

Black Bear Management Frequently Asked Questions

On November 15, 2022, New Jersey Fish and Game Council approved the state's Comprehensive Bear Management Policy (CBBMP) and amendments to the Game Code, including measures to reintroduce a regulated black bear hunt beginning in December as a necessary means of reducing the population and potentially dangerous bear-human interactions to protect public safety. The Fish and Game Council's amendments to the Game Code include limitations to a regulated hunt, including prohibitions focused on the protection of cubs.

What is the process and timeline for reinstatement of the black bear hunt in New Jersey for December 2022?

On November 15, 2022, the New Jersey Fish and Game Council approved emergency amendments to the Game Code, including the CBBMP reinstating the black bear hunt beginning in December 2022. The Governor has provided concurrence on the emergency adoption of the amended Game Code and CBBMP, each of which has been filed with the Office of Administrative Law and will be effective for 60 days.

After working closely with the Council to develop mutually agreeable amendments to govern the hunt, the DEP Commissioner has provided the required approval of the CBBMP to allow the hunt to move forward. The Commissioner agrees with the Council's determination, as stated by [letter](#) on November 15, 2022, that the December 2022 hunt is necessary in light of imminent peril to the health, safety, and welfare of New Jersey residents that the growing black bear population presents.

To allow hunting to resume on State lands, the Governor signed [Executive Order 310 \(2022\)](#) rescinding [Executive Order 34 \(2018\)](#) and the DEP Commissioner signed [AO 2022-22](#) rescinding [AO 2018-24](#), which had prohibited black bear hunting on state-owned lands.

A bear hunt will occur December 5 – December 10, 2022.

To allow hunting beyond this initial 60-day period, the Council has additionally filled a concurrent rule proposal with the Office of Administrative Law. The public comment period begins on December 5, 2022, when the rule is published in the NJ Register. The public can submit comments by accessing the following link <https://www.nj.gov/dep/rules/comments/>.

The public comment period will close on February 3, 2023. A public hearing will be scheduled for mid-January. Details for the public hearing will be added once available. Comments may be submitted in writing or during the public hearing. The CBBMP and Game Code changes related to the bear hunt are available for review on the Department's Rules & Regulations webpage under "[Current Proposals](#)".

What amendments to the Game Code have been approved by the Fish and Game Council?

On November 15, 2022, the Fish and Game Council approved a more restricted regulated hunt including the strict prohibitions on the taking of cubs under 75 pounds, the taking of adults traveling with cubs below 75 pounds, and restrictions on the practice of baiting.

What are current population estimates for black bears in New Jersey?

The DEP estimates that the population in northwestern counties of Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren, where the state's population is centered, has increased, with estimates of approximately 3,000 black bears, up from approximately 1,500 in

2018. The black bear population is projected to grow to more than 4,000 bears in the next two years. In the absence of population control measures, the rate of population growth will compound in future years as a greater number of female bears reproduce, with population reduction standing as the only scientifically sound method of restraining unchecked growth and dispersal.

How does a rising black bear population endanger public safety?

Despite the additional non-lethal management efforts that the DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife has taken, including concerted public outreach and education, reported black bear incidents, including dangerous human-bear interactions, from January through October of 2022 have increased by 237% compared to the same period in 2021. The most concerning of these incidents include: 62 aggressive encounters with humans, 1 human attack, 12 dog attacks, 12 home entries, 15 attempted home entries, 89 instances of property damage, and 52 attacks on protected livestock.

Dense populations of bears can also lead to inadequate natural sources of food for the animals and territory for young males. This causes wider dispersion of bears into areas where they are even more likely to come into conflict with people and increases the risk of bears seeking sources of food such as trash, pet food left outside, seed from bird feeders, agricultural crops, and poultry and livestock.

Incident reports for the years 2010 through 2022 are available at [NJDEP | Fish & Wildlife | Activity Reports](#).

Why was the black bear hunt previously closed?

The hunt was suspended on state lands in 2018 to provide an opportunity to evaluate the feasibility of exclusively using non-lethal measures to maintain the population in a manner that is protective of the public's safety. Bear hunting on any lands in New Jersey ended in 2021 with the expiration of the previous CBBMP.

