



MAINE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE



BEAR FACTS

Black Bears Are Thriving in Maine

- Maine has the largest black bear population in the eastern U.S. and one of the largest in the U.S.
- There are more than 30,000 bears in Maine.
- Bears are less common along Maine's southern coast where human densities are the greatest, as a result, conflicts between people and bears are lower than other northeastern States.
- IFW receives an average of 500 nuisance bear complaints each year.
- Maine's bear population is increasing following years of low harvest and high cub production from 18,000 bears in 1990 to 30,000 bears in 2010.

Maine Has a "State of the Art" Bear Management Program

- Maine has one of the most comprehensive and extensive bear studies in North America and is based on wildlife management's proven scientific methods.
- Since 1975, between 80 and 100 radio-collared bears are tracked annually to provide information on bear survival and birth rates, behavior, and animal condition.
- IFW uses this information to adjust the bear harvest to meet bear population objectives and ensure the conservation of Maine's black bears.

Public Input Determines Black Bear Management Objectives

- In 1999, a public working group representing landowners, forest industry, sportsmen, and environmentalists developed the following management objectives through 2015:
 1. Stabilize the bear population through annual hunting and trapping harvests.
 2. Promote traditional hunting and trapping methods.
 3. Promote public tolerance of bears in Maine.

Regulated Hunting is the Primary Tool to Achieve Publics' Goals and Objectives

- Most states permit the use of bait, hound, or traps to harvest a black bear.
- To achieve population objectives, a harvest of 3,500 to 4,500 bears is needed annually.
- Since 2005, harvest has declined below objectives (average of 2,910 bears annually) and is attributed to a 24% decline in hunter numbers.
- Bait, hounds, and trapping accounts for 93% of the annual bear harvest:

Bait	79%	Still-hunting while deer hunting	4%
Hounds	11%	Unreported (likely still-hunting)	3%
Trapping	3%		

- Although hunting bears with bait is the most effective way to hunt bears in Maine, all the methods are needed to manage bear numbers.
- About 30% of bear hunters using bait and hounds, 19% of trappers, and 3% of still-hunter will harvest a bear each year.
- Although still-hunters in the western U.S. have greater success, restricting hunters in Maine to still-hunting may be impractical because of our terrain and thick vegetation.
- Without all the hunting methods, Maine's bear population will grow even more and conflicts between bears and people will become more common.