Wisconsin bear hunters harvested 3,717 bears during the 2018 season, 81.7% of the state’s quota of 4,550 bears. Annual quotas are established by the DNR Bear Advisory Committee with input from eight partner groups. The committee established a quota of 3,835 bears for the 2019 season.

Interest in Wisconsin bear hunting continues to increase, as almost 121,000 hunters applied for either a harvest permit or preference point for the 2018 season. A total of 11,595 hunters were awarded permits.

Wisconsin is divided into four bear management zones (see page 2). Population goals and harvest quotas are developed for each zone and licenses are zone-specific.

Wisconsin’s black bear population has increased in number and expanded in range in recent decades. Bear densities across portions of Wisconsin’s primary bear range are in excess of 1 bear per square mile, meaning hunters can expect to encounter bears with a little effort and time spent in the woods.

With that in mind, the DNR has implemented a 2019-2019 bear management plan that evaluates and addresses hunting, population and harvest management and bear-human conflicts.

Black bears are often referred to as generalists due to their flexible, omnivorous diet and their broad geographic range. Generally, black bears select habitats that have wetland or riparian habitats and mast-producing trees.

“A healthy bear population and flexible season structure has made Wisconsin a national leader in hunter interest, participation and harvest.”

- Scott Walter, DNR Large Carnivore Specialist
Black Bear Management Zone Boundary

County Boundary

Revised 3/19/14