

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS**  
**HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Species: Black Bear**  
**Region: R1**  
**Hunting District: 130, 141, 150 &170**  
**Year: 2025**

**1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).**

Proposal: Eliminate 37% female harvest limit during spring season for for BMUs 141, 150 and 170 and instate a 37% female harvest limit during the spring season for BMU 130.

In 2024, the Commission extended the spring black bear season in Region 1 BMUs to June 15<sup>th</sup>, with the caveat of a female harvest did not exceed 37% by the end of May. All BMUs reaching or exceeding the 37% female threshold would close to black bear harvest. This regulation applied to all BMUs without a current end date of June 15<sup>th</sup> at the time the regulation was approved. BMUs 141 and 150 fall within the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex and routinely see low levels of black bear harvest. Average harvest in BMUs 141 and 150 from 2021-2023 was 10 and 8 bears, respectively. BMU 170 is comprised primarily of private property and from 2021-2023 an average of 13 bears were harvested by hunters. The level of harvest in these districts is unlikely to reach levels that would affect black bear populations. As a result, it is not necessary to impose a spring female harvest limit of 37%. During many years, the determination of if to close the spring season in these BMUs would be based on a harvest of less than 5 bears.

The ending date of the spring season in BMU 130 was set at June 15<sup>th</sup> during the 2022 season-setting process. As a result, BMU is not subject to the 37% female harvest limit. BMU 130 is a popular bear hunting area and harvest from 2021-2023 averaged 49 bears, with a high of 72 being harvested in 2022. The high level of harvest can be of concern in this district. The proposal to include BMU 130 in the 37% female harvest closure would make this BMU consistent with all the other non-wilderness or non-urban area districts in Region 1.

**2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.**

The objective of this proposal is to allow increased bear hunting opportunity in BMUs 141, 150, and 170 that routinely have low bear harvest due to the remoteness of the BMUs or due to the BMU being primarily private property. Including BMU 130 in the list of BMUs with a 37% restriction on female harvest during the spring season would make it consistent with other BMUs in the region that see high levels of harvest. It would reduce the likelihood of harvest impacting the population.

**3. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints.**

Success will be measured by maintaining a 3-year running average black bear harvest under 20 bears in BMUs 141, 150 and 170 while allowing additional spring hunting opportunity. Success in BMU 130 will be measured by ensuring female harvest doesn't hit levels that would drastically reduce the population and make regulations consistent with other BMUs in the Region with high levels of harvest.

**4. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).**

Current population estimates have not been completed but should be available soon as the black bear DNA population estimate field work was just completed in Region 1. Currently, the percent female in the harvest is used to evaluate population status with a goal of a black bear harvest of less than 40% females. Biologists will continue to use this metric until better population estimates have been established.

**5. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).**

BMUs 141 and 150 fall within the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex and hunter participation due to the remoteness of the area is limited. BMU 170 is primarily private property and hunting pressure is limited. BMU 130 is largely public property with good access and often sees high levels of black bear harvest.

**6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).**

We have not contacted sportsmen groups regarding these changes. We did ask sportsmen for opinions on extending the spring black bear season in BMUs 141, 150 and 170 during the 2022 season setting process and received wide support. The change to BMU 130 would increase consistency in the regulations and reduce the likelihood of overharvest due to no spring female harvest limit.

Submitted by:

Date:

Approved:

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Regional Supervisor / Date

Disapproved / Modified by:

Neil Anderson/ 9/30/2024 \_\_\_\_\_

Name / Date

Reason for Modification: Regulation cleanup

Game – BFW October 23, 2024