



River Otter Trapping/Hunting Season Frequently Asked Questions 2021

Why did Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) propose a river otter trapping/hunting season beginning in 2021?

The river otter has been protected since 1978 as a state threatened species. It was recently delisted as it met established goals for distribution and reproduction. While a state threatened species, river otters have been incidentally caught by trappers, with an average of almost 17 river otters trapped each year for the past 5 years. As a state threatened species, incidentally trapped river otters were required to be surrendered to GFP or released alive if possible. Despite incidental take by trappers and other mortality causes, the river otter has expanded in the past 40 years, especially in eastern South Dakota, and GFP determined the population can support a conservative harvest.

What license is required to trap river otters?

The river otter trapping/hunting season is only open to South Dakota residents. A *Furbearer License* is required to harvest river otters. However, no license is required for resident youth under age 18 or resident landowners trapping/hunting on land they own/operate. A Hunt Safe certification is required for youth 12-15 years old, but not required for youth 16 or older.

What are the season dates?

The river otter trapping/hunting season for 2021 is November 1 to December 31 or until the harvest limit of 20 river otters is reached, whichever comes first. The November 1 date coincides with the start of most furbearer trapping/hunting seasons. A majority of the previous incidentally trapped river otters from the last five years were taken in November.

What is the harvest limit for river otters?

The limit is one river otter per furbearer license holder, per season. The harvest limit is 20 river otters during the 2021 season. The season will end prior to December 31 if the harvest limit of 20 river otters is reached.

How will I know if the harvest limit is reached?

GFP will have updated harvest information available on GFP's website (<https://gfp.sd.gov/river-otter/>) and will do press releases and emails to communicate that the river otter season is closed. Individuals can also call (605.353.7185) for current status on the number of river otters harvested for the 2021 season.



Where can I legally trap/hunt river otters?

The river otter trapping/hunting season is open in the following counties: Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Brown, Charles Mix, Clark, Clay, Codington, Davison, Day, Deuel, Douglas, Grant, Hamlin, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, Marshall, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, Turner, Union and Yankton counties during the designated river otter trapping season. See map below (Figure 1).

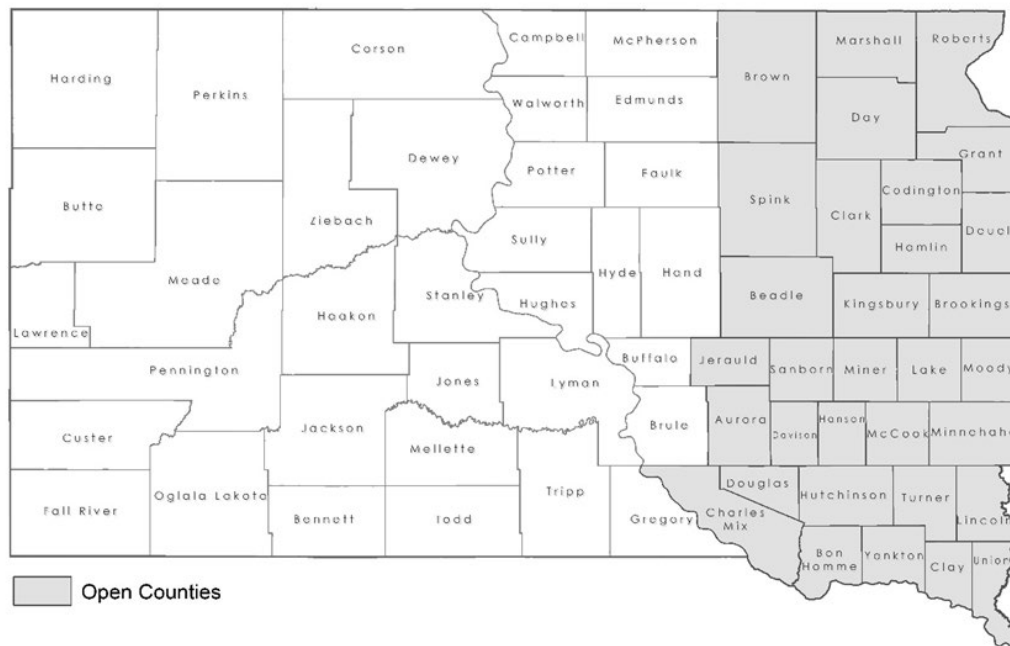


Figure 1. Counties open for the river otter trapping/hunting season for residents in South Dakota.

What do I do after I harvest a river otter during the designated river otter season?

An individual is required to report a harvested river otter during the designated river otter season to GFP at (605.353.7319) within 24 hours of its harvest. At that time, arrangements will be made to check-in the detached pelt and surrender the carcass to a GFP office for registration and pelt tagging within 5 days of harvest.

What do I do if I trap more than one river otter? The limit is one river otter per furbearer license holder per season. If you catch more than one river otter and the additional river otter is dead, the trapper would need to leave the second river otter undisturbed and contact a GFP representative within 12 hours. The department representative may authorize the temporary possession of the river otter until it can be surrendered to the department. If the additional river otter is alive, the trapper must immediately release the river otter.



Why must a river otter pelt be tagged and the carcass surrendered?

Some species traded in international markets are covered by a federal regulation called Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

Because the river otter is similar in appearance to another rare species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulates and monitors river otter harvest. To allow the harvest of river otters in South Dakota, GFP must comply with certain regulations, which includes the approval of the harvest structure and tagging and marking of all river otter pelts. GFP requires the surrender of river otter carcasses for data collection on sex, age, size, and other biological information.

What if I trap a river otter after the harvest limit has been reached or outside of the river otter season?

Individuals must regularly monitor the status of the river otter harvest, which will be available on the GFP's website and by calling (605.353.7185). If the harvest limit is reached during the season dates, a trapper has 24 hours to report any river otter harvested. After the season has closed, whether 24 hours after the harvest limit was reached or a season date closure, a trapper must leave all dead river otters undisturbed and contact a GFP representative within 12 hours. If a trapped river otter is alive, the trapper must immediately release the river otter.

What can I do to try to avoid catching a river otter outside of the trapping season?

Trappers should learn to identify river otter sign and avoid trapping in areas with river otter sign after the season has closed; modify traps to avoid catching river otters (e.g., move trigger to side on a conibear). The following link provides information for river otter avoidance techniques, <https://gfp.sd.gov/userdocs/docs/RiverOtter-online.pdf>.