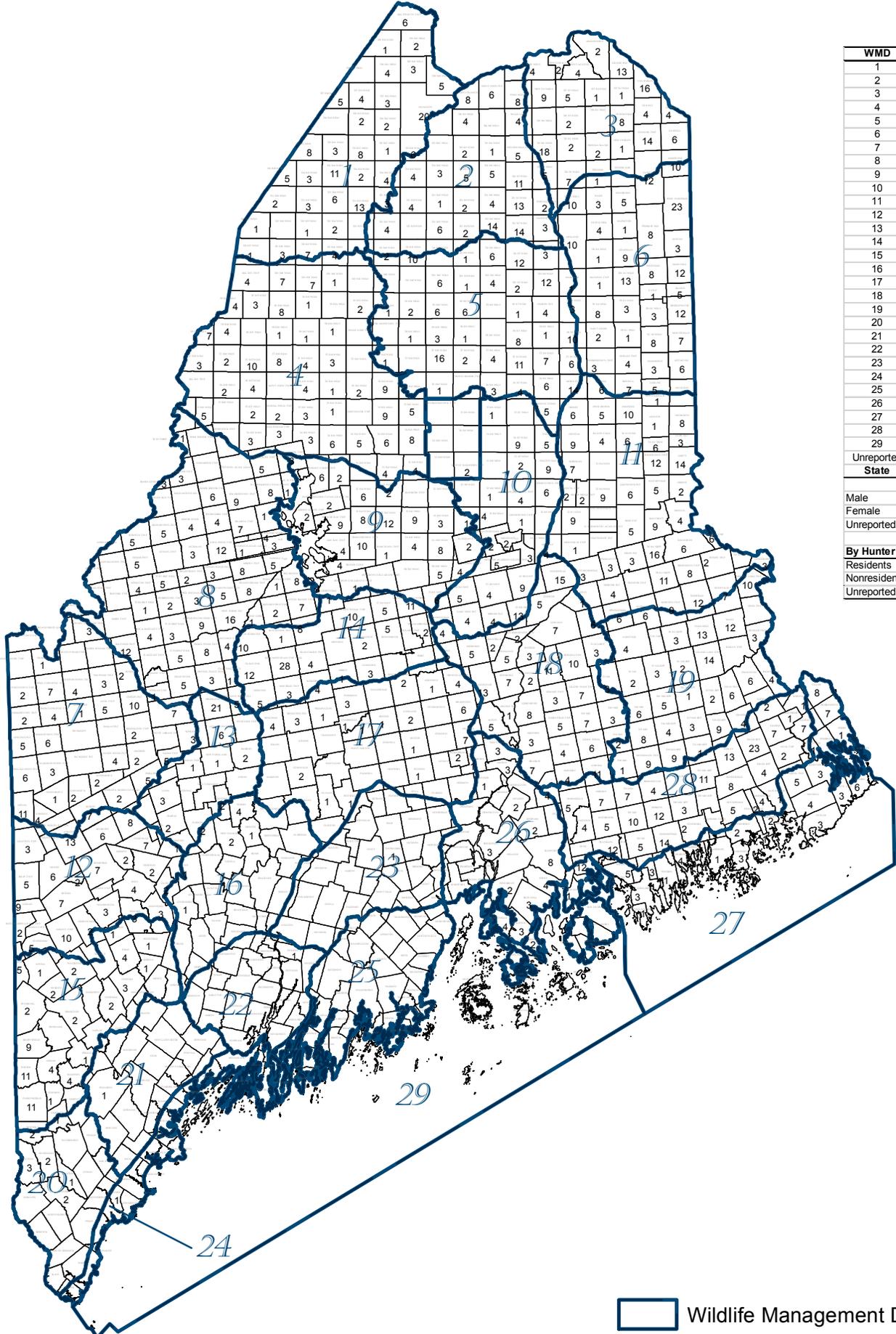


2017 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	143
2	134
3	188
4	182
5	173
6	226
7	119
8	239
9	118
10	105
11	223
12	105
13	54
14	83
15	67
16	10
17	62
18	176
19	163
20	10
21	3
22	1
23	0
24	0
25	1
26	59
27	68
28	174
29	0
Unreported	11
State	2,897
Male	1,688
Female	1,186
Unreported	23
By Hunter Residence	
Residents	1,085
Nonresidents	1,802
Unreported	0

Wildlife Management Districts
 Townships

2017 Maine Black Bear Season

Starting in 2015, youth hunters are permitted to hunt the Saturday prior to the opening of the season. The general hunting season for black bears opens the last Monday in August and closes the last Saturday in November. Hunters are allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout the entire three-month season. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 26 through September 23. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 11 and closing October 27. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31. Bear hunters can take two bears if one is taken by trapping and the other by hunting. This year, 22 hunters/trappers harvested two bears and 35 youth hunters shot a bear on youth day.

Since 2005, harvest has declined below objectives with between 2,400 to 3,486 bears harvested annually. This fall, 2,897 bears were taken during the 13-week fall season providing approximately 23,000 pounds of bear meat to hunters and their families. Most bears (92%) were taken with the use of bait, dogs, or traps: 1,927 bears were harvested over bait (67%), 614 bears were taken by hunters using trained bear dogs (21%), and 126 bears were taken in traps (4%). Only four percent were taken by other methods: 87 bears were harvested by deer hunters and 38 by spot/stalk or still-hunting. One hundred and five bears (3%) were taken by unreported methods. Most bears (84%) were harvested earlier in the season with 2,428 bears harvested before the end of September. Natural food abundance varies from year to year. Often, a year of high abundance is followed by a year of lower abundance or vice versa. However, this year harvest was similar to last year. The abundance of beech nuts and acorns in northern and eastern Maine likely influenced the low bait harvest (67%).

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

Bears were harvested in 26 of 29 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) with no bears taken in WMDs 23, 24, or 29. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of forested land was greatest in WMDs 28, 3, and 6 at 21-24 bears/100 mi² and lowest in WMD 22 with ≤ 1 bear/100mi². In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between two and 15 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 10 bears/100 mi²). Bears were harvested in 13 of the state's 16 counties. No bears were taken in Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties and between one and eight bears were harvested in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, and Waldo counties.

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 1,809 bears of the 2,897 bears (62%) tagged during 2017. Non-resident hunters shot most of the bears (67%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (66%), although bait hunting remained popular among resident hunters with 58% 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 (82%, 80%, and 71%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2017, guides assisted 303 residents (28%) and 1,586 non-residents (88%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounting for 82% of bears harvested with trained bear dogs, 69% of the bears taken over bait, 25% of trapped bears, 12% of bears taken by unreported method, and 18% of bears taken by spot/stalk/still-hunt methods.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 58% (1,688 bears) of the 2017 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 94% (2,710 bears) of the harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 23 bears (<1%).

Prospects for the 2018 season

Since 1997, the Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods. However, bear hunting regulations can be modified in response to changes in Maine's bear population or other management concerns. The 2018 season will remain similar to recent years, opening with a youth day the last Saturday in August (25th). The general season will open the following Monday (August 27th) and will close the last Saturday in November (24th). Successful hunts are influenced by a variety of factors, but natural food availability is often the most influential. In years with an abundance of soft or hard mast crops, hunters hunting over bait experience lower success, while deer hunters and hunters that pursue bears with hounds have additional opportunity as bears remain out foraging on abundant food crops longer than in years with poor food abundance.