

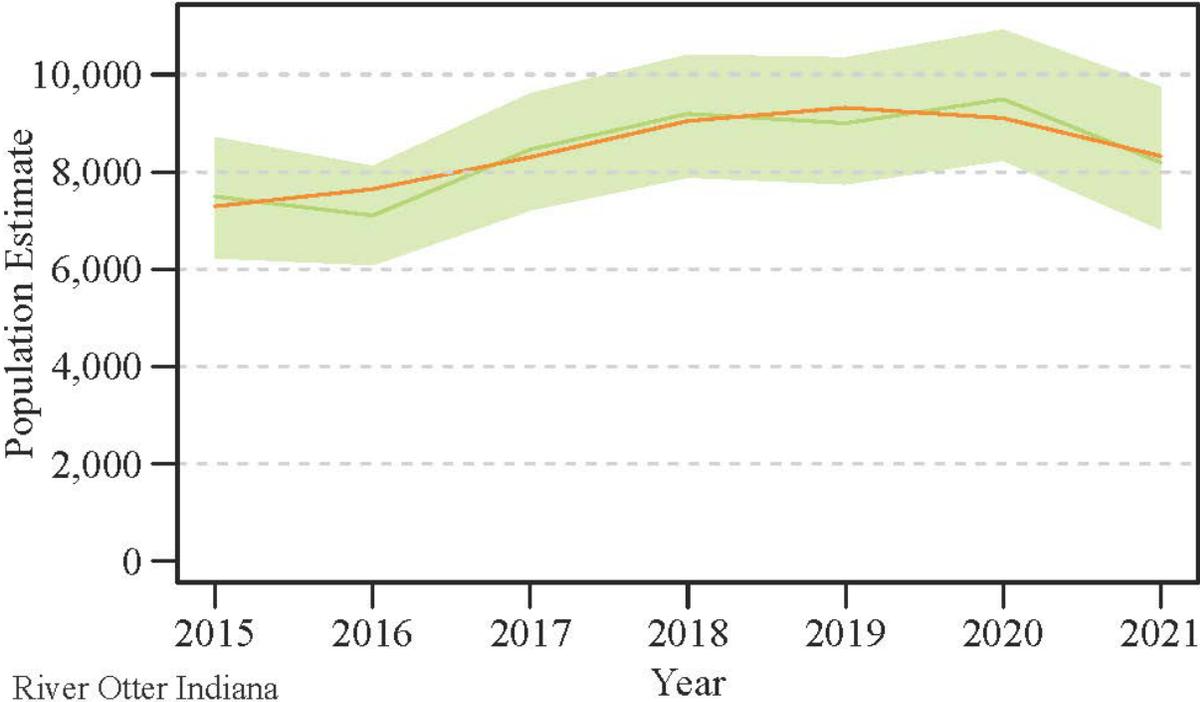
Indiana River Otter Trapping

Background

Indiana DNR and many partners worked together to reintroduce 303 river otters at 12 sites across northern and southern Indiana from 1995–1999. These populations flourished and river otters were removed from the endangered species list in 2009. A limited, regulated trapping season was opened in 2015 across 66 Indiana counties, with a statewide quota of 600 otters and an individual trapper bag limit of 2. The season dates have remained the same, from November 15 until March 15 or until the statewide quota is met. River otters trapped are required to be checked in within 24 hours to help ensure that the number of otters harvested stays within the statewide quota, which has been helpful in the 3 years the season has reached the quota before the March 15 season ending date. Licensed trappers must register harvested river otters in person within 15 days after the month of harvest so they can turn in their carcass to DNR staff, which is used to collect critical data like age, and obtain a CITES tag, which allows them to sell the river otter pelt. Licensed trappers younger than 10 must complete a trapper education course to trap river otters.

