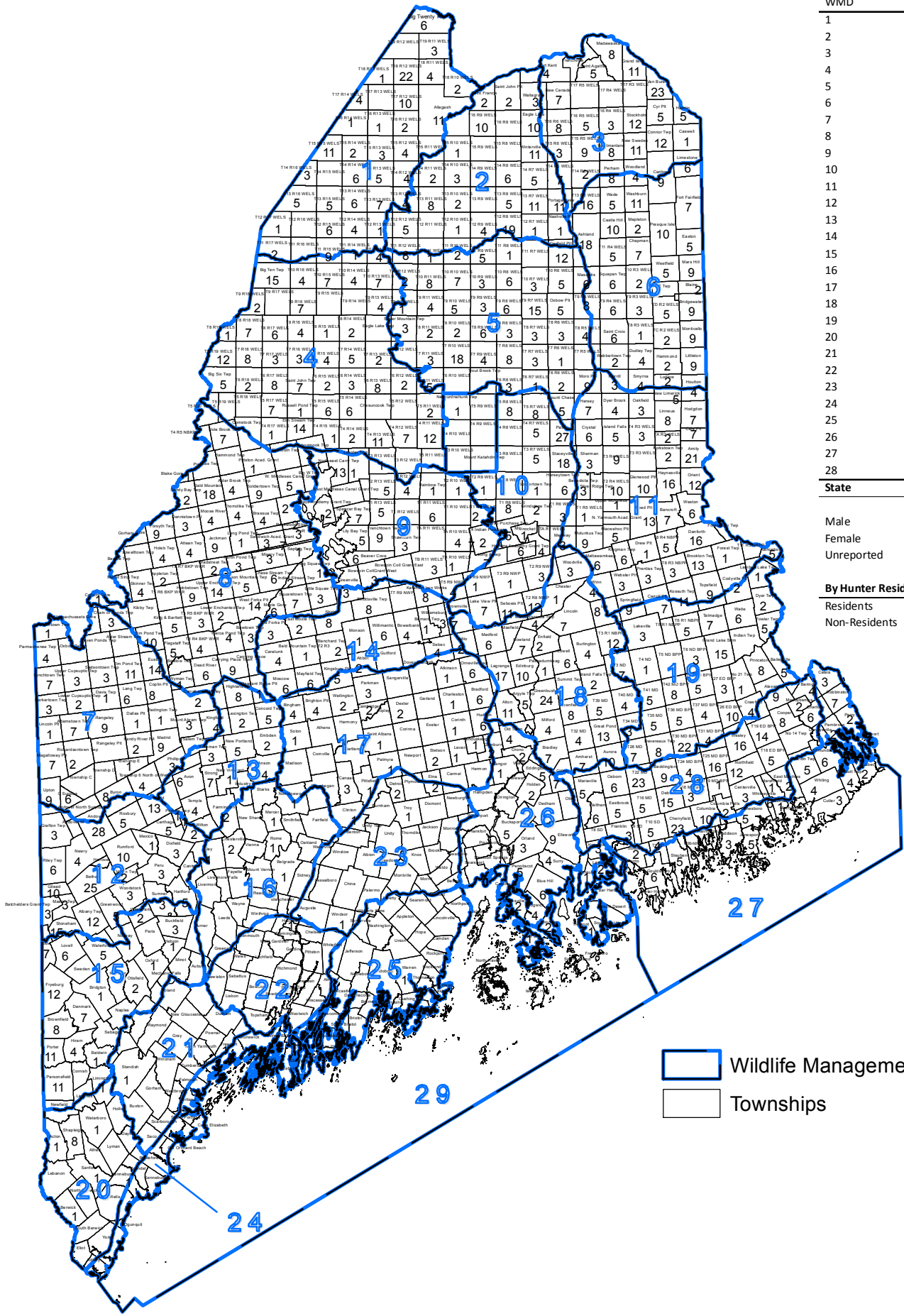


2012 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	156
2	132
3	168
4	223
5	187
6	211
7	145
8	242
9	97
10	150
11	288
12	170
13	51
14	74
15	85
16	7
17	50
18	204
19	166
20	13
21	1
22	1
23	6
24	1
25	1
26	71
27	78
28	229
State	3,207

Male	1,721
Female	1,453
Unreported	33

By Hunter Residence	
Residents	909
Non-Residents	1,704

Wildlife Management Districts
 Townships

Maine's 2012 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bear in 2012 opened August 27 and closed November 24. Hunters were allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout this 3-month period. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 27 through September 22. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 10 and closing October 26. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31.

This fall, 2,613 bears were taken over bait (81%), 368 bears were taken by hound hunters (11%), 66 bears were taken in traps (2%), 100 were taken by unreported methods (3%), and 66 bears (2%) were harvested by deer hunters. Most bears were taken early in the season with 3,020 bears (94%) harvested before the end of September. Bear harvests reached record levels of around 4,000 bears per year between 2000 and 2004. In recent years, harvests have declined averaging 3,000 bears annually. The 2012 harvest of 3,207 bears is the second highest harvest recorded in recent years. We expected a high harvest this fall due to the limited availability of natural foods, however this was offset by bears entering the dens early. As a result opportunity to hunt bears later in the season was low and only 187 of the 3,207 bears (6%) were harvested in October and November. For many years, the abundance of fall foods for bears has been high in even numbered years and low in odd numbered years. Like last year, this year was an exception to the rule.

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

For the first time, bears were harvested in 28 of the 29 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) with one bear taken in WMD's 21, 22, 24 and 25. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of habitat (forested land) was greatest in WMD 3 at 21 bears/100 mi² followed closely by WMD 6 and 28 with 20 bears/100 mi², and WMDs 10-12 with 18 bears/100mi². In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between <1 and 17 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 11 bears/100 mi²). Bears were harvested in 13 of the state's 16 counties. No bears were taken in Androscoggin, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties and ≤5 bears were taken in Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, and Waldo counties.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting was again reflected in the harvest distribution by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 2,021 bears (63%) of the 3,207 bears tagged during 2012. Non-resident hunters shot most of the bears (65%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (69%), although bait hunting remained popular amongst resident hunters with 77% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although few bears were taken during the deer season or in traps, Maine residents accounted for the majority (85% and 80%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2012, guides helped take 79% of bears harvested over hounds, 66% of the bears taken over bait, and 21% of trapped bears. Guides assisted 252 residents (12%) and 1,811 nonresidents (88%) with their successful hunts.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 54% (1,721 bears) of the 2012 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 93% (2,970 bears) of the harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 33 bears (1%).

Prospects for the 2013 season

The Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods, unless management concerns require changes to the lengths of hunting or trapping periods. In 2013, the season will remain similar to those in recent years. The season will span 14 weeks and will begin on the last Monday in August and close on the last Saturday in November (August 26-November 30, 2013).

A population model of Maine black bears indicates the population can sustain a harvest of 15%. Thus a harvest of 3,500 bears was needed to stabilize Maine's bear population conservatively estimated at 23,000 bears in 2004. However, in recent years we have not met our harvest objective. This low harvest rate coupled with high cub survival rates has allowed Maine's bear population to grow. We will be considering modifying hunting opportunities to stabilize Maine's bear population based on a pending updated population estimate.