

Fisher Harvest 2015

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Abstract

Wisconsin trappers reported 805 fisher during the 2015 season including 658 taken with DNR issued permits, 93 taken off reservation by native trappers, 1 taken on reservations, and 53 reported as incidentals. The harvest consisted of 375 males, 370 females, and 60 unknowns. The five leading counties of harvest were Burnett (88), Marathon (66), Polk (44), Chippewa (40), and Dunn (39) counties.

Background

Dhuey, et al. (2015) described the results of the 2014 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 permits increased, and the area open to fisher trapping expanded as the fisher population continued to grow rapidly.

Wisconsin is now divided into six Fisher Management Zones (FMZ) which are clusters of deer management units (Fig. 1). FMZ E was open to fisher trapping for the first time for the 2000 season and FMZ F was opened to fisher harvest in 2004. Currently all FMZ in Wisconsin are open to regulated trapping. Fisher harvest goals are set annually for each FMZ based upon population size in relation to management goals (FMZ A – D) or overall status (FMZ E & F). The numbers of harvest permits issued are based on the highest trapper success rates during the previous three years in those zones. Negotiated amounts of the harvest in each zone within the ceded territory are allotted to Native American (Chippewa) trappers. The current FMZ's were expanded and new zones were added in 1996.

Methods

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

Trappers were required to register all fishers with DNR personnel. The date and area (county and deer 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 Chippewa harvest was compiled by Jonathan Gilbert 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 2015 fisher season ran from 17 October-31 December for non-Chippewa trappers and from 17 October 2015 - 31 March 2016 for Chippewa trappers. There were a total of 8,745 applicants for a total of 3,350 fisher harvest permits (Table 1). Another 6,837 applicants applied for a preference point only, not a permit. The number of permits available for the 2015 season was more than in 2014 when 16,020 applicants were issued 3,225 permits. 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. Declarations were required in FMZ A and B.

During 2015 season a total of 805 fisher were reported. These included 658 fisher harvested with state issued permits and 93 fisher harvested off-reservation by Chippewa trappers (Table 2; Jonathan Gilbert, personal comm.). One fisher harvest was reported on reservations in Wisconsin. Also, 53 fisher were turned in as incidental fisher. These are fisher that were either trapped incidental to other trapping activities, found dead, or a road kill, and are included in the statewide totals. Trapper success averaged 19.6% statewide in 2015; an increase from the 2014 season (25.3%).

Most fisher (239) were trapped in FMZ F, followed by FMZ A (187), FMZ E (181), FMZ D (102), FMZ C (66) and FMZ B (30) (Table 3, Fig. 1). Fisher harvests were highest in Burnett (88), Marathon (66), Polk (44), Chippewa (40), and Dunn (39) counties (Table 4, Fig.2), and in Game Management Units 10 (53), 59A (40), 11 (38) and 59B (37) (Table 5, Fig. 3). Males comprised 46.6% of the harvest, while females made up 46.0%. Sex was not recorded for 7.5% of the fisher harvested.

Fisher pelt prices change from year to year but have generally fallen in the last several years 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 \$29.89 in 2015, and ranged from \$20 to \$43.75. This was a decrease over last year's price of \$38.67.

In 2015, 74.9% of the fisher harvested were captured with body-gripping traps and 14.6% were trapped with foothold traps, 3.3% in cage or box traps, and 7.1% unknown trap type. In 2014, 77.0% of the fishers were caught in body-gripping traps, 15.6% in foothold traps, 4.7% in cage or box traps, and 2.7% were unrecorded trap type.

The state harvest of fishers in 2015 of 658 was lower than in 2014 (817). Weather during the fisher season was above average for temperature and below for snowfall. This may have allowed for more trappers be more active, but may have made locating fisher more difficult. Overall conditions were probably below average for trapping.

Fisher skulls were collected statewide from trappers, with a total of 681 being turned in during the 2015 season. Fisher populations have been experiencing somewhat long-term declines in northern portions of Fisher Zones A-D and a significant population increase in southern portions of these zones, as well as Zones E & F in southern Wisconsin.

The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee has recommended a statewide harvest goal of 985 fisher in the 2016 season. Harvest goals by zone are: FMZ A, 150; FMZ B, 75; FMZ C, 60; FMZ D, 100; FMZ E, 250, and FMZ F 350.

