

TELEPHONE LOG

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Subject: Update of Furbearer Organochlorine Studies

The following is a summary of preliminary observations/findings of the program:

NYSDEC is currently selecting tissues (necropsy) for PCB and pesticide analysis. The selection will continue through July/August and the analysis should be completed November-February. Method 1668 or a method that yields high resolution for co-planar PCB congeners will be used on some (highly contaminated) animals and the remainder will receive a limited (less expensive) analysis.

About 99 animals will be analyzed from the Upper Hudson, including 60 mink (out of 150 samples) and 20 otter (out of 25 samples). Plasma was also taken from live-trapped otters.

A subset of the animals will receive a retinol (Vitamin A) analysis to see if PCBs are associated with decreasing retinol.

There is also a trap and release program in effect. Some trappers maintain a diary of locations of animals and are interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Trappers generally have 30-40 years of experience and can pinpoint take, habitat, and quality. However, habitat quality is not well understood and does not appear pertinent to whether mink use an area. Mink presence is considered to be prey driven. Open water in winter act as refugia. The vegetation structure does not appear to have much impact. For example, an stream in a field with fish is more likely to have mink than good habitat where productivity is low.

Otters appear to be even more prey driven, particularly in seasons other than winter. In summer they disperse throughout wetlands and woodlands. The ecology is not well understood.

A field study is ongoing. Last fall (1999) a trapper was hired to work on the Hudson and its tributaries between Corinth and Stillwater. Twenty six mink were caught, but there was the sense that many more mink should have been taken. The otter take also much lower than expected (45 in northern part of Hudson River drainage over two years).

There are also some carcasses from down river. However, since the animals may have large home ranges, they are difficult to track. There are few trappers along the river, unlike 30-40 years ago.

Since otter are resident year-round, they are the animals to focus on rather than mink.

Dose-response studies (feeding) are scheduled for the future and DNA work to determine the relatedness of mink along the river (offspring or immigrants) is being considered.