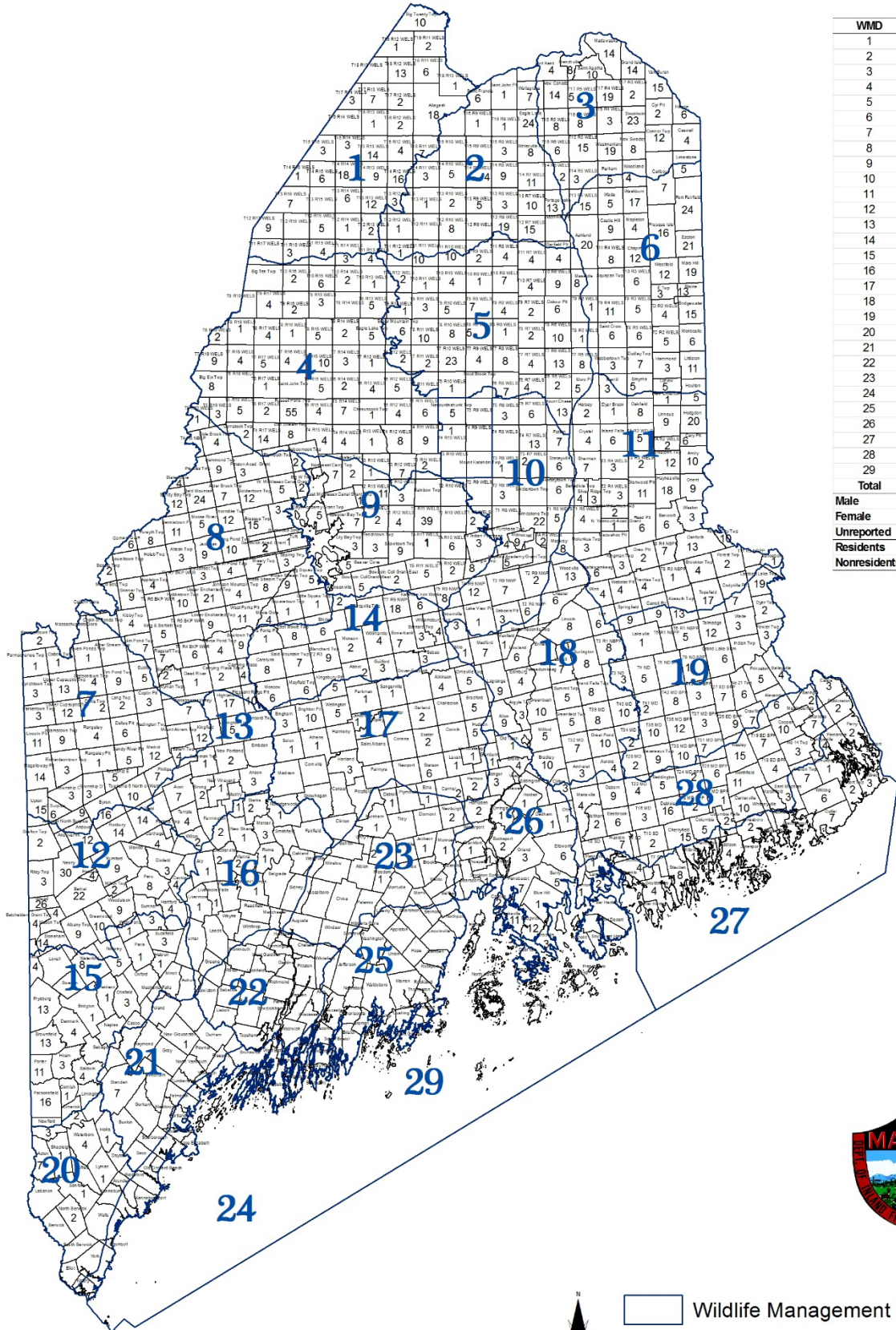


2024 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	187
2	162
3	267
4	265
5	216
6	306
7	209
8	351
9	149
10	129
11	280
12	214
13	54
14	103
15	98
16	17
17	69
18	181
19	179
20	20
21	9
22	0
23	12
24	0
25	0
26	74
27	63
28	173
29	0
Total	3787
Male	2074
Female	1713
Unreported	0
Residents	1471
Nonresidents	2316