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 J. Olson. 2015. Fisher Harvest, 2014. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report, August 2015. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Madison, WI 53716

Table 1. Numbers of state issued fisher trapping permits, number of fisher trapped, harvest quota, and permit success for the 2015 season.

Zone	State Issued Permits	State Applicants	State Tags/ Applicant	State Fisher Trapped	State Harvest Goal	State Permit Success
A	230	1,250	0.18	88	175	38.3%
B	170	1,471	0.12	25	75	14.7%
C	345	903	0.38	61	60	17.7%
D	375	1,299	0.29	84	75	22.4%
E	690	1,259	0.55	164	250	23.8%
F	1,540	2,563	0.60	236	350	15.3%
Total	3,350	8,745	0.38	658	985	19.6%

Table 2. The 2015 Tribal off-reservation treaty fisher harvest.

Zone	Sex			Total Trapped
	Female	Male	Unknown	
A	49	37	1	87
B	2	2	0	4
C	0	0	0	0
D	0	0	2	2
E	0	0	0	0
F	0	0	0	0
Total	51	39	3	93

Table 3. Reported 2015 fisher (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
A	88	87	0	12	187
B	25	4	0	1	30
C	61	0	0	5	66
D	84	2	1	15	102
E	164	0	0	17	181
F	236	0	0	3	239
Total	658	93	1	53	805

Table 4. *The 2015 fisher take by county and sex.*

County	Fisher Female	Fisher Males	Fisher Unknowns	Total	County	Fisher Female	Fisher Males	Fisher Unknowns	Total
Adams	1	2	0	3	Menominee	0	1	0	1
Ashland	1	1	0	2	Monroe	1	3	0	4
Barron	12	11	0	23	Oconto	10	11	0	21
Bayfield	3	3	0	6	Oneida	10	17	2	29
Brown	4	1	0	5	Outagamie	3	6	2	11
Buffalo	3	2	0	5	Pepin	2	2	0	4
Burnett	49	39	0	88	Pierce	2	1	0	3
Chippewa	21	19	0	40	Polk	22	20	2	44
Clark	14	20	2	36	Portage	14	15	4	33
Columbia	1	0	0	1	Price	2	6	0	8
Door	1	1	0	2	Rusk	4	6	0	10
Douglas	5	5	0	10	Sawyer	5	5	0	10
Dunn	16	23	0	39	Shawano	8	6	0	14
Eau Claire	12	16	0	28	St Croix	8	6	0	14
Florence	5	6	0	11	Taylor	1	2	0	3
Forest	4	6	0	10	Trempealeau	7	1	0	8
Iron	0	1	1	2	Vilas	5	4	1	10
Jackson	9	4	0	13	Washburn	9	9	1	19
Juneau	5	2	0	7	Waupaca	15	10	0	25
La Crosse	1	2	0	3	Waushara	2	3	0	5
Langlade	10	5	1	16	Winnebago	2	0	0	2
Lincoln	5	4	0	9	Wood	13	19	0	32
Marathon	33	33	0	66	Unknown	3	8	44	55
Marinette	11	2	0	13					
Marquette	1	1	0	2	Total	375	370	60	805

