



**Humane
World for
Animals**

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Society of the United States and
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Keep Florida bears protected

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has proposed reopening a trophy hunt of Florida's iconic black bears. The last time Florida held a bear hunt was in 2015, and it was a disaster. Hunters exceeded the quota in two bear management units and the scheduled week-long hunt was shut down in 48 hours. More than 300 bears were killed in that time. Of the bears killed, about 60% were females, which is a big problem for bear conservation since females don't start reproducing until around age three and only have a few cubs every other year. Even worse, hunters killed 38 lactating mothers—meaning as many as 95 nursing cubs potentially died too.

But the proposed 2025 hunt could be even worse...

- The FWC is proposing a month-long bear hunting season starting in December 2025
- The proposed season would allow baiting and hounding.
- Hunters would have up to 24 hours to report a kill, which could lead to the state's proposed quota of 187 bears being exceeded before the hunt can be stopped.
- The FWC may allow trophy hunters to field dress bears, which opens the door to misidentifying the sex or hiding the fact that a bear was a lactating mother. Hunters could also under-report the weight of a cub to avoid penalties.
- Without required check-ins at FWC stations like in 2015, there's also far less oversight and media accountability.

Florida's bear numbers are outdated—and a 20% offtake in some areas could be devastating

Florida doesn't actually know how many black bears are on the landscape—because the latest population data was gathered nearly a decade ago, back in 2014 and 2015. Despite that, FWC is proposing to allow up to 20% of some bear subpopulations to be hunted. That's a serious problem. Bear populations don't grow that fast—nowhere near 20% annually—so this kind of offtake could wipe out more bears than are being born or surviving each year.

81% of FL voters
oppose hunting Florida's
black bears, according
to an April 2025 poll by
Remington Research
Group



89% of Florida voters

oppose permitting the practice of using packs of hounds to kill bears, according to an April 2025 poll.

86% of Florida voters

oppose Florida permitting hunters to shoot bears over bait stations, according to an April 2025 poll.

The FWC is proposing to allow baiting and hounding—cruel and unsporting methods that make it much easier for trophy hunters to quickly find and kill bears—as well as archery.



In 2018, then-attorney general Pam Bondi prosecuted a ring of nine racketeers, who were caught illegally hounding, baiting and siccing their dogs on black bears. She said some of these nine took “sick pleasure” in causing harm to black bears. Yet now Florida wants to sanction these very same behaviors into state law.

Hounding is cruel and dangerous

The FWC is proposing to allow hound hunting of Florida bears, where packs of dogs chase down bears. The chase itself is brutal—dogs and bears can die from heat exhaustion, since both species overheat easily while running. Eventually, exhausted bears are often forced to climb trees, where hunters shoot them at close range. FWC's proposal also would allow up to 10 hunters and six hounds per group. These hunts would send packs of dogs tearing through Florida's diverse landscapes — disturbing, displacing, and even killing bears and other wildlife.

Trophy hunters typically use GPS collars on their dogs, tracking the chase from afar rather than staying close. Because hounds outrun people, hunters can't keep up and must rely on remote monitoring—leaving dogs free to create chaos. Hounds often encounter non-target animals, including protected species, leading to injuries or death for either the wildlife or the dogs themselves. Bears, cubs, or even endangered panther kittens could be cornered and attacked.

The dogs aren't safe either. They can be seriously hurt if wildlife defends themselves or their young—suffering from broken bones, punctured lungs, or deep lacerations. And when hounds are no longer useful—if they're too slow or injured—some are abandoned in the wild or dumped at shelters, straining already limited resources.

These hunts also pose broader dangers: hounds may chase wildlife into roads, risking deadly collisions with cars and harm to motorists. They may trespass onto private lands or pose safety threats to people, pets, and farm animals nearby. Hounding is a dangerous, inhumane, and deeply flawed approach to wildlife “management.”

Archery causes prolonged suffering in black bears

Bows and arrows—often called “archery equipment”—can leave bears wounded to die slowly and painfully. A study of modern archery equipment found that about 30% of deer shot by archers die slowly rather than from quick, clean kills. And black bears are even more difficult than deer to kill with an arrow because of their massive muscles and heavy bones. When hit, a bear may run off and suffer for hours—or even days—from blood loss or infection before dying. It's a painful and inhumane way to hunt.

Baiting bears is unethical, and counterproductive

The FWC is proposing to allow bear baiting at “game feeding stations,” on private lands. Even with restrictions, baiting on private lands is almost impossible for FWC to monitor. Landowners could illegally use foods like chocolate or caffeine, which are toxic and deadly to bears and other wildlife.

Bear baiting involves zero fair chase. Trophy hunters sit in blinds or elevated stands and shoot bears that have been “trained” to show up for easy meals. These food-rich bait sites make it more likely that females with cubs will be killed—since family groups need more calories to survive and grow.

Baiting will backfire on FWC's population goals. By adding excessive calories into the environment, baiters can actually increase bear numbers. This is contrary to FWC's goal, which seeks to stabilize or reduce the bear population. Bears with access to human-provided foods have more cubs, higher cub survival rates, and start reproducing earlier. On top of that, baiting puts nearby people and pets at risk by drawing in bears and other animals to concentrated spots, leading to spreading of diseases like rabies and mange. It can also cause conflicts, because small bears may be killed by larger bears.



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