



Rulemaking Petition Summary Sheet

Decision must be made on or before:

11/27/2024

Agenda item:

Petition to open rulemaking for a Spring black bear season to address human-bear conflict.

Presenter(s): Stephanie Landry, Carnivore Section Manager, Game Division

Background summary:

The petitioner has asked for a Spring black bear season to be created by the Department to address human-bear conflict. The petitioner points out that Washington is surrounded by 4 different governments that all have Spring black bear hunting seasons: Idaho, Oregon, British Columbia, and the Quinault Indian Nation. Additionally, the petitioner notes that, based on density and abundance estimates provided by WDFW Staff in 2023 and results of the recent 5-year black bear population surveys, the black bear population in WA is robust and has enough individuals to support a spring harvest season.

Staff recommendation:

Department staff recommend denial of the petition for the following reasons:

- 1) Black bears that come into conflict with people are generally occupying areas where firearm restrictions exist. Therefore, using hunters would have limited utility. An additional spring season is not likely to be any more effective in targeting conflict bears than the existing fall general season.
- 2) The cause of most human-bear conflict are attractants, such as bird feeders and unsecured trash in neighborhoods and public areas. The best way to reduce this type of conflict is to remove the attractants. Removing bears in these situations is only a short-term solution, as more bears are likely to be attracted to this area by the available food source. Therefore, hunting is not the most recommended tool for human-bear conflict situations.
- 3) In fall 2022, the Commission gave the Department policy direction related to spring black bear hunting. Despite a robust bear population, Department staff currently do not have new management-based needs beyond what has been presented to the Commission in the past. In addition, at the October 2024 FWC meeting, the Department staff briefed the Commission on the staff's on-going assessment of the Washington State black bear population and a range of frameworks for future black bear hunting decision making. The Commission is expected to

provide further policy guidance on black bear management in 2025, which will consider among other things the information presented at the October 2024 briefing.

Given all of these considerations, Department staff do not recommend initiating a rulemaking to consider adding a spring black bear hunt at this time.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

If the Director denies the petition, no rule making will occur.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

If the Director denies the petition and no rulemaking occurs, the fiscal impact of this decision is expected to be minimal.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Not applicable.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

The Wildlife Program recommends the petition be denied.

Post decision communications plan:

WDFW will communicate the outcome of the Director's decision to the petitioner.

Form revised 10-29-24