

2016 MARTEN AND FISHER HARVEST SURVEY

Brian J. Frawley

ABSTRACT

A survey was completed to determine the number of harvest tag holders who set traps for marten and fisher, the number of animals caught, the types of traps used, and the number of days spent trapping. In 2016, 4,273 furtakers obtained a harvest tag to trap marten or fisher, compared to 3,059 tag holders in 2015 (40% increase). About 12% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (519 trappers) and 14% set traps for fisher (581). Trappers spent about 3,972 days targeting marten, captured 183 marten, and registered 158 marten. Trappers pursuing other species caught an additional 62 marten but released all alive. The number of trappers targeting marten and their trapping effort decreased significantly between 2015 and 2016 by 29% (519 versus 730 trappers) and 24% (3,972 versus 5,211 days), respectively. Furthermore, the number of marten registered decreased significantly by 56% between 2015 and 2016 (158 versus 359). Trapper effort per registered marten increased significantly by 68% between 2016 than 2015 (25.1 versus 15.0 days). An estimated 581 trappers spent 5,011 days targeting fisher, captured 241 fisher, and registered 194 fisher. Trappers pursuing other species caught 64 additional fisher and registered 9 of the non-target fisher. The number of trappers seeking fisher decreased significantly by 17% from 2015; however, their trapping effort was not significantly different. The number of fisher registered by all trappers decreased significantly by 26%, but trapper effort per registered fisher was not significantly different between 2016 than 2015 (25.9 versus 21.8 days).



A contribution of Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, Michigan Project W-147-R

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INTRODUCTION

The Natural Resources Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have the authority and responsibility to protect and manage the wildlife resources of the state of Michigan. Harvest surveys are important management tools used to help accomplish this statutory responsibility. The main objectives of this harvest survey were to determine the number of trappers who set traps for marten (*Martes americana*) and fisher (*M. pennanti*), the types of traps used, the number of days trapped, and the number of animals captured.

Efforts to restore the American marten and fisher have been successful throughout the Upper Peninsula (UP) (Williams et al. 2007). As a result, the first modern fisher trapping season was initiated in 1989, and the first modern marten trapping season was initiated in 2000.

In 2016, the marten and fisher trapping season was December 1-15 in the entire UP, except Drummond Island, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, and Seney National Wildlife Refuge. In order to trap either marten or fisher, trappers were required to obtain a free harvest tag, in addition to a Fur Harvester License. Trappers had to be a resident, 8 years of age or older, to obtain a kill tag. Starting in 2016, harvest tags were only available from May 1 through December 15. In previous years, harvest tags were available during September 15 through December 15. Trappers were limited to one marten or one fisher in 2016. Successful trappers were required to register all fisher and marten taken by December 20, 2016. Regulations mandate any fisher or marten captured in excess of the limit or outside of the season (i.e., incidental captures) must be released alive by trappers. If these incidental captures could not be released alive, trappers were required to transfer the incidental catches to the DNR. Trappers could use body-gripping (e.g., conibear) traps, foothold traps, and live restraining cage traps to capture marten and fisher.

METHODS

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to everyone who obtained a marten or fisher harvest tag in 2016 (4,273 tag holders). Trappers receiving the questionnaire were asked to report if they set traps for marten or fisher, number of days spent afield (i.e., effort), number of marten and fisher caught and released alive, and number of marten and fisher registered (registration estimates included incidentally caught animals that were not returned to the trapper). The number of days spent afield was reported as the number of days in which a trapper had at least one trap set. Trappers were asked to report whether any marten and fisher captured were taken in traps set for them or taken in traps set for another species. Trappers were also asked to indicate their impression of the status of the marten and fisher populations in the county where they primarily trapped (i.e., absent, stable, increasing, or decreasing).

Questionnaires were mailed to all harvest tag holders during mid-January 2016, and up to two follow-up questionnaires were mailed to nonrespondents. Although all tag holders were sent a questionnaire, not everybody returned their questionnaire. To extrapolate from the tag holders that returned their questionnaire to all people obtaining harvest tags, estimates were calculated using a simple random sampling design (Cochran 1977).