- Wildlife Management Districts
- Townships

Map created:
05/13/2025

Maine's 2024 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bears opens the last Monday in August and closes the last Saturday in November. Hunters can hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout the entire 3-month season. The bear trapping season spans 2 months opening on September 1 and closing on October 31. Hunting over bait is permitted during the first 4 weeks of the season (August 26-September 21, 2024). The hound season overlaps the last two weeks of the bait season and continues through the following five weeks (September 9-November 1, 2024). Most bears are harvested during the first month of the season and with the use of bait, dogs, or traps. Only 3% are harvested by spot/stalk or still-hunting or by deer hunters during the November firearm season. Starting in 2015, youth hunters were permitted to hunt the Saturday prior to the opening of the season and since 2008, hunters can take two bears if one is taken by trapping and the other by hunting. During the 2024 season, 73 youth hunters shot a bear on youth day, a record high, and 75 hunters harvested 2 bears, a new record high since 2015.

Natural food abundance varies from year to year and can have a strong influence on the final harvest. This fall, we expected a lower abundance of natural food crops and higher overall harvest. A higher percentage of bears were harvested over bait (66%) than in the previous year, likely due to the decreased abundance of natural foods during the fall. The 2024 harvest reached 3,787 bears, slightly higher than the previous ten-year average of ~3,200. Hunter participation remained high (~12,900 bear permits) with a high harvest by hound hunters (916 bears) and by trappers (312 bears). Natural food levels also influence bear harvest by deer hunters. In years of higher food abundance, bears forage longer providing deer hunters greater opportunity to harvest a bear. This year's harvest of 24 bears during the November deer season indicates that natural foods were less abundant, causing bears to enter dens early.

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

In 2024, bears were harvested in 13 of the state's 16 counties and in 25 of 29 WMDs. Although the highest harvest occurred in Aroostook County (1,176 bears, 31% of total harvest), the density of harvest, expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of forested land, remains greatest in portions of northern, western and eastern Maine with between 23 and 33 bears/100 mi² harvested in WMDs 3, 6, 12, and 28. Fewer bears were taken in southern portions of the State with only 2 to 9 bears harvested in Androscoggin, Kennebec, and Waldo counties and less than five bears/100 mi² harvested in WMD 16, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 29. In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between 6 and 19 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 14 bears/100 mi²). No bears were taken in Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties and in WMD 22, 24, 25, and 29.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting was again reflected in the distribution of the harvest by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 2,316 bears (61%) of the 3,787 bears tagged during 2024. Non-resident hunters shot more of the bears taken over bait (63%) and with the use of hounds (73%). However, hunting over bait remained popular among resident hunters with 64% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although fewer bears were taken during the deer season, in traps, or by spot and stalk methods, Maine residents accounted for the majority (94%, 76%, and 79% respectively) taken during those seasons.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2024, guides assisted 384 residents (32%) and 1,836 non-residents (91%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounted for 91% of bears harvested with trained bear dogs, 67% of the bears taken over bait, 27% of trapped bears, 18% of bears taken by spot/stalk/still-hunt methods, and 3% of the bears taken while deer hunting.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 55% (2,074 bears) of the 2024 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 96% (3,631 bears) of the harvest.

Prospects for the 2025 season

Since 1997, the Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods. However, regulations can be modified in response to changes in the bear population or other management concerns. The 2025 season will remain the same, opening with a youth day the last Saturday in August and closing the last Saturday in November. Successful hunts are influenced by a variety of factors, but natural food levels are often the most influential. When soft or hard mast crops are abundant, hunters hunting over bait experience lower success while deer hunters and hunters that pursue bears with hounds have greater opportunity as bears remain out foraging longer when natural food is abundant. Based on past alternate cycles in natural foods, we anticipate that the 2025 season will provide less opportunity to take a bear with the aid of bait and overall lower harvest but more opportunity to hunt over natural food sources or harvest a bear later in the season with bears entering the dens later.