2016 Mink Monitoring Summary

The third of a three year study of the AOC Mink monitoring project is complete. This year produced 2 tracks in the AOC and 8 tracks in the control area. These numbers are similar to the first year of the monitoring project. This year we did not carry out any trapper surveys or on-foot surveys of stream banks. Both methods were determined to be ineffective at monitoring Mink numbers. On-foot tracking was ineffective due to unsuitable river bank conditions. Trapper surveys were stopped due to lack of response to surveys.

This year a local veterinarian was contacted for collecting blood samples this year to avoid schedule conflicts with department veterinarians. Despite this traps were not set out until the end of September due to low track numbers. Starting 09/26/2016 through 09/30/2016, traps were set out on the AOC to attempt to trap mink with gland lure as an attractant. Traps were selectively place depending on river use by fishermen and housing on the river. The rafts closest to the dam on River Wildlife property did not have traps set due to intense fishing pressure from the salmon run.

One possible reason for the low number of mink tracks for year one and three could be because of higher river flow and water levels. Water levels during 2014 and 2016, in the Sheboygan River were above the historic average due to a wet summer and fall. The second year (2015) water levels were consistently low without any major rain events which coincided with more tracks on the track boards. This could suggest a design flaw in the study. Mink might alter their hunting tactics, hunting areas, or food sources during high water times, or they might be less likely to climb on a track board when the board is more unstable in fast moving water.

When you look at the trapping effort, the tracks per trap night are very low. For the AOC, the trapping effort was 1:216 track per trap nights. For the control area the trapping effort was 1:154.5 track per trap nights.