A 95% confidence limit (CL) was calculated for each estimate. In theory, the CL can be added and subtracted from the estimate to calculate the 95% confidence interval. The confidence interval is a measure of the precision associated with the estimate and implies that the true value would be within this interval 95 times out of 100. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include failure of participants to provide answers (nonresponse bias), question-wording, and question order. Because it is very difficult to measure these biases, estimates were not adjusted for these possible biases.

Statistical tests are used routinely to determine the likelihood that the differences among estimates are larger than expected by chance alone. The overlap of 95% confidence intervals was used to determine whether estimates differed. Non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals were equivalent to stating that the difference between the means was larger than would be expected 95 out of 100 times if the study had been repeated (Payton et al. 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2016, 4,273 trappers obtained a harvest tag to trap either marten or fisher, compared to 3,059 tag holders in 2015 (40% increase). Furtakers could obtain harvest tags earlier in 2016 than in 2015 (May 1 in 2016 versus September 15 in 2015). The DNR emphasized this change to furtakers during 2016 which may have contributed to the increase in tags distributed in 2016. Men obtained most of the marten and fisher harvest tags (4,076). Women obtained 187 harvest tags, and the sex of ten tag holders was unknown. Of the 4,122 people receiving the questionnaire, 2,271 responded (55% response rate). Questionnaires could not be delivered to 151 harvest tag holders.

Marten

About 12% of the tag holders set traps specifically for marten (519 trappers, Table 1). About $32 \pm 4\%$ of these trappers successfully captured at least one marten. The trappers targeting marten spent 3,972 days trapping ($\overline{x} = 7.6 \pm 0.4$ days/trapper), captured 183 marten (24 released alive), and registered 158 marten (Table 2). Trappers targeting other species caught 62 additional marten, and all of these non-target marten were released alive. Among trappers seeking marten, the greatest numbers of marten were captured in Marquette (43), Alger (26), and Chippewa (26) counties.

The number of trappers targeting marten decreased significantly by 29% (519 versus 730 trappers) and their trapping effort decreased significantly by 24% (3,972 versus 5,211 days, Figure 1) between 2015 and 2016. Furthermore, the number of marten registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting marten and trappers that caught non-target marten) decreased significantly by 56% between 2015 and 2016 (158 versus 359 marten, Figure 1). Among trappers targeting marten, the mean number of days of effort per registered marten was 25.1 ± 4.5 days in 2016, which increased significantly by 68% from the 2015 estimate (15.0 days, Figure 2).

The correlation between trapping effort and pelt prices (Pearson product moment correlation coefficient [r] = 0.55, the probability of obtaining this result [P] = 0.02) was significant, but the

correlation between the number of trappers and pelt prices was not significant (r = 0.39, P = 0.13). The mean number of days of effort per registered marten was not correlated with the mean value of marten pelts during 2000-2016 (r = 0.39, P = 0.12) (Figure 3).

Most trappers used body-gripping type traps (e.g., conibears) to capture marten (82 \pm 3%), although foothold traps also were used frequently (25 \pm 4%). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was 4.7 \pm 0.3. Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set per day was 4.3 \pm 0.5.

Nineteen percent of marten trappers ($\pm 3\%$) believed marten numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while 32 \pm 4% thought marten numbers were stable, 8 \pm 2% thought marten were declining, 5 \pm 2% indicated marten were not present, and 36 \pm 4% did not comment on the status of marten.

Fisher

About 14% of the marten and fisher tag holders set traps for fisher (581 trappers, Table 1). About 35 \pm 4% of these trappers successfully captured at least one fisher. Trappers targeting fishers spent 5,011 days trapping (8.6 \pm 0.4 days/trapper), captured 241 fisher (47 released alive), and registered 194 fisher (Table 3). Trappers targeting other species caught 64 additional fisher (55 released alive) and registered 9 incidental catches. Among trappers seeking fisher, the greatest numbers of fisher were captured in Marquette (36), Gogebic (24), and Iron (24) counties.

