburn, Barron
2011	1,335	\$48.64	Rusk, Marathon, Burnett, Chippewa, Polk
2012	821	\$64.41	Clark, Chippewa, Marathon, Burnett, Polk
2013	822	\$63.91	Burnett, Marathon, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn
2014	991	\$38.67	Burnett, Marathon, Clark, Chippewa, Dunn
2015	805	\$29.89	Burnett, Marathon, Polk, Chippewa, Dunn
2016	579	\$33.71	Marathon, Dunn, Chippewa, Clark, Polk
2017	656	\$29.28	Marathon, Chippewa, Dunn, Polk
2018	1,137	\$26.22	Marathon, Burnett, Clark, Chippewa
2019	555	\$18.86	Marathon, Dunn, Clark, Chippewa
2020	745	\$20.31	Marathon, Dunn, Burnett, Clark

<sup>1</sup>Pelt values varied greatly by sex in the early years of fisher harvest, with female's value more than double that of males.



### Fisher Take and Pelt Value 1985-2020

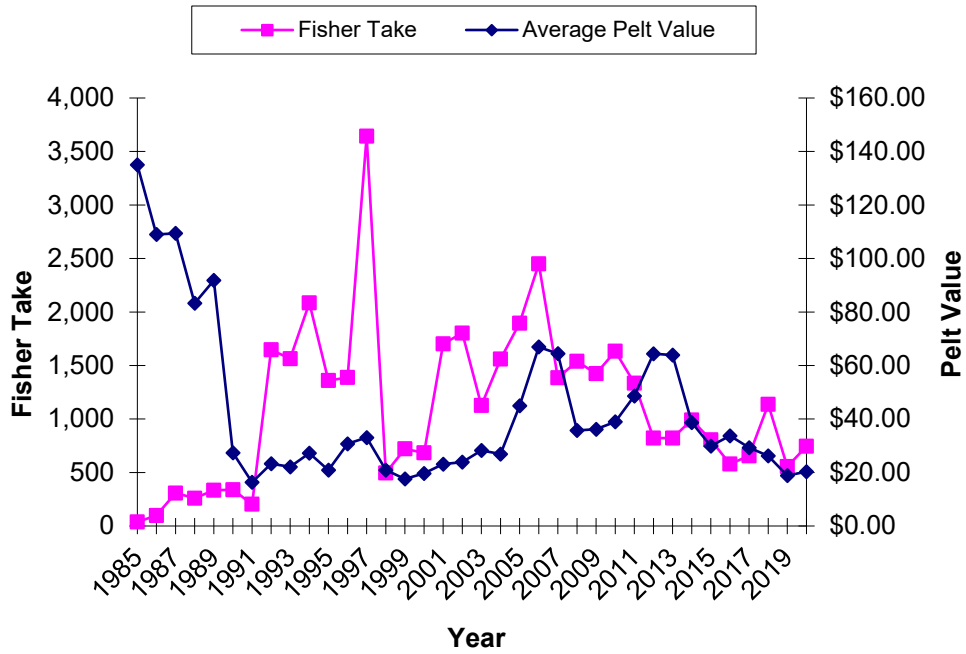


Figure 4. Historical fisher take and pelt value, 1985-2020.