

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

SUBJECT: Approval of bear harvest quotas for the 2013 season.

FOR: January 2013 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Kevin Wallenfang, Big Game Ecologist and Brad Koele, Wildlife Damage Specialist

SUMMARY:

The department will request adoption of bear harvest quotas for the 2013 hunting season and will provide an informational overview of the bear damage and nuisance program.

The department recommends a harvest quota of 4,000 bears and a harvest permit level of 8,560. In individual management units the recommended 2013 permit levels are: A) 2,130 B) 690, C) 4,110, and D) 1,630. Permit levels are based on the recommended 2013 quota and hunter success rates over the last 3 years, and were decreased by just 5% when compared to 2012.

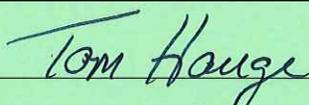
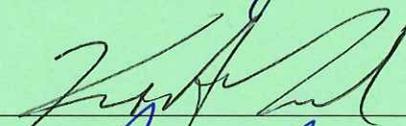
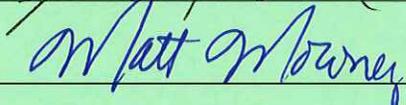
Harvest goals and permit levels increased in 2009 and have remained at relatively high levels following the results of a tetracycline mark-recapture study completed in 2008. The study indicated the presence of more bears than had been estimated using the population modeling techniques utilized at that time. Since then, monitoring indices (bait station surveys, mean age at harvest, age structure of harvest, harvest success rates) indicate the bear population has responded to increased harvest quotas and has decreased in management zones A and B. Despite more aggressive harvest levels, bear numbers have remained relatively stable or have slightly increased in Zones C and D. After reviewing indices, population data, and nuisance damage records, we recommend decreasing harvest goals in Zones A and B, and increasing harvest goals in Zones C and D. These changes will result in a 13% decrease in the overall statewide harvest goal in 2013 compared to 2012.

Additionally, this presentation will include an overview of the bear damage and nuisance management program.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of bear harvest quotas for the 2013 season.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- Background memo
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Approved by	Signature	Date
Tom Hauge, Bureau Director		1/10/13
Kurt Thiede, Administrator		1/11/13
Cathy Stepp, Secretary		1/11/13

DATE: January 8, 2013

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Cathy Stepp

SUBJECT: 2013 Bear Season Quotas

FILE REF: 2300

Background

The department recommends a 2013 bear harvest quota of 4,000 and a harvest permit level of 8,560. This is a 13% reduction in the quota and 5% reduction in permits when compared to 2012 harvest goals. In individual management units the recommended 2013 quotas are: A) 1,150, B) 450, C) 1,200, and D) 1,200 and the recommended permit levels are: A) 2,130 B) 690, C) 4,110, and D) 1,630. Permit levels are based on the recommended 2013 quota and hunter success rates over the last 3 years.

Harvest goals and permit levels increased in 2009 and have remained at relatively high levels following the results of a tetracycline mark-recapture study completed in 2008. The study indicated the presence of more bears than had been estimated using the population modeling techniques utilized at that time. Since then, monitoring indices (bait station surveys, mean age at harvest, age structure of harvest, harvest success rates) indicate the bear population has responded to increased harvest quotas and has decreased in management zones A and B. Despite more aggressive harvest levels, bear numbers have remained relatively stable or have slightly increased in Zones C and D. After reviewing indices, population data, and nuisance damage records, the department recommends decreasing harvest goals in Zones A and B, and increasing harvest goals in Zones C and D.

Another tetracycline mark-recapture population study began in 2011. Preliminary study results (based upon 2011 harvest data) indicate that Wisconsin's 2009-2011 bear harvest strategies have reduced the overall bear population to approximately 18,500 bears. In Zones C and D, the bear resource has been underutilized, remains at levels where damage and nuisance complaints are high, and can sustain harvest rates above recent years.

The Conservation Congress Bear Committee has reviewed and voted in support of the recommended 2013 harvest quotas for each zone. The department consulted with the Voigt Tribal Task Force through their representative to the committee when determining these recommendations.

The 2013 recommended harvest quotas are not intended to try to reach current population goals as established in administrative code. The current population goals were based on the numbers of bears believed to be present using old population monitoring methods. These need to be updated using the new mark-recapture methodology as part of a larger statewide bear management plan update. The public will be engaged over the next year to determine preferred goals in each zone. This input will be used for goal revisions in administrative code. The department does not believe it prudent to substantially reduce or increase bear populations until public input on future population goals is solicited.



Harvest Quotas and Permits by Zone

Zone A:

The population in Zone A is estimated to be approximately 3,920. The 2012 harvest quota was 1,900. The preliminary 2012 harvest was 1,835 with 3,425 harvest permits available, resulting in a 55.2 % success rate. The 3-year average success rate is 54.0%. The recommended harvest quota for 2013 is 1,150 down 40% from the 2012 bear season. A harvest of 1,150 is expected to decrease the estimated population in Zone A from 3,920 in 2013 to 3,560 in 2014. Applying success rates to the quota results in 2,130 permits (Table 1).

Zone B:

The population in Zone B is estimated to be approximately 2,520. The 2012 harvest quota was 900. The preliminary 2012 harvest was 803 with 1,335 harvest permits available, resulting in a 62.7% success rate. The 3-year average success rate for Zone B is 65.1%. The recommended harvest quota is 450, down 50% from the 2012 bear season. The proposed harvest quota is expected to slightly decrease the estimated population in Zone B from 2,520 in 2013 to 2,370 in 2014. Applying success rates to the quota results in 690 permits (Table 1).

Zone C:

The population in Zone C is estimated to be approximately 5,640. The 2012 harvest quota was 900. The preliminary 2012 harvest was 734 with 2,970 harvest permits available, resulting in a 26.2% success rate. The 3-year average success rate for Zone C is 29.2%. The recommended harvest quota for 2013 is 1200, up 33% from the 2012 bear season. The proposed harvest quota is expected to stabilize or slightly increase the estimated population in Zone C from 5,640 in 2013 to approximately 5,740 in 2014. Applying success rates to the quota results in 4,110 harvest permits (Table 1).

Zone D:

The population in Zone D is estimated to be approximately 4,940. The 2012 harvest quota was 900. The preliminary 2012 harvest was 1,070 with 1,285 harvest permits available, resulting in an 80.9% success rate. The 3-year average success rate for Zone D is 73.8%. The recommended harvest quota for 2013 is 1,200, up 33% from the 2012 bear season. The proposed harvest quota is expected to decrease the estimated population in Zone D from 4,940 in 2013 to approximately 4,700 in 2014. Applying success rates to the quota results in 1,630 harvest permits (Table 1).

Recommendation

The Department recommends that the Natural Resources Board approve the bear harvest quotas and permit levels in Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed black bear harvest quotas and permit levels for the 2013 black bear season.

Bear Management Zone	2012 quota	2012 permits	2012 harvest	2013 quota	2013 permit level
A	1,900	3,425	1,835	1,150	2,130
B	900	1,335	803	450	690
C	900	2,970	734	1,200	4,110
D	900	1,285	1,070	1,200	1,630
Total	4,600	9,015	4,448	4,000	8,560