Between 2015 and 2016, the number of trappers targeting fisher decreased significantly by 17% (581 versus 705 trappers in 2015); however, their trapping effort was not significantly different (5,011 versus 5,734 days in 2015, Figure 4). The number of fisher registered by all trappers (including trappers targeting fisher and trappers that caught non-target fisher) decreased significantly by 26% between 2015 and 2016 (203 versus 274 fisher, Figure 4). Among trappers targeting fisher, the mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was 25.9 ± 3.6 days in 2016, which was not significantly different from the number of days per registered fisher in 2015 (21.8 days, Figure 5).

The correlations between the number of trappers and pelt prices (r = 0.55, P = 0.01) and between trapping effort and pelt prices (r = 0.59, P < 0.01) during 1997-2016 were significant. However, the mean number of days of effort per registered fisher was not significantly correlated with the mean value of fisher pelts (r = 0.36, P = 0.12; Figure 6).

Most trappers used body-gripping traps (e.g., conibears) to capture fisher (78 \pm 3%), although foothold traps also were used frequently (30 \pm 4%). Among trappers using body-gripping traps, the mean number of body-gripping traps set per day was 5.1 \pm 0.6 traps. Among trappers using foothold traps, the mean number of foothold traps set daily was 4.1 \pm 0.4 traps.

Twenty percent of fisher trappers ($\pm 3\%$) believed fisher numbers were increasing in the county where they trapped most often, while 33 \pm 4% thought fisher numbers were stable, 9 \pm 2% thought they were declining, 5 \pm 2% indicated fisher were absent, and 32 \pm 4% did not comment on the status of fisher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank all of the marten and fisher trappers that provided information. Theresa Riebow completed data entry. Adam Bump, Mike Donovan, and Dwayne Etter reviewed a draft version of this report.

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Table 1. Estimated harvest tag holders that attempted to trap marten or fisher in Michigan

during 2016 season.

Species sought by tag holders	%	95% CL ^a	Total	95% CL ^a
Trapped for only marten	3	1	147	22
Trapped for only fisher	5	1	209	26
Trapped for both marten and fisher	9	1	373	34
Trapped for either marten or fisher	17	1	728	45
Trapped for marten ^b	12	1	519	39
Trapped for fisher ^c	14	1	581	41

a95% confidence limits.

bSum of trappers that trapped only marten and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher. cSum of trappers that trapped only fisher and trappers that trapped both marten and fisher.

Table 2. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, marten captured (including all incidental catches and releases), marten released alive, and marten registered (including incidental

catches) during the 2016 Michigan trapping season.

Type of	the 2010	o micriiç	Jan trapp Trapp		Maı	ten	Ma	rten	M	larten
trapper and	Trapp	ers	effort (days)		_captured ^a _		released alive		registered ^b	
area trapped		95% CL		95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL	Total	95% CL
Trappers that set traps targeting marten										
Alger	49	13	297	96	26	10	0	0	26	10
Baraga	32	10	213	81	19	9	2	3	17	8
Chippewa	51	13	309	97	26	10	4	4	23	9
Delta	9	6	49	33	2	3	0	0	2	3
Dickinson	19	8	175	78	4	4	0	0	4	4
Gogebic	19	8	188	86	6	4	2	3	4	4
Houghton	41	12	322	104	8	5	0	0	8	5
Iron	47	13	438	132	9	6	0	0	9	6
Keweenaw	11	6	87	50	6	6	2	3	4	4
Luce	55	14	391	103	13	7	0	0	13	7
Mackinac	36	11	318	107	4	4	0	0	4	4
Marquette	77	16	578	136	43	16	13	9	30	10
Menominee	8	5	88	62	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	23	9	184	74	13	9	2	3	11	7
Schoolcraft	34	11	273	94	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	11	6	62	39	4	4	0	0	4	4
Subtotal ^d	519	39	3,972	377	183	28	24	11	158	23
Trappers that captured marten in traps set to catch another species										
Alger	0	0	ŃΑ	NA	0	Ó	0	0	0	0
Baraga	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chippewa	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gogebic	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Houghton	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	2	3	0	0
Iron	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Keweenaw	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luce	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mackinac	2	3	NA	NA	4	5	4	5	0	0
Marquette	9	6	NA	NA	47	31	47	31	0	0
Menominee	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ontonagon	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	2	3	0	0
Schoolcraft	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
LP ^c	4	5	NA	NA	8	10	8	10	0	0
Subtotal ^d	19	8	NA	NA	62	33	62	33	0	0
Grand totald	529	40	3,972	377	245	44	87	35	158	23
aAll marten removed fro	om trane inc	ludina all ir	oidontal oat	ohoc and ro	loacoc					

^aAll marten removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

blncluded incidentally caught marten that were not returned to the trapper.

