

Alberta Trappers' Association

Highway 44 South Industrial Park, Lot 14, PO Box 6020, Westlock, Alberta T7P 2P7

Tel: 780.349.6626 • Fax: 888.362.4679 • Email: info@albertatrappers.com

www.albertatrappers.com



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Constant Contact Message to ATA Membership

Greetings ATA members,

There is a lot of concern throughout the trapping community these days and rightly so. The slide of NAFA into receivership has certainly been a blow and as a result, a cloud of uncertainty is hanging over the fur market. The ATA executive along with other provincial associations have been working hard to cut through rumor and speculation, and to get to the facts of the situation we are faced with, so I'll share what I know.

North American Fur Auction is now in receivership and under the protection of a trustee so it cannot operate in any capacity whatsoever. The main creditor will be their bank CIBC, and until that debt is satisfied or terms are finalized, all assets will be frozen. That means that we will have to wait and see how the liquidation of equity and the possible settlement of outstanding debt vs receivables plays out.

There is of course outstanding money owing to trappers from previous sales and all the fur pelts currently in storage on consignment to deal with. There have been communications from NAFA executives stating their intent to make good on all of that, and I have no doubt that is the intent. But at this point it is out of their hands so I think trappers just need to take a breath and resign ourselves to the fact that this will all take some time to resolve.

As everyone knows there has been quite a bit of speculation regarding the cause of the financial failure. I think that it is a combination of factors and really we may never know the full story. What I can say is that there is still a demand for wild fur, perhaps now more than ever? Ranch fur comprised 95% of the global market, and now that one of the main trading houses for that commodity is gone. We'll have to see what effect that has on demand?

I know that Fur Harvesters remains committed to the marketing and sale of wild fur, and that they are ramping up in a big way to step into the void left by NAFA. They have also assured their shippers and agents to which the ATA is one, that all agreements will be honored. There have also been some major moves taking place in the cash buyer market that has local buyers reorganizing for an increased market share and international buyers such as Groenewolds Fur and Wool out of Illinois, USA, looking to establish a foothold in Canada. My point is that in a market economy when a major player goes down, the void will be filled if the opportunities are viable; and from what I see there is a lot of people looking to get a share of what NAFA has left on the table.

So I would not give into the doom and gloom being perpetuated that this is the end of the fur industry. It is a reorganization, one of many over the last 350 years, and who knows what the future will bring. All I know is that trappers need to trap and that is what we should be doing. I know that we will continue to receive fur at the ATA for shipment to Fur Harvesters. For those that want to hedge their bets on the auction I'm quite certain there will be a strong, competitive cash market for your fur this season.

On another note, the new ATA Log Book for 2019-2020 is ready for distribution and will be available through your local or on the ATA website next week. New for this year is a more simplified format regarding trapper activity and a move to include the quota species: lynx, fisher, river otter and wolverine in the data gathering process. The government is very happy with the progress to date and this year I am confident we can increase the number of submitted logbooks to 300. At that point the sample will be large enough so that furbearer management regulations can be based on that real time data provided by trappers. In short we will be masters of our own destiny regarding sustainable fur harvest and that will be a great day for the trapping community.

We are ramping up for the 2019-2020 ATA Wolf Management Program. All trappers operating in **and around** the Little Smoky/A la Pêche, Athabasca East/Cold Lake and Chinchaga Caribou Management Areas need to get a hold of Jeff at the ATA office, Kevin Klein or Vic Toutant and get registered in this program. Funds are in place, training is available and the deadline is November 30, 2019. This is our chance to show the people of Alberta that we don't need poison and gunships to manage our wildlife resource, we just need trappers doing what we do best. There is a lot of eyes on this program so let's show them what we can do!

This first week of November has been a big one for the ATA and trappers. To begin with representatives of the Alberta Trappers Association sat in at the Caribou Sub-Regional Task Forces Meeting at the legislature in Edmonton early this week. This is the ministers task force chaired by MLA's for each regional subcommittee. Trappers will have a strong voice and a key role to play in this process. This is an A list strategic planning session and trappers should be proud that we have been invited to take part. The process will continue well into 2020 and has the potential to yield productive dividends for the trapping community here in Alberta.

On Friday of this week we will finalize our agreement with the North West Species at Risk and Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute to kick off the Caribou Monitoring Project in Chinchaga and Caribou Mountains this winter. Again, trappers will be in a position to demonstrate that we have no equals when it comes to working in harsh and remote landscapes. The potential of this project for trappers cannot be overstated and the success of this small pilot project may have far reaching implications and opportunity for trappers. Zone 3 director Terry Batt deserves special thanks for getting this project off the ground!

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the 2020 ATA Rendezvous will be held July 3-4 at the Christensen Sports and Wellness Centre in Rocky Mountain House. The town of Rocky is very excited to host our event and they have bent over backwards to accommodate us. I think that this will be a great event at a wonderful facility in a historic location. Now the work starts but I think we'll put on one hell of a show!

Best of luck on the line this fall!

Yours in trapping,

Bill Abercrombie, ATA President