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

Table 5. *The 2015 fisher take by deer management unit and sex.*

Unit	Fisher Females	Fisher Males	Fisher Unknowns	Total	Unit	Fisher Females	Fisher Males	Fisher Unknowns	Total
2	2	2	0	4	46	5	7	0	12
3	0	1	0	1	47	2	0	0	2
4	1	3	0	4	48	0	1	0	1
6	1	0	0	1	49A	4	2	0	6
8	3	2	0	5	49B	4	0	0	4
9	5	2	0	7	50	3	1	0	4
10	31	22	0	53	51B	4	2	0	6
11	20	17	1	38	52	4	1	0	5
12	0	1	0	1	53	1	7	0	8
13	5	3	0	8	54A	4	5	0	9
15	4	5	0	9	55	4	4	1	9
16	11	12	2	25	56	5	3	0	8
17	1	5	0	6	57	4	11	0	15
18	2	5	0	7	57A	9	7	0	16
20	3	2	0	5	57B	5	8	0	13
21	11	7	0	18	57C	7	15	4	26
22	11	8	0	19	58	9	17	1	27
22A	15	12	0	27	59A	23	17	0	40
23	0	1	0	1	59B	15	22	0	37
24	0	1	0	1	59C	12	2	0	14
25	2	0	0	2	59D	1	2	0	3
27	6	9	0	15	60A	2	1	0	3
28	0	1	1	2	60B	1	4	0	5
29A	0	3	0	3	60M	0	2	0	2
29B	0	1	0	1	61	5	3	0	8
31	4	4	0	8	62A	16	9	0	25
32	1	4	0	5	62B	8	5	0	13
33	10	4	0	14	63A	10	10	1	21
34	1	1	0	2	63B	3	2	0	5
35	2	0	1	3	64M	4	1	0	5
36	3	3	0	6	65A	3	3	0	6
37	5	6	0	11	65B	8	9	0	17
38	3	2	3	8	66	3	0	0	3
39	1	2	0	3	67A	1	0	0	1
40	4	6	0	10	70G-CWD	1	0	0	1
42	0	2	0	2	72	1	2	0	3
43	3	7	0	10	80B	1	1	0	2
44	4	6	1	11	Unk	4	11	44	59
45	4	1	0	5	Total	375	370	60	805