[°]Counties in the Lower Peninsula.

^dNumber of trappers does not add up to totals because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.

Table 3. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort, fisher captured (including all incidental catches and releases), fisher released alive, and fisher registered (including incidental

catches) by trappers during the 2016 Michigan trapping season.

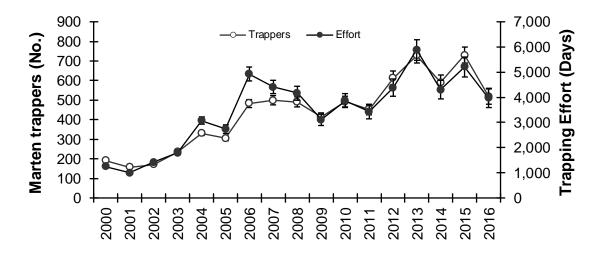
Type of	pors du	ining the			Fish		Fish	er	Fig	her
trapper and	Trapp	ners		rapping Fisher ort (days) captured ^a		released alive		registered ^b		
county	παρρ	95%	CHOIL	95%	<u> </u>	95%	TOTOGOOG	95%	regio	95%
trapped	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c	Total	CL ^c
Trappers that s					Total		rotar	<u> </u>	rotar	
Alger	28	10	230	93	9	8	4	4	6	4
Baraga	36	11	239	90	19	9	4	4	15	7
Chippewa	32	10	183	70	6	6	2	3	4	4
Delta	19	8	143	69	6	6	2	3	4	4
Dickinson	47	13	476	135	17	8	0	0	17	8
Gogebic	34	11	301	107	24	10	8	6	17	8
Houghton	41	12	361	116	21	13	9	8	11	6
Iron	64	15	653	163	24	13	6	8	19	8
Keweenaw	15	7	115	57	8	5	0	0	8	5
Luce	51	13	406	111	8	5	2	3	6	4
Mackinac	30	10	263	96	9	6	0	0	9	6
Marquette	73	16	598	146	36	13	6	6	30	10
Menominee	36	11	399	130	19	9	2	3	17	8
Ontonagon	36	11	275	88	23	10	2	3	21	9
Schoolcraft	41	12	326	104	13	8	2	3	11	6
Unknown	6	4	43	34	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotald	581	41	5,011	437	241	34	47	16	194	25
Trappers that c								.0	101	20
Alger	4	4	NA NA	NA NA	4	4	2	3	2	3
Baraga	2	3	NA	NA	4	5	4	5	0	0
Chippewa	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delta	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dickinson	2	3	NA	NA	6	8	6	8	0	0
Gogebic	6	4	NA	NA	6	4	4	4	2	3
Houghton	6	4	NA	NA	8	6	8	6	0	0
Iron	4	4	NA	NA	4	4	4	4	0	0
Keweenaw	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luce	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mackinac	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	2	3	0	0
Marquette	13	7	NA	NA	24	14	21	14	4	4
Menominee	4	4	NA	NA	4	4	4	4	0	0
Ontonagon	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	0	0	2	3
Schoolcraft	2	3	NA	NA	2	3	2	3	0	0
Unknown	0	0	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal ^d	41	12	NA	NA	64	20	55	19	9	7
Grand total ^d	604	42	5,011	437	305	43	102	28	203	27

^aAll fisher removed from traps, including all incidental catches and releases.

blncluded incidentally caught fisher that were not returned to the trapper.

^{°95%} confidence limits.

^dNumber of trappers does not add up to statewide total because trappers could trap in more than one county. Column totals for trapping effort and capture may not equal statewide totals because of rounding errors.



