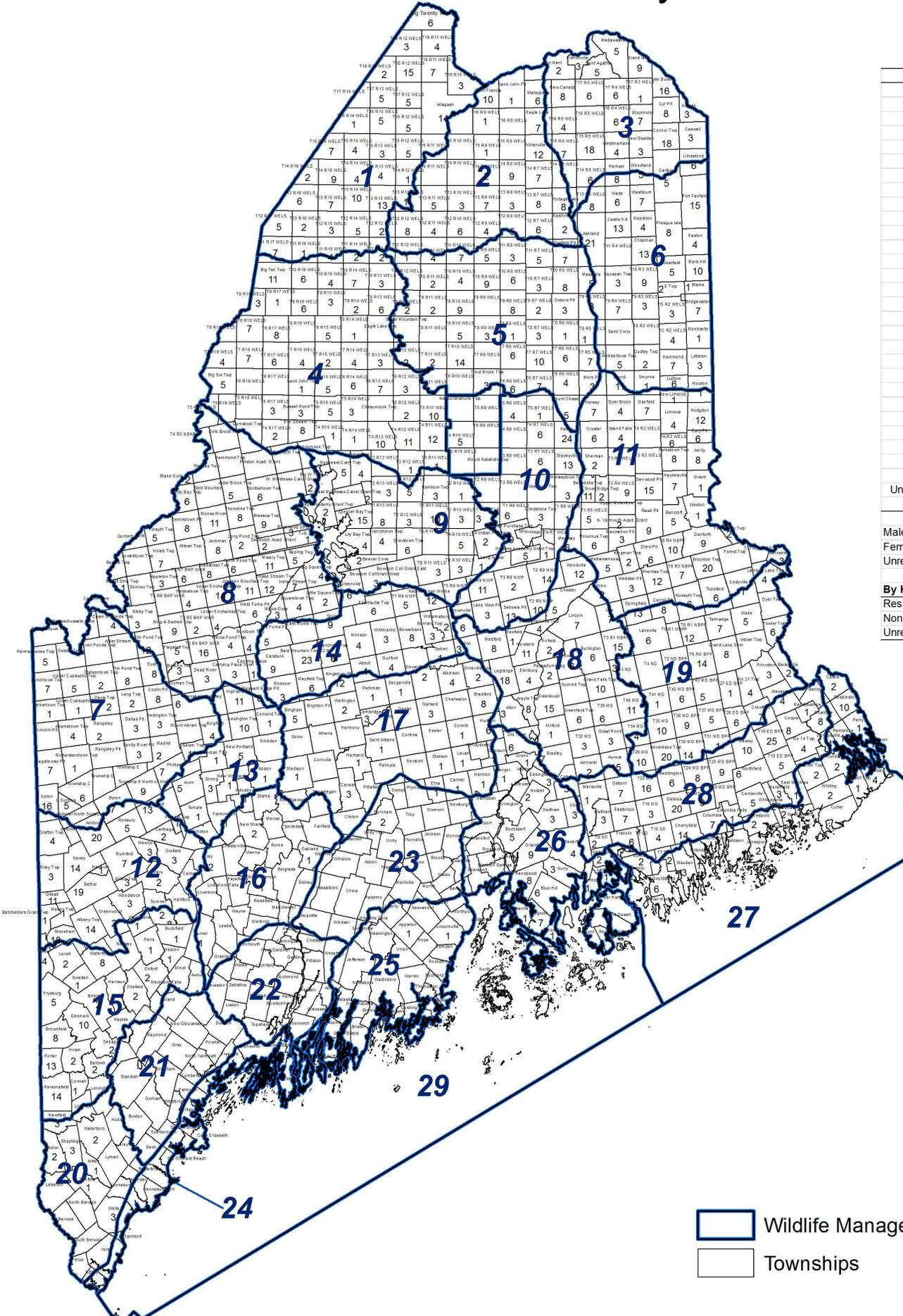


# 2014 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	200
2	135
3	176
4	212
5	178
6	193
7	139
8	273
9	113
10	136
11	275
12	155
13	47
14	122
15	82
16	7
17	51
18	213
19	177
20	15
21	1
22	0
23	3
24	0
25	2
26	71
27	51
28	207
29	4
State	3,238
Male	1,761
Female	1,339
Unreported	138

By Hunter Residence	
Residents	1,218
Nonresidents	2,018
Unreported	2

 Wildlife Management Districts  
 Townships

## Maine's 2014 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bears opened August 25 and closed November 29. Hunters were allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout the entire 3-month season. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 25 through September 20. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 8 and closing October 31. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31. Bear hunters can take 2 bears if 1 is taken by trapping and the other by hunting. This year, 20 hunters/trappers harvested 2 bears.

Since 2005, harvest has declined below objectives with between 2,659 to 3,486 bears harvested annually. This fall, 3,239 bears were taken during the 14 week fall season. Most bears (96%) were taken with the use of bait, hounds, or traps: 2,477 bears were harvested over bait (77%), 523 bears were taken by hunters using hounds (16%), and 106 bears were taken in traps (3%). Only 4% were taken by other methods: 36 bears were harvested by deer hunters, 57 bears by still-hunting, and 39 bears were taken by unreported methods. Most bears (92%) were harvested earlier in the season with 2,993 bears harvested before the end of September. Natural food abundance varies, often with a year of high abundance followed by a year of lower abundance. This year, the lower abundance of natural foods caused bears to enter their winter dens earlier reducing opportunity for hunters late into the season (8% taken in October and November). By comparison, 2013 was a very abundant year for natural foods for Maine's black bears. As a result fewer bears were taken by bait hunters (72%) and more bears (12%) were harvested in October and November since bears entered dens later.

### *Geographic Distribution of the Harvest*

Bears were harvested in 26 of 29 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) with no bears were taken in WMDs 22, 24 or 29. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of habitat (forested land) was greatest in WMD 28 and WMD 3 at 29 and 23 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup>, respectively and lowest in WMD's 16, 21, 23, 25 with  $\leq 1$  bear/100mi<sup>2</sup>. In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between 3 and 18 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> (statewide average of 12 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup>). Bears were harvested in 14 of the state's 16 counties. No bears were taken in Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties and between 1 and 11 bears were taken in each of these counties: Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, 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 2,018 bears of the 3,238 bears (62%) tagged during 2014. Non-resident hunters shot most of the bears (65%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (64%), although bait hunting remained popular among resident hunters with 70% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although few bears were taken during the deer season, while still-hunting or in traps, Maine residents accounted for the majority (89%, 70%, and 84%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

### *Assistance by Registered Maine Guides*

In 2014, guides assisted 323 residents (26%) and 1,801 non-residents (89%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounting for 79% of bears harvested over hounds, 67% of the bears taken over bait, 25% of trapped bears, 32% of bears taken by still-hunting (i.e., without bait, dogs, or traps), and 2% of bears taken by deer hunters.

### *Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest*

Males made up 54% (1,761 bears) of the 2014 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 90% (2,922 bears) of the harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 138 bears (4%).

### *Prospects for the 2015 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 2015 season will remain similar to recent years, opening the last Monday in August and closing the last Saturday in November (August 31st -November 29<sup>th</sup>). 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. Early indications are that natural foods will be abundant this fall.