Black Bear
Management in Maine
2000 Black Bear Plan

Goal: Provide hunting, trapping & viewing opportunity

Objectives

– Stabilize population by 2005 at no less than current levels through annual hunting and trapping harvest.

Create I&E by 2002 targeting specific audience promoting:

– Traditional hunting and trapping methods
– Public tolerance of bears
Population Objective

Stabilize population by 2005 at no less than current levels through annual harvest
Measuring ability to meet objective

Harvest
• McLaughlin 1998

  – 15% harvest rate is sustainable

  – Harvest of 3,500–4,000 bears annually
Bear Management Goals

Population Goal: 23,000 bears

- ACCEPTABLE HARVEST
- HARVEST BELOW OBJECTIVE

Graph showing the population of bears from 2000 to 2012.
What does a declining harvest mean?

Possible explanations

• Not sufficient to stabilize growth = pop ↑

OR

• Population declining?
Available data

- Harvest
- Hunter Numbers
- Success rates = \frac{\text{Harvest}}{\text{Hunters}}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th># Harvest</th>
<th># Hunters</th>
<th>Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2005</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>3,650</td>
<td>12,650</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2014</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>9,700</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</table>
Maine Black Bear Study
1975 to present

- Survival and productivity
Monitoring indicates an increasing pop

Since 2005, we have seen

• Increased recruitment – more cubs surviving to independence

• Slightly higher productivity (loss of synchrony)

• Healthier yearlings
Maine’s forest has changed, providing more natural foods for Black Bears.

1980s: Spruce Budworm Outbreak

Today: 16% less mature spruce/fir, increase of hardwoods & shrubs producing berries & nuts, greater abundance & diversity of bear foods.
The population is growing in response to improved habitat and low hunter harvests.

Increase of 30% since 2005.

- **1984**: Below objective (18,000)
- **2000-2005**: At objective (23,000)
- **2010**: Above objective (>30,000)
Modify Harvest to Meet Objectives

1989
Bear population declined to 18,000

1990
IFW shortened the bear hunting season to reduce the harvest

1997
Population recovered
Seasons extended
Not Meeting Objectives

- Increased bag limit – 2011
  - 1 bear by hunt
  - 1 bear by trap

- Public Tolerance High
  - Hunter Satisfaction
  - Few Conflicts
Bears more common in rural areas

Will tolerance change with more bears in urban areas?
At a crossroad

• Do we:
  1. Stabilize growth at current levels
  2. Return to 1999 levels
  3. Allow population to continue to increase

What are the consequences?

BIG GAME PLANNING PROCESS
Objective 3: I&E promoting increased tolerance of black bears
Currently relatively few conflicts in Maine

- 500 complaints annually
  - Varies with berry/nut crops

- Most are at birdfeeders, garbage

- Home entries & bear attacks currently uncommon

- Expect conflicts to rise with an increase in the bear populations
Objective 3: I&E promoting increased tolerance of black bears

- Brochures
- Website
- Social Media
- Press Releases
Objective 3: I&E promoting increased tolerance of black bears

- Brochures
Living with Black Bears

Maine is home to the largest population of black bears in the lower 48 states. Our bears are most active between April 1 and November 1.

When natural foods are scarce, especially in the spring or dry summers, bears will venture into backyards and fields in search of easily accessible food such as bird feeders, garbage, grills and pet foods.

While hundreds of conflicts between bears and people are reported each year in Maine, many can be prevented by simply removing or securing common bear attractants. Removing these food sources will also limit other backyard visitors (raccoons, skunks, etc.).

Avoiding bear conflicts and protecting your property from damage

1. **REMOVE & STORE INSIDE BETWEEN APRIL 1 AND NOVEMBER 1**
   - Take bird feeders down
   - Store bird feeders indoors (you can still feed birds in the winter)

2. **SECURE & CLEAN**
   - Bake up bird seed from the ground
   - Keep out buildings and garage doors closed at all times
   - Dumpster lids and doors should be kept closed and latched
   - Use bear-resistant dumpsters or garbage can

- **GRILLS**
  - Store grill inside when not in use
  - If you are having bear conflicts, stop grilling until bear moves on
  - Burn off food residue
  - Dispose of food wrappers and grease cups

- **LIVESTOCK & PET FOOD**
  - Store livestock and pet food inside
  - Feed pets inside
  - If you feed your pets or livestock outside:
    - Clean dishes daily
    - Remove leftover food daily

If you have an issue with a bear and need assistance, contact the Wildlife Service dispatch center closest to you:

- Aroostook County: 1-800-655-5277
- Penobscot County: 1-800-220-0011
- MaineCoast:
  - Hancock County: 1-888-825-1755
  - Penobscot County: 1-800-220-0011

**DOWNLOAD PDF**
A bear was sighted several times on walking trails in Bucksport.

To Avoid Bears:
- Hike in Groups
- Always Stay Together
- Keeps Dogs at Home or Leashed
- Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Report Aggressive Bears by Calling 911

If You Encounter A Bear:
- Don’t Approach The Bear
- Back Away and Leave the Area

Report Aggressive Bears by Calling 911
A bear was sighted several times on walking trails in Bucksport.

If a Bear Approaches or Follows You:
- Wave Your Arms
- Back Away Shouting “Hey Bear”
- Always Stay Together

Report Aggressive Bears by Calling 911

If a Bear Charges You:
- Stand Your Ground
- Stay Calm

If a Bear Attacks You:
- Fight Back

Report Aggressive Bears by Calling 911

mefishwildlife.com

mefishwildlife.com
Objective 2: I&E promoting traditional hunting and trapping by 2002

- Two ballot measures to limit hunting methods
Objective 2: I&E promoting traditional hunting and trapping by 2002

• Social Media – Facebook, twitter,
• YouTube videos
• Handouts – fact sheet, faq
• Public Speaking Engagements & Debates
• TV, Radio, Newspaper
• Press Releases
• Website
Objective 2: I&E promoting traditional hunting and trapping by 2002

Still-hunting alone will not control Maine’s black bear population.

**Still-hunting**
- 7% of current harvest
- 3% success rate

On average, with baiting, hunting with dogs, and trapping:
- Only 1 in 4 hunters is successful
- Hunters spend 15 days to harvest one bear

IFW Biologists and Game Wardens are opposed to the 2014 Bear Referendum.
Objective 2: I&E promoting traditional hunting and trapping by 2002

IFW Biologists and Game Wardens are opposed to the 2014 Bear Referendum

Maine is the most heavily wooded state in the nation making still-hunting an ineffective management tool

82% FORESTED
7% OF CURRENT HARVEST
3% SUCCESS RATE

IFW closely monitors and adjusts hunting methods and seasons in response to scientific research.
Objective 2: I&E promoting traditional hunting and trapping by 2002

- Two ballot measures to limit hunting methods
  - Does the public understand hunting methods in Maine
  - Surveys
Issues to address in new plan

- Benefits/Impacts of Increasing Population
  - Other wildlife
  - Agriculture/livestock
  - Public
  - Hunters
  - Department

- Support of hunting & hunting methods

- Options to meet goals

- Outreach & Education Needs
Questions?