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

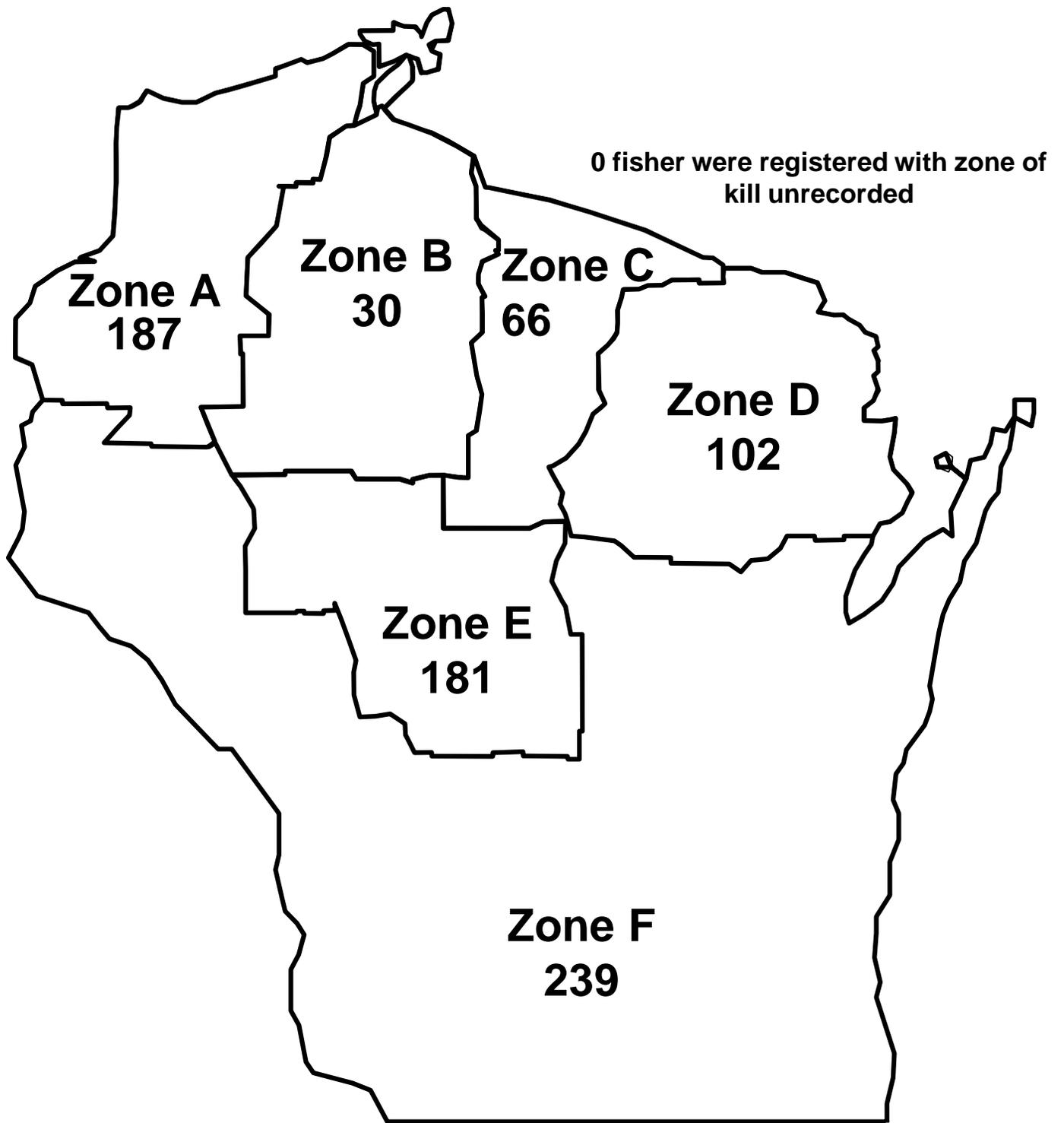


Figure 1. *The 2015 fisher take by management zone (includes tribal, on reservation, and incidentally taken fisher).*