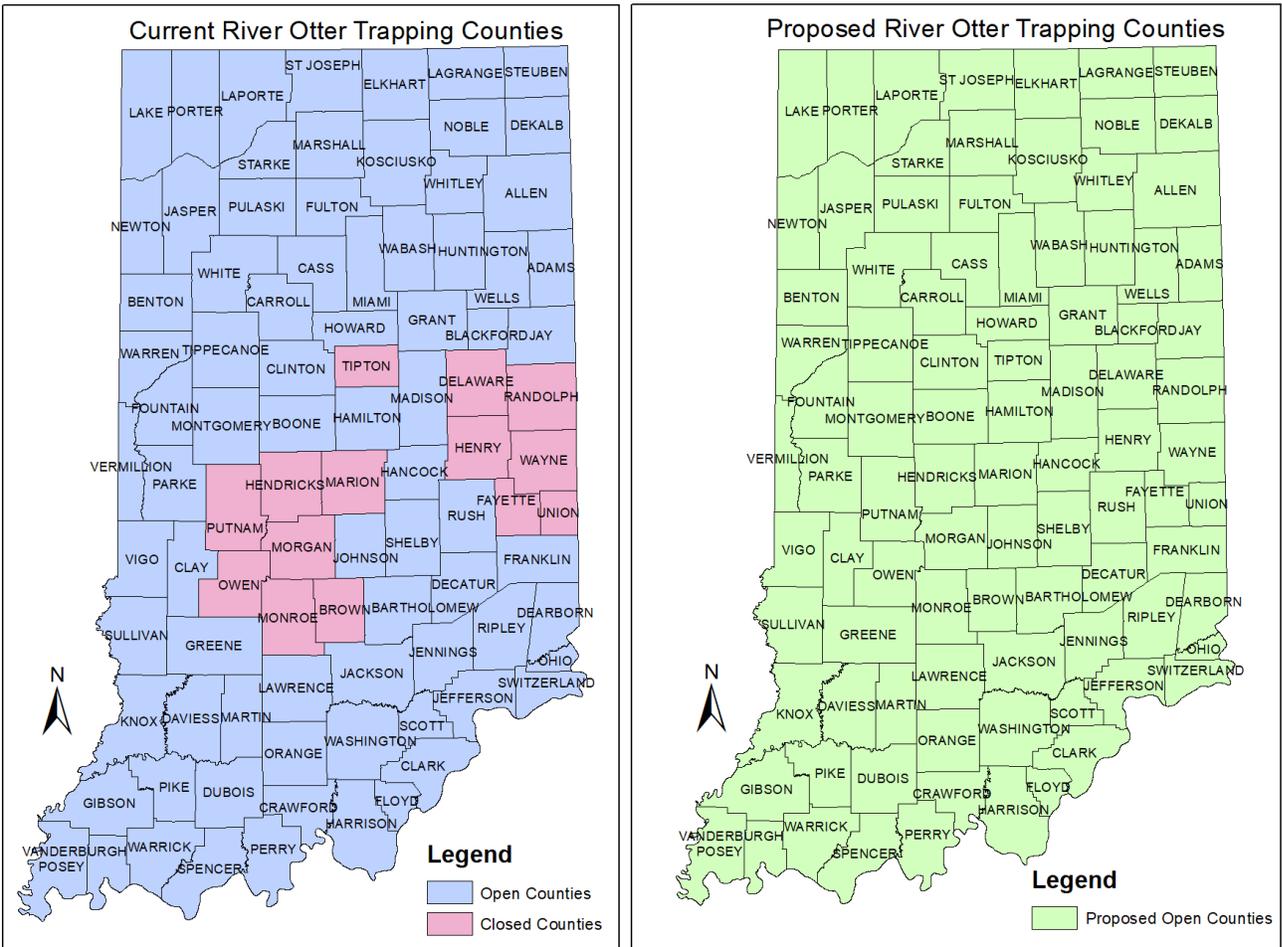
Population Model

River otter have overall increased in Indiana since a limited, regulated season in 2015 and the age data collected from carcasses has been critical in tracking otter populations and setting quotas. Based on this data, there was a lower otter reproduction year in 2021. Therefore, the DNR proposes maintaining the quota at 750, the bag limit at 2 per trapper, and a mandatory carcass submission while DNR staff continue to track otter populations to ensure their health and robustness.



Counties Open to Trapping

Counties have been opened to trapping after meeting minimum thresholds of otter records, showing that otters have continued to expand and thrive. This year, there are only a small number of counties that remain closed. Therefore, the DNR is proposing to open the otter season statewide. Staff within DNR do not anticipate that this will negatively effect river otter populations as quotas and bag limits will remain in place. However, it will allow currently closed counties the flexibility to deal with any emerging otter damage issues during the season without a permit.



The DNR is not proposing any other changes to the river otter season at this time. The DNR intends to update and review the river otter population model every year, think critically about the statewide quota, bag limit, counties that are open, the requirement to turn in carcasses and evaluate if changes are needed based upon available data.