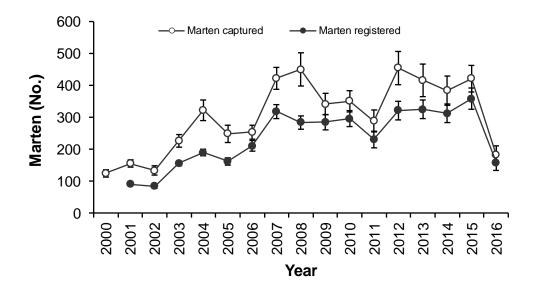


Figure 1. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of marten captured and registered in Michigan, 2000-2016. Registration total was not estimated in 2000. Beginning in 2006, the estimates of marten captured and registered included incidental animals that the trapper was not allowed to keep; estimates from previous years excluded incidental animals. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers specifically targeting martens, but estimates of marten captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included marten taken by trappers not targeting marten).

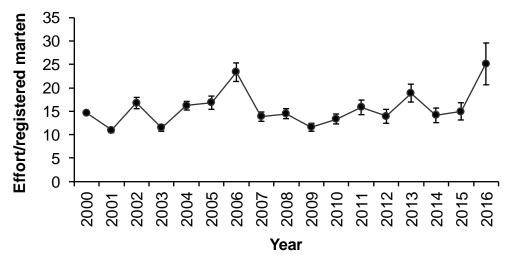


Figure 2. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan during 2000-2016. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered marten included only trappers targeting martens.

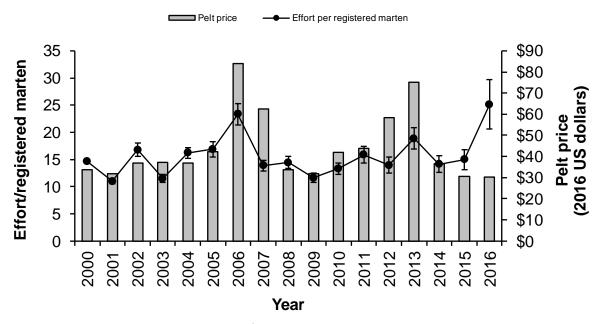


Figure 3. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a marten in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 2000-2016. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Dexter 2017). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2016 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered marten included only trappers targeting marten.

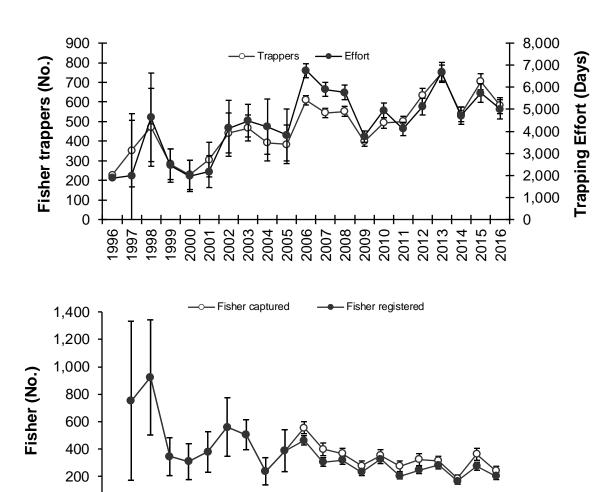


Figure 4. Estimated number of trappers, trapping effort (days), and number of fisher captured and registered in Michigan, 1996-2016. Estimates of trappers and effort included only trappers targeting fishers, but estimates of fisher captured and registered included the take by all trappers (i.e., included fisher taken by trappers not targeting fisher).

Year

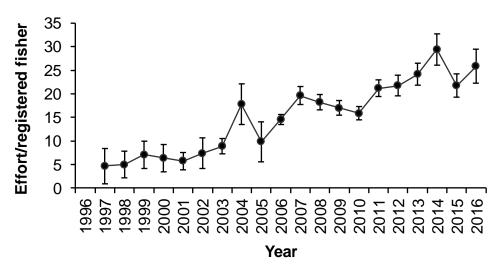


Figure 5. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan during 1997-2016. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

