



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEEK-LONG BLACK BEAR HUNT STARTS MONDAY IN NORTH JERSEY
COINCIDES WITH OPENING OF THE STATE'S DEER HUNTING SEASON STATEWIDE

(14/P131) TRENTON –The state’s weeklong black bear hunting season will begin just prior to sunrise on Monday morning, December 8, and continue just past sunset on Saturday, December 13, in portions of six North Jersey counties. The season runs concurrently with the six-day firearm deer hunting season.

Department of Environmental Protection wildlife biologists anticipate the outcome of this year’s hunt to be similar to 2013, when 251 bears were harvested, with hunting zones set up in all or portions of Morris, Passaic, Hunterdon, Somerset, Sussex and Warren counties, plus a small area of western Bergen County.

“We expect another safe, professionally managed black bear hunt, which is just one component of New Jersey’s comprehensive effort to manage our black bear population,” said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. “In an effort to properly manage our ecosystem, we are seeking to reduce the number of black bears to a sustainable number in Northwest Jersey, while improving public safety by reducing bear encounters with our residents.”

In addition to hunting, the state’s comprehensive policy includes a common sense mix of bear management tools, including public education, research, bear-habitat analysis and protection, non-lethal bear management techniques, trash management, and a bear feeding ban, all geared towards reducing bear-human encounters.

“The initial results of this coordinated, statewide black bear plan are encouraging,” said Dave Chanda, director of the State Division of Fish and Wildlife. “But we must continue this effort to further reduce bear and human encounters and farm and property damage, while easing public concerns about black bears.”

The DEP’s comprehensive approach, which was formally established in 2010 by the state’s Fish and Game Council, has been gradually reducing the estimated number of black bears living in North Jersey, which has a robust black bear population. Scientifically calculated and conservative estimates show approximately 2,200 to 2,500 black bears living in the hunting area north of Route 78 and west of Route 287. That is down from an estimated 3,400 bears in 2010.

In concert with university scientists, further work will be done next year by the DEP’s Division of Fish & Wildlife biologists to reassess the black bear population in North Jersey, and to begin to develop a black bear population model for other parts of the state. Black bears have been observed in all 21 counties in New Jersey, with some prominent sightings of black bears in Central and South Jersey last spring, but the number of bears living outside of the northwestern portion of the state remains low, with no population estimate currently available.

Black bear hunting is taking place this week within a 1,000-square-mile area north of Route 78 and west of Route 287. It is complemented by black bear hunts that occur each autumn in neighboring Pennsylvania and New York, where 3,510 and 1,358 bears respectively were taken by hunters in 2013. Bears living in North Jersey also traverse parts of those neighboring states.

It is expected that by Monday morning, more than 7,000 bear hunting permits will have been obtained by licensed hunters from New Jersey and other states for this year's hunt. A maximum of 10,000 permits will be allocated.

For information on New Jersey's 2014 black bear hunt, including bear permit availability, and information on the 2003, 2005 and 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 bear harvest results, visit: http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/bearseason_info.htm

For the state's Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy, visit: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/bearpolicy10.htm>

For more information on black bears, including black bear biology and behavior, and bear safety tips, visit: <http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/bearfacts.htm>

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