



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: Feb. 16, 2024

Agenda Item: 2024 and 2025 Black Bear Hunting Regulations, Season Structures, and Hunting District Boundaries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially by the commission for most game species. The proposed changes to black bear seasons are described in the attached black bear season summary and presented in detail for commission action within the regulation mockup. These documents are presented for public review and commission action. The commission is considering all regulations and descriptions of boundaries for the 2024 and 2025 black bear seasons, whether a change is proposed or not. All other regulations and descriptions of boundaries will remain unchanged unless addressed by the commission.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public input was solicited through 34 public meetings during June and July 2023 where concepts for biennial season setting were discussed. Public comment was solicited for a four-week period following the Dec. 14, 2023, commission meeting. Seven hybrid virtual meetings were held (one in each region) between Oct. 30 and Nov. 10, 2023, to answer questions about proposals. Written public comments received during the comment period will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the February commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: The department presented concepts for discussion for each species during June and July. Based on public feedback and legal analysis, the department refined the concepts and developed proposals for commission action.

Alternative A: The commission may approve the department's recommendation as presented.

Alternative B: The commission may amend the department's recommendation on any aspect of season structure, quota, or hunting district or on aspects of the regulations that are not proposed for change.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission approve the proposed 2024 and 2025 hunting regulations and district boundaries as presented by the department and as detailed in the attached mockup. Any aspect unchanged from 2023 season will remain in effect for 2024 and 2025, except where affected by routine calendar rotations.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve: 1) changes identified in the black bear regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department; and 2) all other black bear regulations contained in the 2023 regulations, except for those affected by regular calendar rotations, unless addressed in some other proposal to be adopted for the 2024 and 2025 black bear hunting seasons and districts.

Alternative Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission amend: 1) changes identified in the black bear regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department as follows (Insert changes here); and 2) accept all other black bear regulations contained in the 2023 regulations, except for those affected by regular calendar rotations, unless addressed in some other proposal to be adopted for the 2024 and 2025 black bear hunting seasons and districts.

Season dates

Season 2024	Date conventions
Black bear spring	4/15 – 5/31 or 6/15
Black bear hound training	5/26 – 6/15
Black bear fall – archery	9/7 – 9/14 (First Saturday of September to 9/14)
Black bear fall	9/15 – 12/1 (9/15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving)

Season 2025	Date conventions
Black bear spring	4/15 – 5/31 or 6/15
Black bear hound training	5/26 – 6/15
Black bear fall – archery	9/6 – 9/14 (First Saturday of September to 9/14)
Black bear fall	9/15 – 11/30 (9/15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving)

Summary of proposed changes for black bear

Extend spring black bear season closing dates in BMUs 140, 141, 150, and 170 to June 15.

Hound Hunting – Description of closed area

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Reason for change: To reflect changes in the occupied grizzly bear habitat.

• Hound hunting and training is prohibited in occupied grizzly bear habitat in BMUs 100, 101, 103, 104, 110, 120, 121, 122, 123, 130, 140, 141, 150, 170, that portion of 200 in Missoula County that includes the Ninemile watershed north of I-90, that those portions of 216 in Missoula County and east of the Granite/Ravalli county line and in Ravalli County north of township 9N 18W, 9N 19W, and 9N 20W, that portion of 240 in Missoula County and Ravalli County north of township 9N 20W, 9N 21W, and 9N 22W, 280, 290, 300 west of I-15, 301 west of I-15 and HWY 69, 309, 317, 341, 400 north and west of I-15/Hwy 87 between Helena and Fort Benton, west of Hwy 223 between Fort Benton and Hwy 2 at Chester, south of Hwy 2 between Chester and I-15 at Shelby, and west of I-15 between Shelby and the Canadian border, 510 West of Hwy 310, 520.

Mandatory submission of two premolar teeth from harvested bears in Region 1

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Reason for change: When hunters submit a premolar tooth from a black bear, the tooth is broken and unusable in 10–20 percent of the submissions. Obtaining a second tooth will reduce the likelihood that the sample is unusable and improve the department's data used in modeling bear populations.

Inspection requirements Region 1 only: For black bears harvested within Region 1, physical inspection of a harvested black bear is not required. Successful Region 1 hunters must submit ~~a two~~ two premolar ~~teeth~~ teeth from harvested black bears and deliver them to an FWP office within 10 days, either in person or by mail (postmarked within 10 days). See page 10 for more information.

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Physical inspection of a black bear harvested in Region 1 is no longer required. However, mandatory 48-hour reporting of any successful black bear harvest is required. In addition, successful hunters are required to submit ~~one~~ two premolar ~~teeth~~ teeth from any black bear harvested in Region 1 within 10 days of harvest. Teeth can be submitted in person or by mail (post-marked within 10 days).