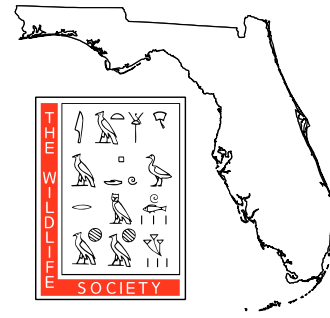


Florida Chapter
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
www.fltws.org



Position Statement Regarding FWC-managed Black Bear Hunting
20 June 2016

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society is a non-profit conservation organization of wildlife professionals, educators, and students dedicated to sustainable management of wildlife resources and habitats in Florida. With approximately 250 members, the Chapter is recognized as a proactive group that promotes wildlife research and management, and develops positions on natural resource issues based on sound biological data and scientific principles. Our parent organization, The Wildlife Society, has over 10,000 members and is the certifying body for wildlife biologists in North America.

The Florida Chapter supports the North American Wildlife Conservation Model on which modern wildlife management is based. Two of the seven basic tenets of the model are that 1) hunting is a legitimate, beneficial use of public resources and 2) science is the basis for informed management and decision-making processes. Based on bear abundance data, which we believe were collected and analyzed with sound methodology, the Florida black bear population has recovered from its previous “Threatened” status as defined in the Florida Administrative Code. These data also suggest that certain subpopulations could be sustainably harvested, offering hunting opportunities and potentially reducing human/bear conflicts. Therefore, the Florida Chapter supports limited hunting of such subpopulations provided that:

- Measurable objectives for demographic parameters such as abundance, survival, reproduction, and recruitment are established for each harvested subpopulation to ensure sustainability of the harvests and conservation of the Florida bear population;
- Data are collected and analyzed using the best available science to determine if the demographic objectives are being met;
- Harvests are monitored and mechanisms are in place to adjust harvest strategies as necessary to achieve the objectives;
- Objective 2 of the 2012 Black Bear Management Plan, which addresses habitat suitability, and particularly habitat connectivity between Bear Management Units, is made a top priority. Movement and genetic exchange between subpopulations are imperative for the long-term sustainability of the Florida black bear population.

The Florida Chapter commends the FWC for its progress toward achieving the objectives set forth in the 2012 Black Bear Management Plan, especially those associated with public education and outreach, and efforts to reduce human/bear conflicts. Management of the Florida bear population using technically sound and defensible methods will create a sustainable resource, as well as promote confidence from the public. The Chapter is ready and willing to provide scientific input toward this goal whenever requested.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Bolt, President, and the Executive Board for the Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society