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Title: Otter Trapping Lottery Tags

The Problem:

Currently Wisconsin has a lottery to give the trappers a chance to get an otter tag. On the average we get an otter tag every other year. ~~It isn't because we don't have any otters. We trappers see plenty of otters and otter sign.~~ 21

There is no doubt in my mind that many otters that are caught by trappers, that don't have an otter tag, just open the trap and let the otter float away. ~~Otters are caught not just in otter sets.~~ Many times they are caught in muskrat, raccoon and beaver sets. 42

Allot of trappers don't want anything to do with an incidental otter catch. They don't want the hassle of transporting an untagged otter. Then having to contact the DNR to find out how to turn it in. 30

~~Then there are nuisance otters that move into land owner's ponds. Otters can clean out allot of the fish from a pond in a summer. Otters also damage the pond banks by digging dens.~~

Wisconsin's current way of keeping track of the otter population doesn't work well. Between the weather, like cold winters, that freezes up the waters, and that causes otters to move south to open water. This takes the otter catch down, which makes it look like the population is down. Not true ... The otters move back north when the weather warms up. Otter are migratory which makes it hard to ever get an accurate count on them. The otters that are incidental catches and are killed just to be released downstream are not counted either. 92

Illinois changed their otter trapping rules to allow each trapper five otters per trapping season for two years now. They are seeing no problems with the rule change, and will probably continue this. 33

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Green County on April 14th, 2014 recommends that the Conservation Congress work with the Department to take action to correct this situation by introducing rule change allowing each trapper five otters per season.

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