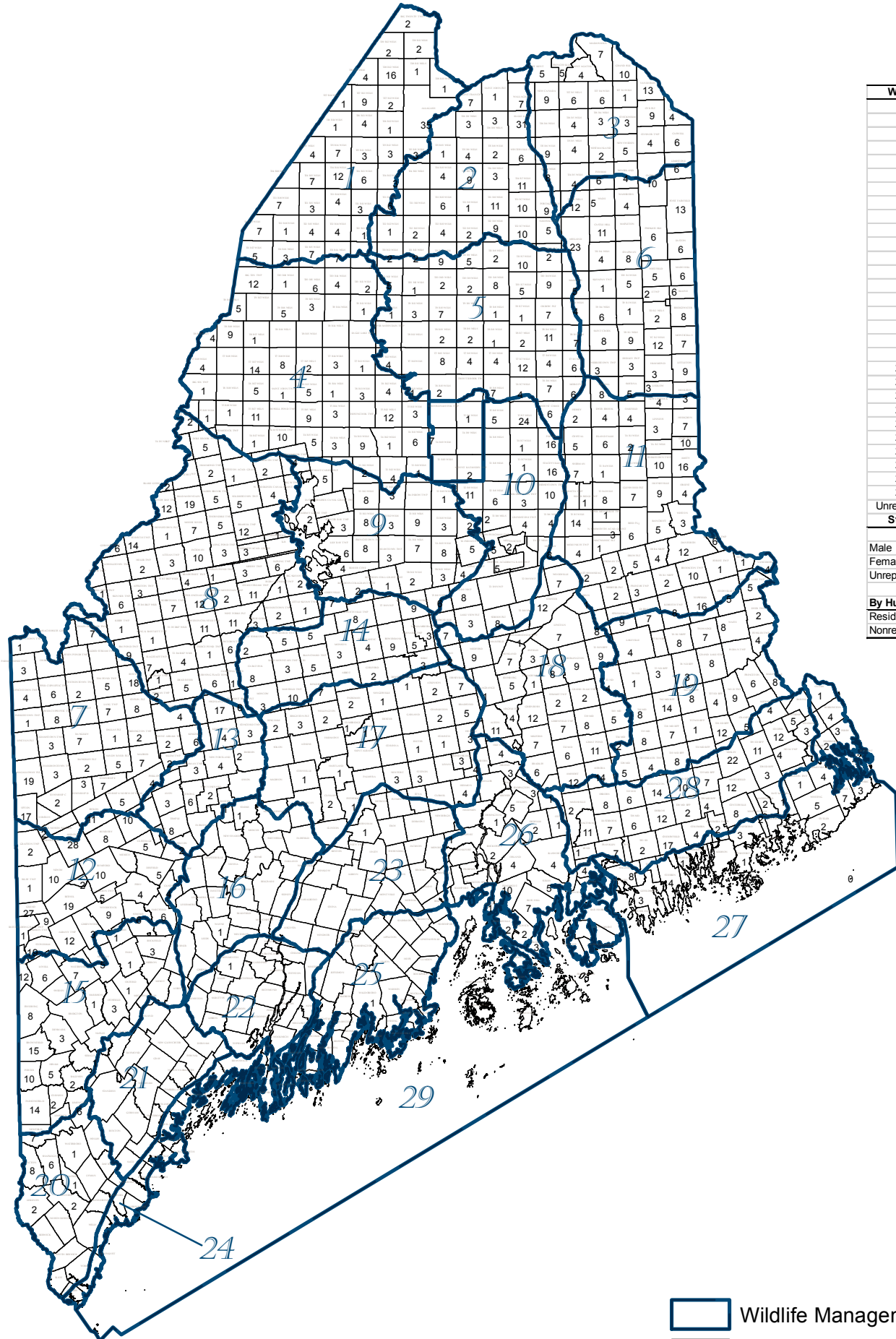


2018 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	168
2	166
3	170
4	213
5	160
6	221
7	177
8	281
9	120
10	137
11	245
12	187
13	61
14	83
15	112
16	5
17	60
18	200
19	189
20	26
21	3
22	0
23	2
24	0
25	0
26	65
27	53
28	204
29	1
Unreported	5
State	3,314

Male	1,885
Female	1,428
Unreported	1

By Hunter Residence	
Residents	1,250
Nonresidents	2,064

Wildlife Management Districts
 Townships

2018 Maine Black Bear Season

Starting in 2015, youth hunters are permitted to hunt the Saturday prior to the opening of the season. The general hunting season for black bears opens the last Monday in August and closes the last Saturday in November. Hunters are allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout the entire three-month season. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 25 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. Bear hunters can take two bears if one is taken by trapping and the other by hunting. This year, 25 hunters/trappers harvested two bears and 64 youth hunters shot a bear on youth day.

Since 2005, harvests have declined below objectives with between 2,400 to 3,486 bears harvested annually. This fall, 3,314 bears were taken during the 13-week fall season providing approximately 265,000 pounds of bear meat to hunters and their families. Most bears (98%) were taken with the use of bait, dogs, or traps: 2,484 bears were harvested over bait (75%), 692 bears were taken by hunters using trained bear dogs (21%), and 87 bears were taken in traps (3%). Only 1% were taken by other methods: 12 bears were harvested by deer hunters and 34 by spot/stalk or still-hunting. Five bears (<1%) were taken by unreported methods. Like most years, the majority of bears (92%) were harvested earlier in the season with 3,045 bears harvested before the end of September. This was a record high early season harvest. Natural food abundance varies from year to year and was particularly low this season. The lack of natural foods caused bears to enter dens early which influenced the record low harvest later in the season, particularly the low harvest by deer hunters (1%).

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

Bears were harvested in 26 of 29 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) with no bears taken in WMDs 22, 24 or 26. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of forested land was greatest in WMD 28 at 28 bears/100mi², followed by WMDs 3, 6, and 12 at 20-21 bears/100 mi², and lowest in WMDs 16, 23 and 29 with ≤ 1 bear/100mi². In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between five and 17 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 10 bears/100 mi²). Bears were harvested in 13 of the state's 16 counties. No bears were taken in Knox, Androscoggin, and Sagadahoc counties, and between one and four bears were harvested in Cumberland, Kennebec, Lincoln, and Waldo counties.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting was again reflected in the distribution of the harvest by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 2,064 bears (63%) of the 3,314 bears tagged during 2018. Non-resident hunters shot more of the bears (63%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (69%). Bait hunting remained popular among resident hunters with 74% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although fewer bears were taken during the deer season, in traps, or by spot and stalk methods, Maine residents accounted for the majority (92%, 82%, and 73%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2018, guides assisted 359 residents (29%) and 1,903 non-residents (92%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounted for 86% of bears harvested with trained bear dogs, 66% of the bears taken over bait, 21% of trapped bears, 17% of bears taken while deer hunting, and 21% of bears taken by spot/stalk/still-hunt methods.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 57% (1,885 bears) of the 2018 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 94% (3,127 bears) of the harvest, and sex and age were not reported for one bear.

Prospects for the 2019 season

Since 1997, the Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods. However, bear hunting regulations can be modified in response to changes in Maine's bear population or other management concerns. The 2019 season will remain similar to recent years, opening with a youth day the last Saturday in August (24th). The general season will open the following Monday (August 26th) and will close the last Saturday in November (30th). Successful hunts are influenced by a variety of factors, but natural food availability is often the most influential. In years with an abundance of soft or hard mast crops, hunters hunting over bait experience lower success while deer hunters and hunters that pursue bears with hounds have additional opportunity as bears remain out foraging on abundant food crops longer than in years with poor food abundance.