

Director's Message

| *Ross Beal - Alaska Trappers Association Vice President*



I know for many of you, I may be preaching to the choir but dressing right for our climate is important. Thanks to our ATA trapping schools, every year more inexperienced Alaskans make the decision to trap. How to dress for our climate may be a class we need to include in our school. We may know how to dress for that walk to the store, but now we need to learn how to stay warm and safe for extended periods of time in the outdoors at temperatures of -20F or colder. Dressing in layers will keep you warm. with options to remove clothing if the temperature rises, I've included a run down of my best gear choices.

Base layer - Polypropylene and other synthetic fabric underwear is probably the best choice for the layer next to the skin as it wicks moisture very well.

Middle layer - Fleece is one of the best choices for our climate. Polartec 200 or 300 fits the bill and can be windproof, as well. Wool is also an option, but synthetics are lighter and allow for more movement. Down is nice and warm, but retains moisture so forget it if you may get wet. This garment should be sized large enough to allow lots of movement.

Shell layer - First of all, the outer shell of the garment must be tough enough to withstand walking through brush without tearing or snagging and must also have excellent insulating qualities. Canvas, cordura, Ultrex and Nomex are excellent choices for the outer shell. Here again, synthetics are the best choice for the insulating layer of your outer garment and there are too many choices to list them all. If your choice is a two piece garment, the bibs should be constructed of the same materials. Be sure the garment is sized large enough to allow lots of movement and ample room for the middle layer.

Socks - Again a base layer should be polypropylene with wool socks over. Cotton is not your friend in socks because if they get wet, you get cold.

Boots - Many trappers rely on the standard military "Bunny Boot" for reliable warmth. They have a felt layer vulcanized inside the boot so it cannot absorb moisture. You'll never have cold feet with the proper socks inside them. The only down side to the Bunny Boot is they are very heavy and walking any distance will be a workout you won't soon forget. Other boot manufacturers have begun to vulcanize felt in their boots as well and are much lighter with cold ratings to -100 degrees. The real secret to warm feet in Alaska's extreme cold is getting enough insulating material under the foot and keeping your foot dry.

Headgear - Many trappers choose fur - marten, beaver and others. Wool works well, or a down insulated hood that fastens to your parka is also a great choice. It's important that any headgear protrude over your parka to keep snow from going down your neck when going under snow covered branches and trees. I actually fastened a strip of deerskin inside my fur hat that extends over my neck and shoulders. No more snow dumps down my neck!

For the novice, I hope I've been of assistance. Stay warm and safe out there!