



Trapping Matters Workshop

Communicating Effectively About Trapping

Messages

To communicate effectively, you must consistently use messages that “ring true” with your target audiences.

The messages that will be most effective in communicating about trapping will vary, depending on who the target audience is, the medium of communication used, the source of the information, and many other variables. However, considerable research has shown that the “priority” and “supporting” messages listed below are effective with a broad cross-section of the public.

Priority Messages

Given limited time, space, and/or budget, these messages are the priorities (the *first* things that should be mentioned in any communication event):

- The kinds of wildlife that are trapped are abundant – regulated trapping does not cause wildlife to become endangered.
- Trapping is managed through scientifically-based regulations that are strictly enforced by conservation officers.
- The state fish and wildlife agency continually reviews and develops rules, regulations, education programs, and capture methods to ensure the humaneness of trapping.
- Regulated trapping provides many benefits to wildlife and people.

Supporting Messages

Following are supporting messages that can be used to expand on and *explain* the key messages if needed and if time and/or space is available.

It is important to keep in mind that these messages can help explain and support the priority messages, but they are not necessarily by themselves reasons why trapping should be allowed to continue. For example, the fact that nature produces a surplus of animals each year helps explain why regulated trapping does not cause wildlife to become endangered. However, by itself, it's not a reason why trapping should be allowed to continue—robins, cardinals, and other species produce surpluses, but we don't trap them.

The priority messages are listed below (#s 1-4), with appropriate supporting messages listed beneath each one.

1. The kinds of wildlife that are trapped are abundant – regulated trapping does not cause wildlife to become endangered.
 - A. Only a few species of wildlife can be legally trapped by licensed trappers.
 - B. No threatened or endangered animals are legally trapped, except for protection or restocking programs.
 - C. Many wildlife populations naturally produce a surplus of animals each year that can be removed from the wild without harming the populations (sustainable use).
 - D. The environment contains only enough food, water, and habitat for a certain number of animals of each species (carrying capacity).
 - E. Without the regulated capture and removal of some animals, a wildlife population may exceed its habitat's carrying capacity. Potential results include:
 - i Threats to human health and safety;
 - ii Damage to the animals' habitat;
 - iii Damage to agricultural crops or other human structures;
 - iv Death from starvation or disease outbreaks
 - F. The trapping of some wild animals is a legal activity in which some Americans choose to participate.

2. Trapping is managed through scientifically-based regulations that are strictly enforced by conservation officers.
 - A. Trapping is endorsed and controlled by trained wildlife professionals who dedicate their lives to ensuring the welfare of animals. [The Wildlife Society (professional society of wildlife management professionals) recently reaffirmed its position on the value of trapping to wildlife management.]
 - B. Trapping is not allowed year-round (except for nuisance control). It is limited to short seasons which help to prevent the capture of females with dependent young.
 - C. Most state fish and wildlife agencies provides trapper education courses to ensure that trappers have the most up-to-date information on effective, efficient, humane trapping tools and techniques.

3. The state fish and wildlife agency continually reviews and develops rules, regulations, education programs, and capture methods to ensure the humaneness of trapping.
 - A. State wildlife agencies, working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state trappers associations, and experienced veterinarians, have spent over \$40 million over the past 20 years to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping. (BMPs detail the most effective, efficient, humane trapping tools and techniques.)
 - B. Wildlife professionals support the use of the best available technology and techniques for trapping (as exemplified by the unanimous support for the best management practices project by state wildlife agency directors).
 - C. The Wildlife Society (professional association of wildlife management professionals), endorses best management practices for trapping.
 - D. Trappers and wildlife management professionals support these efforts because they care about the welfare of wildlife.

4. Regulated trapping provides many benefits to wildlife and people.
 - A. As a way to maintain a balance between wildlife and people:
 - i. By reducing or preventing damage to agricultural crops and human property
 - ii. In certain situations, reducing or preventing threats to human and pet health and safety (e.g. minimizing exposure to diseases such as rabies).
 - B. Managing and protecting endangered species such as the least tern, piping plover and sea turtles.
 - C. As a way to collect important ecological information about wildlife.
 - D. Funding for wildlife conservation -- trapping license fees paid by trappers are used for the protection of wildlife habitat and populations.
 - E. In many states, some people rely on trapping of wildlife for food or a source of supplemental income.
 - F. Most of the animal can be used: the fur to make coats, gloves, mittens, trim on coats and sweaters; the meat for human food; and the rest of the animal for other by-products such as soap, tires, and lubricants.