

Few trappers had exclusive rights to specific areas and most of them were unable to establish permanent homes in communities. Poaching was common practice and there was little economic security. Beaver began declining steadily after World War I and this affected the habitat for other fur bearers as well.

In 1944, the Saskatchewan Government set up a committee to study trapping problems and the following year the South Saskatchewan Muskrat Trapping Program was instituted. Under this plan, individuals received exclusive rights to trap on definite land locations. Owners and occupants received first consideration, with special priority given to Indians and metis on Crown lands. Muskrat quotas were established to assure continuing populations, and marketing of pelts under government supervision was instituted.

In 1946, under federal-provincial agreement, all Crown lands north of the 53rd parallel were set up as the Northern Fur Conservation Block. Up to \$50,000 was to be expended over the following ten years to establish and administer conservation areas, purchase equipment, pay salaries of personnel, transplant live beaver and build dams; the Federal Government agreed to assume 60 p.c. of the cost and the province the remainder. A Fur Advisory Committee, with representation from the provincial Department of Natural Resources and the federal Indian Affairs Branch was set up to supervise the program. Organization of conservation areas was left to the trappers. Five-man councils were elected in all districts, with Indian, metis and white trappers sharing privileges, obligations and responsibilities on an equal basis. Conservation measures and licensing regulations were initiated. In 1962, a co-ordinating body was set up by the Fur Advisory Committee to promote better communications and understanding of the fur program.

Under the present fur program, security of trappers has been strengthened; fur bearer populations have increased; quotas have put trapping on a sustained-yield basis; poaching has been largely eliminated; higher water levels resulting from comeback of beaver have improved the habitat for other wildlife; and Indian and white trappers are sharing alike in the self-government of trapping areas and in fur management policies and programs.

**Alberta.**—Meetings under the auspices of the Fish and Wildlife Division of the provincial Department of Lands and Forests have been held with trappers to advise them of new and improved methods of trapping and to help alleviate problems in trapping that arise from time to time. Studies are being made by the biological staff of the Division regarding fur bearing animals, their habits and their habitat, and knowledge gained from these studies is passed on to the trapper. Pamphlets are distributed to trappers showing how and where to set traps, how to pelt the different fur bearing animals, and regulations in force. The Alberta Government has submitted pelts to the main fur exhibits in Canada and Europe, a policy that has increased the interest of foreign buyers in Alberta furs.

Several legislative measures have been taken in the past few years. The spring beaver season has been shortened, as a result of which Alberta has been marketing a higher grade pelt. Investigations have shown that beaver pelts coming on prime bring a higher price than pelts going off prime and the main reason for this legislation was to persuade trappers to trap beaver in winter when pelts are at their best. The season on otter was closed three years ago but there has been no significant change in their population. The prohibiting of mismanagement of registered trapping areas by holders, although introduced only in 1963, has already had the effect of greatly increasing activity in trapping—areas have been taken away from persons holding them for investment and given to persons willing and able to trap, and borderline trappers have been forced to put more effort into trapping. It should be stated that the present price of pelts has made it easier to make this legislation effective.

**British Columbia.**—The British Columbia wild fur resource is administered by the Fish and Game Branch of the Department of Recreation and Conservation. Regulations are derived under authority of the Game Act and resource use is controlled under the registered trapline system, in effect since 1926. Registered traplines are areas of Crown land allotted, for purpose of trapping wild fur, to trappers who are resident in the province.