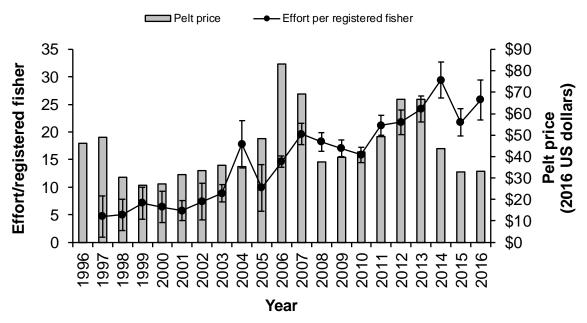


Figure 6. Estimated mean number of days required to harvest a fisher in Michigan and the mean pelt value during 1996-2016. Vertical bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Pelt prices were the mean of values reported from Minnesota (Dexter 2017) and Wisconsin (Lohr 2017). Pelt price were adjusted for inflation and reported in 2016 dollars. Estimates of effort/registered fisher included only trappers targeting fishers.

Appendix A. 2016.	The questionn	aire sent to peo	ple who obtain	ed a marten or f	isher harvest ta	ag in



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, WILDLIFE DIVISION PO Box 30030 Lansing MI 48909-7530

2016 Marten and Fisher Harvest Report

This information is requested under authority of Part 435, 1994 PA 451, M.C.L. 324.43539



It is important that you complete and return this questionnaire even if you did not trap or capture a marten or fisher. 1. Did you place traps for marten during the 2016 season (December 1-15)? ² No, Skip to question number 5. 2. If you attempted to trap marten during the 2016 marten season, please complete the following table. COUNTY NUMBER OF MARTEN TRAPPED FOR NUMBER OF MARTEN NUMBER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED **CAUGHT AND RELEASED** MARTEN OF DAYS (Count all marten that were TRAPPED registered including incidental (List each county (Count only martens that you trapped **FOR** you released alive catches that were for marten.) MARTEN from your traps.) not returned to you.) 3. How many of the following traps did you set for marten in 2016? (For each type, record the average number used per day.) Foothold Conibear Other (Please specify 4. What is the status of marten in the area (county) you trapped most often in 2016? ¹ Increasing ² Decreasing ³ Stable ⁴ Not present 5. Did you incidentally catch any marten while trapping for other species that you have not already reported in Question #2. ² No, Skip to question number 7. 6. If you answered yes in the previous question, please report the location and number of incidental martens you captured. Please do not report marten already reported in question #2. COUNTY WHERE NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL INCIDENTAL MARTEN MARTEN CAUGHT AND MARTEN CAUGHT AND CAUGHT RELEASED REGISTERED (List each county (Count only incidental martens (Count incidental marten that were that you caught an you released alive registered including catches that incidental marten.) from your traps.) were not returned to you.)

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7.	2000		er during the 2016 season (D	ecember 1-15)?						
	1 🔲 Y	es es	² No, skip to question #11.							
8.	If you attempted to trap fisher during the 2016 $\underline{\text{fisher}}$ season, please complete the following table.									
	COUNTY TRAPPED FOR FISHER (List each county that you trapped for fisher.) COUNTY NUMBER OF DAYS TRAPPED FOR FISHER		NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only fishers you released alive from your traps.)	NUMBER OF FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count all fisher that were registered including incidental catches that were not returned to you.)						
9.		record the av	traps did you set for fisher in erage number used per day.) Foothold Conibear Other (Please specify	2016?						
40	10% -4 !- 414-	S		/						
10.			in the area (county) you trap	AV						
	¹ Increasir	` —	-	Not present 5 Not sure						
11.	not already rep.		any fisher while trapping for o stion #8.	otner species that you have						
	¹ Yes	²	Skip to question #13.							
12.			previous question, please rep tured. Please do not report f							
	COUNTY V INCIDENTAL CAUG (List each o	FISHER HT	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND RELEASED (Count only incidental fisher	NUMBER OF INCIDENTAL FISHER CAUGHT AND REGISTERED (Count incidental fisher that were						
	that you cau incidental fi	ight an	you released alive from your traps.)	registered including catches that were not returned to you.)						
13.	. Do you have ar Michigan?	ny comments	or suggestions about marte	n or fisher management in						
-										
-										
	Ple	ease return que	estionnaire in the enclosed postage Thank you for your help!	e-paid envelope.						

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