2022 Spring Black Bear Special Permits

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INTRODUCTION

• Process
• Historical information
• Proposal
• Management
• Comment themes
• Summary
Process
MANDATE
Per RCW 77.04.012

• Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage wildlife.

• Maximize public recreational hunting opportunity.

In a manner which “does not impair the supply of these resources”.

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Per RCW 77.04.012
WAC 220-415-080
SPRING BLACK
BEAR SPECIAL
PERMITS

Outlines the season
dates and other
requirements related to
participating in spring
black bear special permit
hunts.

Rule is reviewed annually
to allow for an adaptive
management approach.
Planning tools

- Existing rules
- Game Management Plan (2015-2021)
  - Use as a guiding document
- Professional judgement of the department biologist for the locality
  - Local issue of concern
- Professional judgement of species manager and the department biologist in the local area
  - Impact to resource
  - Statewide influence
“Spring hunts are designed to address emerging management needs, such as bear damage to trees in commercial timberlands, bear-human conflict, or to more evenly distribute harvest compared to fall seasons.”
Additional guidance in the Game Management Plan

Game Management Plan Objectives state the “use of” or “providing opportunity” for recreational black bear hunting as a strategic management tool.

- Objectives: 21, 23, 25, 88 and 89
Historical Information
Black bear hunting in Washington

- 1969 - black bear classified as a game animal statewide.
- 1973 - a special spring bear season was established in 16 bear timber damage areas.
  - The season ran from April through June.
  - Management objective: to apply pressure where bears were damaging timber.
Spring bear special permit history overview


- 1999 - Spring special permits were approved for the Blue Mountain GMUs to mitigate declines in bear harvest numbers due to recent changes in hunting methods.
# Spring Hunts

## Spring Bear Hunts United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Late 1980s</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine²</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Information obtained from Hristienko H. and J. E. McDonald, 2007
2 Allowed on tribal lands, obtained through pers. communication
Spring black bear special permit history overview

Permits have been:

– Offered as opportunities for recreational hunters on a limited basis

– Based on knowledge about the resource

– Additionally used as a management tool for mitigating:
  ☐ Harvest declines
  ☐ Timber damage
  ☐ Ungulate recruitment
  ☐ Human-bear conflict
  ☐ Distribute harvest
Proposal
WAC 220-418-080
2022 Spring black bear special permits

– Propose a 2022 Spring black bear special permit season
  – Offering 664 permits
  – 21 areas across 23 GMUs

– Reduce permits for GMU 684
  – From 10 to 6 permits
Proposed permit levels for spring 2022

North Skagit
30 permits in 1 GMU

Olympic Peninsula
86 permits in 7 GMUs

Northeast WA
390 permits in 6 GMUs

Blue Mountains
158 permits in 9 GMUs
## 2022 Spring black bear special permit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hunt Area</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast WA GMUs 101, 105, 108, 111, 117, 121,</strong></td>
<td>Ungulate concerns (deer or elk) Recreational opportunity (distribute harvest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blue Mountains GMUs 154, 162, 166, 169, 172, 175, 178, 181, and 186</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Skagit GMU 418 Olympic Peninsula GMUs 642, 648, 638, 681, and 684</strong></td>
<td>Bear timber damage and/or likely source of bears for timber damage on adjacent land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olympic Peninsula GMUs 627, 633</strong></td>
<td>Human-bear conflict Reduce need for agency removals Recreational opportunity (distribute harvest)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proposed distribution spring 2022

North Skagit

Northeast WA

Olympic Peninsula

Blue Mountains
Bear Harvest Fall 2020 and Spring 2021

Olympic Peninsula
- 22(0)
- 5(0)
- 11(5)
- 17(7)
- 5(4)
- 8(1)

North Skagit
- 82(9)
Proposed changes

(continued)

– Add language associated with harvest check and inspection
  • State requirements for
    – Validating their bear tag
    – Notify department within 72 hours and schedule inspection
    – Within 5 days of notification present unfrozen raw pelt, evidence of sex and skull attached
Management
Black Bear Management Units
Annual assessment of black bear population

- Manage bears across both seasons combined for a total harvest assessment – (spring ~<10%)
- Manage bears using sex and age class ratios within the harvest
- Assess harvest at a black bear management unit level
- Bear population appears stable and robust
Manage for:

- Females comprised 35-39% of harvest
- Average female ages equal to 5-6 years
- Average male ages equal to 2-4 years
# Percent Female Mortality

## Bear Harvest Statewide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>HARVEST</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>5-yr Avg</th>
<th>10-yr Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberalize</td>
<td>% Female in the harvest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>35-39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrict</td>
<td>&gt; 39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBMU 1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBMU 2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>BBMU 3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>BBMU 4</td>
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<td>BBMU 5</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBMU 6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
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<td>BBMU 7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBMU 8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBMU 9</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working to enhance data collection

• Require mandatory harvest inspection for all successful permit hunters

• Conducting a non-invasive bear density monitoring effort
# Spring bear special permit harvest data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Spring Harvest</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021a</td>
<td>79 (64%)</td>
<td>45 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>99 (68%)</td>
<td>46 (32%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*WDFW preliminary data based on harvest inspections and tooth collections*
Spring black bear special permit

• Minimize harvest of females with cubs
  – Send letters to all hunters drawn for a permit

• Minimize incidental take of grizzly bear
  – Mandatory bear identification test

• Discourage hunting where supplemental feed is used
  – Signs / assist with posting
  – Restrict hunts to areas where feed is not being used
Comment Themes
Public Comment

General Themes

– Oppose spring bear hunting
– Oppose bear hunting
– Would like over the counter tags / general season
– Would like more free access to lands
– Would like more permits and more locations
– Not enough information regarding decision or evidence the hunts are having the desired effect for the added benefits
– Possible cub orphaning
Summary

The spring bear special permit season

• Supports the mandate of the department, the commission, and the director
• Allows the department to use recreational hunters as a management tool
• Maintains Washington’s hunting heritage
• Supports conservation of the species
Thank you
Literature


Literature


