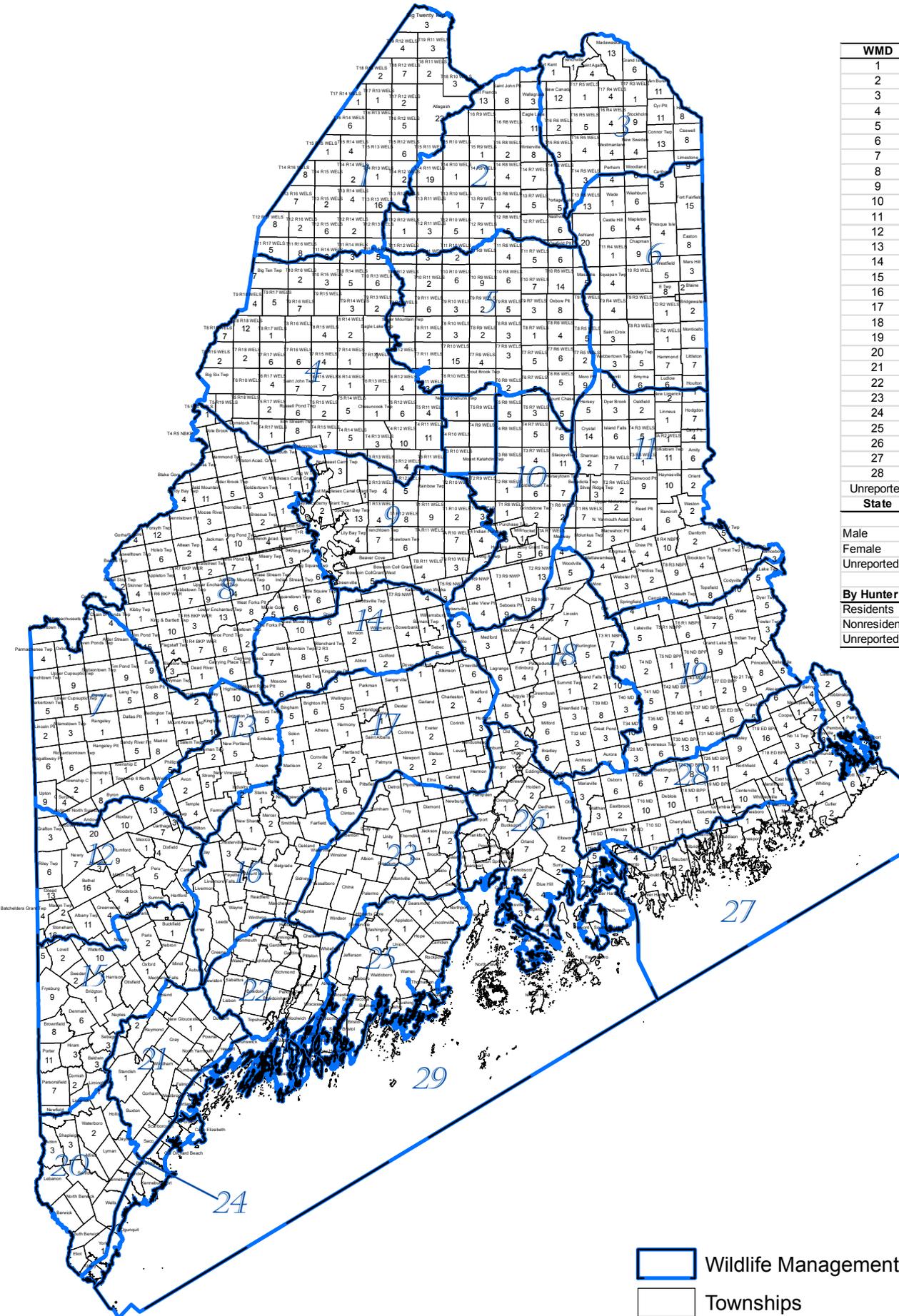


# 2016 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	158
2	125
3	143
4	204
5	180
6	177
7	143
8	241
9	97
10	114
11	225
12	172
13	41
14	80
15	83
16	8
17	56
18	144
19	153
20	13
21	5
22	0
23	5
24	0
25	4
26	53
27	63
28	164
Unreported	8
<b>State</b>	<b>2,859</b>

Male	1,613
Female	1,217
Unreported	29

By Hunter Residence	
Residents	1,082
Nonresidents	1,777
Unreported	0

Wildlife Management Districts  
 Townships

## Maine's 2016 Black Bear Season

Starting in 2015, youth hunters could hunt the Saturday prior to the opening of the season. The general hunting season for black bears opened the last Monday in August and closes the last Saturday in November. 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 29 through September 24. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 12 and closing October 28. 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, 15 hunters/trappers harvested 2 bears and 27 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, 2,859 bears were taken during the 13 week fall season providing approximately 23,000 pounds of bear meat to hunters and their families. Most bears (93%) were taken with the use of bait, dogs, or traps: 1,936 bears were harvested over bait (68%), 595 bears were taken by hunters using trained bear dogs (21%), and 105 bears were taken in traps (4%). Only 3% were taken by other methods: 63 bears were harvested by deer hunters and 31 by spot/stalk or still-hunting. One hundred and twenty nine bears (4%) were taken by unreported methods. Most bears (87%) were harvested earlier in the season with 2,486 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. This year, the abundance of natural foods was low, although black berries remained abundant at the beginning of the season likely influencing a poor response to bait and low bait harvest (69%); bears also entered their winter dens earlier, decreasing opportunity for hunters late in the season (63 bears harvested during the Nov. deer firearm season). By comparison, 2015 was a good year for natural foods, resulting in less bears taken by bait hunters (69%) and more bears harvested by deer hunters.

### *Geographic Distribution of the Harvest*

Bears were harvested in 26 of 29 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) with no bears taken in WMDs 22, 24, or 29. The density of harvest, expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of forested land, was greatest in WMD 28 at 23 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> and lowest in WMD 23 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 10 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup>). Bears were harvested in 13 of the state's 16 counties. No bears were taken in Androscoggin, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties and between 1 and 6 bears were harvested in Knox, 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 1,777 bears of the 2,859 bears (62%) tagged during 2016. Non-resident hunters shot most of the bears (67%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (65%), although bait hunting remained popular among resident hunters with 59% 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 (97%, 77%, and 97%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

### *Assistance by Registered Maine Guides*

In 2016, guides assisted 283 residents (26%) and 1,520 non-residents (85%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounted for 76% of bears harvested with trained bear dogs, 67% of the bears taken over bait, 20% of trapped bears, 19% of bears taken by unreported method, and 3% of bears taken by spot/stalk/still-hunt methods.

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

Males made up 57% (1,613 bears) of the 2016 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 93% (2,654 bears) of the harvest, and sex and age were not reported for an additional 29 bears (1%).

### *Prospects for the 2017 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 2017 season will remain similar to recent years, opening with a youth day the last Saturday in August (26<sup>th</sup>). The general season will open the following Monday (August 28<sup>th</sup>) and will close the last Saturday in November (25<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.