DECEMBER 2022 HUNT SEASON INFORMATION

What are the season dates for hunting black bear in 2022?

The black bear season will be Monday, December 5th through Saturday, December 10th, 2022.

If the harvest rate does not reach 20% during this period, the hunt will be extended to Wednesday, December 14th through Saturday, December 17th, 2022. A season extension will be announced on the [Fish and Wildlife website](#), by press release, and via the [NJ Hunting e-mail list](#).

Can the December segment be closed before Saturday, December 10?

Yes, if the harvest rate reaches 30% of bears tagged in 2022 the season will be closed. In the event of a season closure, notification will be announced on the [Fish and Wildlife website](#) and via the [NJ Hunting E-mail list](#). A season closure will become effective 24 hours from the daily legal closing time of the day on which the decision is made.

Where can I hunt black bears in NJ this December?

Bear hunting is currently only permitted in Bear Management Zones 1 – 5. Hunters may find a map of Bear Management Zones on the [Fish and Wildlife website \(Hunting/Bear Regulations\)](#) or by using the [Hunting Explorer app](#). State lands have been reopened to bear hunting. You may hunt bears on any State, private, municipal, county, or federal land within Bear Management Zones 1 – 5 and for which you have permission. If in doubt about a property's availability, please call the managing agency for that specific property for clarification.

What are the updated regulations for the 2022 bear hunting season?

As part of the Emergency Rule and Concurrent proposal there were three key changes to bear hunting regulations:

- *Hunters may NOT harvest a black bear less than 75 pounds (live weight), or less than 50 pounds dressed.*
- *Hunters may NOT harvest an adult bear that is accompanied by bears less than 75 pounds.*
- *Hunters may NOT hunt a bear or have a loaded weapon within 300 ft. of a baited area.*

What do I need to hunt Black Bears in New Jersey?

To hunt black bears you need a valid NJ Hunting license and a Black Bear Permit (\$2). There is a set number of permits available for each Bear Management Zone. Hunters may purchase up to two permits, each for a different zone, but may ONLY HARVEST ONE BEAR during the entire season regardless of the number of permits they purchased. Bear Management Zone boundary information is available on [Fish and Wildlife's website \(Hunting/Bear Regulations\)](#) or using the [Hunting Explorer app](#).

Where can I purchase a black bear permit?

Bear permits will be sold the same as in previous years and go on sale on Thursday, November 17, 2022 at 10am. You may purchase [permits online](#) or [in-person](#) at license agents. Please see the Fish and Wildlife [Hunting and Trapping Permits webpage](#) for more details. More information concerning licenses and permits, as well as a link to online purchasing is available from the [Fish and Wildlife website](#).

Can I buy more than one bear permit?'

Yes, a licensed hunter can purchase a permit for two separate zones. However only ONE bear, at least 75 pounds, may be harvested regardless of the number of permits purchased.

What weapons are legal to hunt black bear?

During the December season you may use only shotguns no smaller than 20 gauge or larger than 10 gauge with rifled slugs or muzzleloader rifles of .44 or larger caliber. If hunting with a muzzleloader, a rifle permit must be in possession.

What size black bear is legal to hunt?

You may NOT take a bear that is less than 75 pounds live weight or 50 pounds dressed weight, and you may NOT take an adult bear which is in the presence of cubs weighing less than 75 pounds.

What are the reporting or check station requirements for the December 2022 season?

After IMMEDIATELY tagging the bear in the field, hunters are required to check all harvested bears at a check station staffed by NJDEP Fish and Wildlife personnel. Additional information on check station availability and location will be provided in advance of the hunt. Data, including sex, weight and size is collected, and a tooth will be extracted for aging.

How many bears can I harvest?

One. Hunters may only harvest ONE bear even if they purchased more than one permit. Each permit is for a specific Bear Management Zone. Hunters are limited to buying two permits only.

Additional information regarding the Black Bear Hunting Season will be provided on the [Fish and Wildlife website](#) and via the [NJ Hunting e-mail list](#).