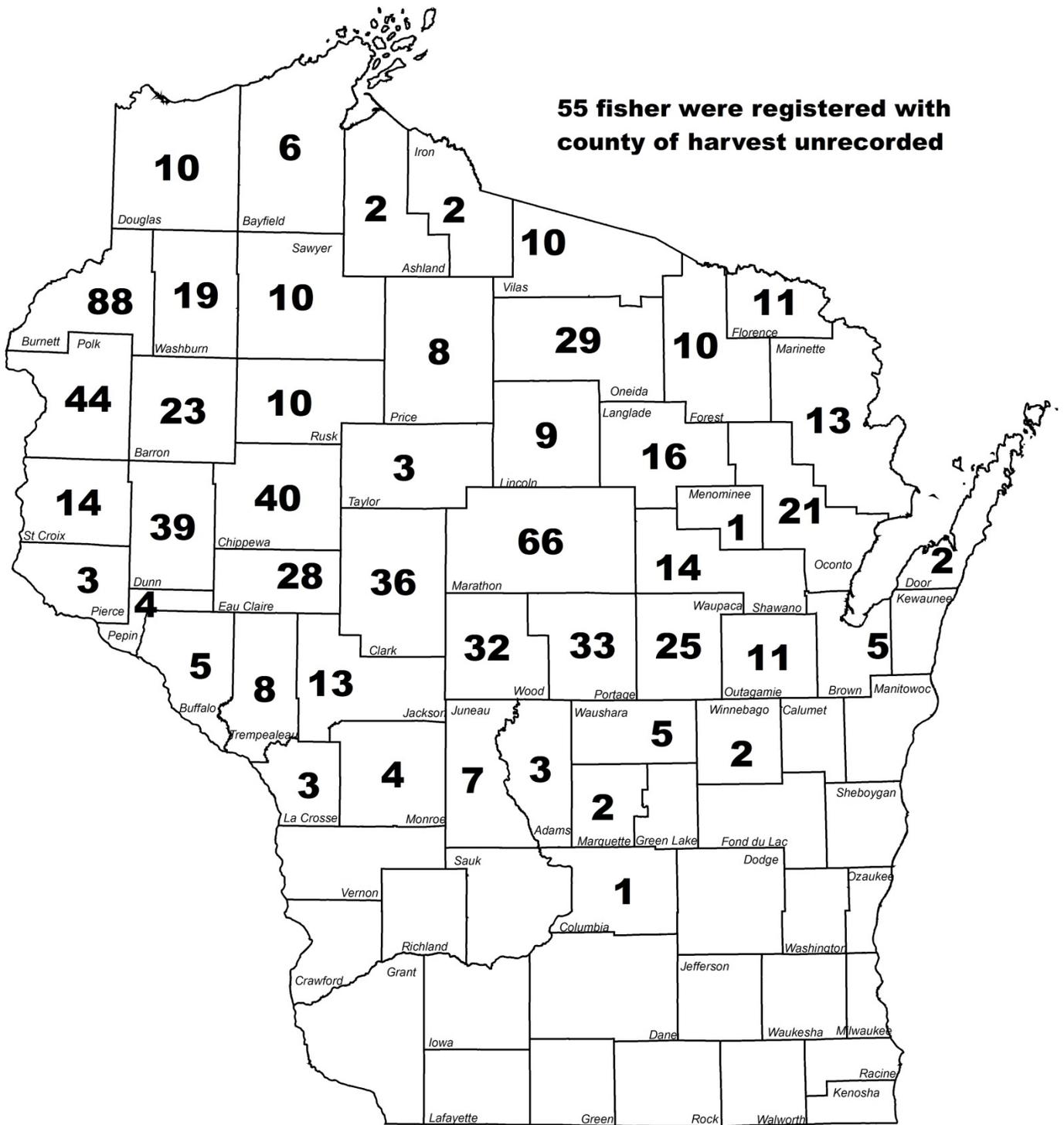


Figure 2. The 2015 fisher take by county (includes tribal, on reservation, and incidentally taken fisher).

