

Habitat Conservation Fund
Wildlife Division
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources
136 Exhibition Street
Kentville, N.S.
B4N 4E5

December 8, 2004

RE: 2004 Final Report for River Otters and Mercury

To Whom it May Concern:

This year has been a great year for the otter project. With the help of a local trapper (Paul Tufts), we have successfully live captured six river otter, three in the spring (May-June) and three in the fall (Oct.-Nov.). These otter were all captured on the coast in South Western Nova Scotia and have been implanted with radio telemetry devices and are currently being tracked by helicopter on a weekly basis. The home range data we have collected thus far on the implanted otter will help to pinpoint mercury sources in contaminated waterways. Fur and blood samples taken from the captured otter have been sent away for mercury analysis; results are pending.

I have had the opportunity to attend various workshops and meetings in order to network and discuss as well as receive feedback on the various aspects of this study. The groups I have met with include the Trappers Association of Nova Scotia, The Fur Institute of Canada, the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the Collaborative Mercury Research Network. These discussions allow valuable information to be exchanged between local communities and scientists.

This year, during the spring and fall trapping seasons I was able to hire a youth intern, Shawn Kelly. Shawn had completed his on the job training with the otter project in May while he attended Holland College. He proved invaluable in the field and was a hard worker. I was glad for the opportunity to hire him after his training was completed. In return he was able to gain wildlife experience that will be important for future employment in the wildlife field. This project was also able to provide food and lodging for volunteers during the fall season. They included a student from Holland who was trying to determine what career path he would like to take and a student from Sir Sandford Fleming College who wished to do their on the job training.

With the continuing support of sponsors such as yourself, I would like to live trap six more otter next year in inland habitats of south western Nova Scotia in order to study the inland/coastal mercury patterns as stated in the proposal.

This winter I will be using otter carcasses provided by local trappers in order to look at the effects of mercury on otter reproductive condition.

Thank you for continued support of this study.

Sincerely,

Sarah Spencer
MSc. candidate
Acadia University