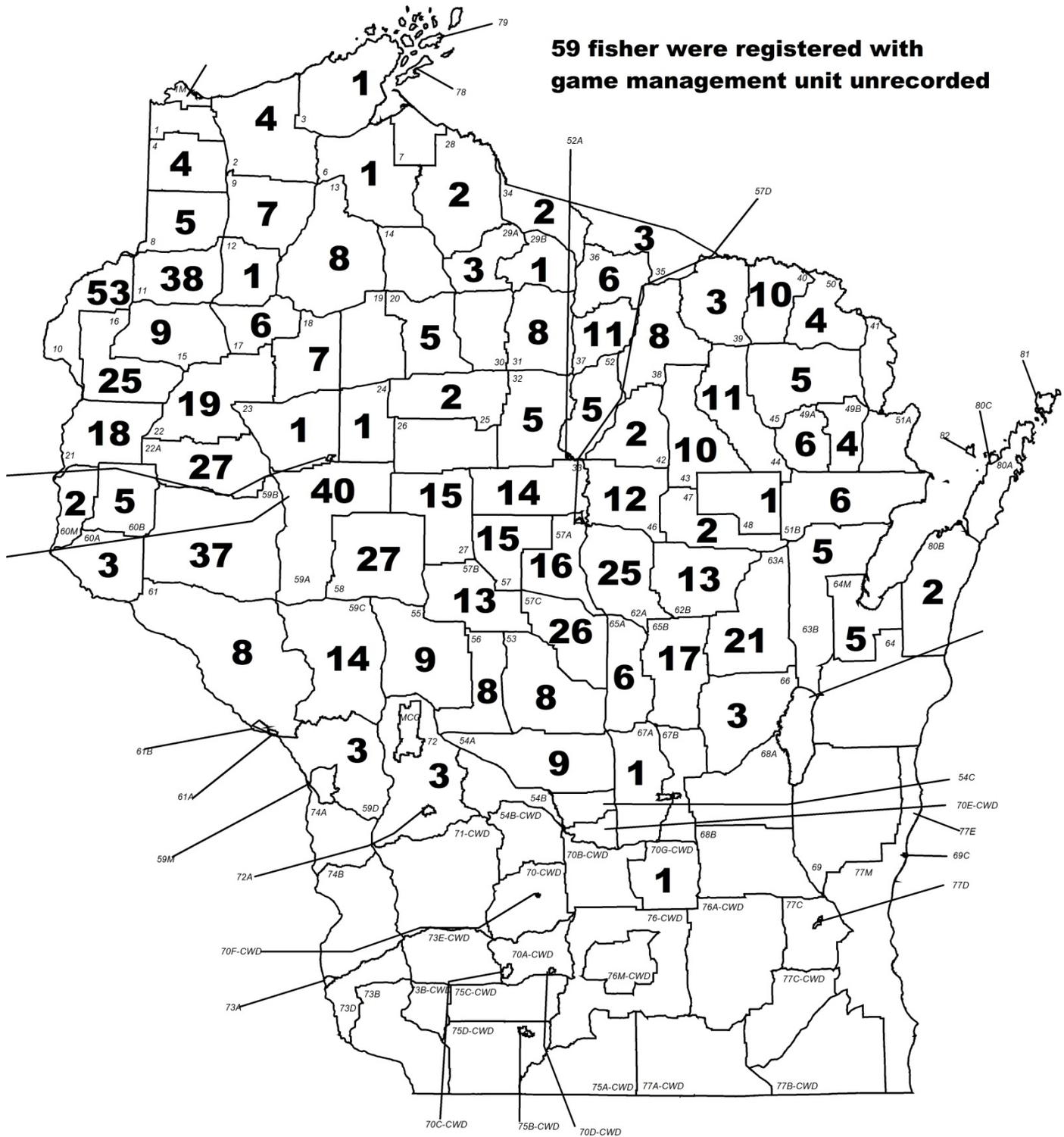


Figure 3. The 2015 fisher take by game management unit (includes tribal, on reservation, and incidentally taken fisher).

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

Year¹	Estimated Trapped Harvest	Average Pelt Value	Leading Counties
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

¹Pelt values varied greatly by sex in the early years of fisher harvest, with females value more than double that of males.

Fisher Take and Pelt Value 1985-2015

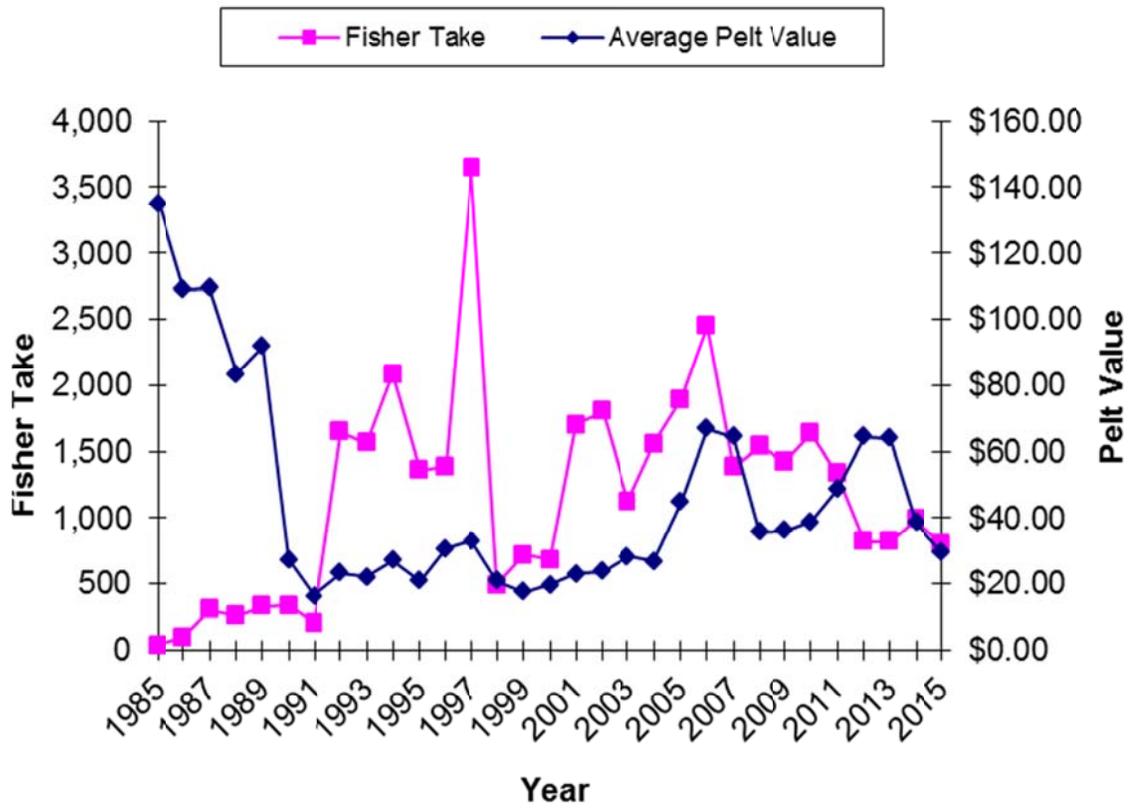


Figure 4. Historical fisher take and pelt value, 1985-2015.