

Good day, fellow SCI members and hunters,

We are working on a second historical event after last year's historic win in getting The Right to Hunt and Fish added to the Florida State Constitution. In 1994, Florida Bear hunting was canceled until 2015, when there was only one season. Click the link here. [For more information](https://myfwc.com/news/all-news/bear-hunt-525/), visit <https://myfwc.com/news/all-news/bear-hunt-525/>

Anyway, we want to work on starting the bear hunt again. Working with FWC and the commissioners who need to approve and pass this, we need your positive support and emails to show support for this season.

I am sure this will be a quota hunt and not a free-for-all. It has never been so, so please shut down the naysayers with the facts below! There are links to email the commissioners expressing your support. This link will allow you to send an email to all the commissioners at the same time: [FWC Commissioner Contact List](#). Comments should also be directed to BearComments@MyFWC.com.

FWC is hosting a virtual public meeting this Thursday, March 13, at 6:00 pm EDT. To join the meeting, go to www.MyFWC.com/Hunting and click "Florida Black Bear" or [click here](#) at the set meeting time. Public members **WILL NOT** be able to provide public comment during this meeting. Instead, there will be three public meetings in April where attendees can voice support or opposition. Once we learn the date and location of those emails, we will get that information to you.

The meeting this Thursday, March 13, should be very informative. We encourage members to join as they're able BUT, right now, the ask and focus should be on providing public comments via the Bear Comments email and then encouraging members to participate further during the April meetings/hearing and then, of course, the May 21-22 FWC meeting in Ocala.

Everyone, please see SCI's talking points to help support this hunt!

Talking Points:

1. Florida's unmanaged bear population is increasing and well above the carrying capacity, as evidenced by the increased reports of bear-vehicle collisions, human-bear interactions, and the presence of bears where they have historically not been.
2. For example, Florida has the highest number of human-bear conflicts in the country, which has become a public safety issue. Nearly 2700 bears have been killed due to vehicles over the last decade. Additionally, due to public safety concerns, the FWC regularly removes dozens of bears from the landscape every year.
3. The technical experts at FWC manage wildlife populations based on the best available science, and we support the FWC's efforts to organize black bears in Florida similarly. [Research shows](#) that regulated hunting is the only way to manage bear population numbers and range

expansion effectively. [Could also cite

https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/bearmgmtopt.pdf]

4. Regulated hunting provides a traditional recreational opportunity that provides essential funding to the FWC.
5. Every state with a sizable bear population, except Connecticut and Florida, relies upon a regulated hunting season for bear management.
6. The Commission is considering whether to allow the use of bait. SCI generally supports this harvest method. Harvest over bait allows for higher selectivity, including the sex of the animal, rough weight estimate, the general age of the bear, the presence of cubs, etc. There is no evidence that harvest over bait for the bear season contributes to the habituation of bears to humans. This is especially true in Florida because deer bait is already prevalent in the landscape.
7. SCI supports all lawful take methods – rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader, and bow.
8. SCI supports both lottery and quota systems while acknowledging a lottery system can offer more precision. Future tag number allotments should be based on past hunter success and other criteria based on the best available science and management objectives, not public sentiment.
9. SCI generally supports spring and fall seasons, recognizing that late fall can allow for more protection for females.
10. The demographic data collection in FL is monitored at each Bear Management Unit (BMU) at a 10-year interval. This is sufficient to keep the data fresh enough to inform harvest decisions. If significant mortality (i.e., disease) were to occur in any of the BMUs, it would show up in the demographic data that is currently being collected. This data shows that the populations are still growing – Central BMU = 2.2%, Eastern Panhandle BMU = 11.9%, South BMU = 12.2%, North BMU = 15.4%
11. Statewide cub survival is generally high, except for the North BMU, which is only 46%. This is primarily due to infanticide, where 35% of all cub mortality is due to infanticide in that BMU; this demonstrates extremely high bear density.
12. To ensure that overharvest does not occur in any subpopulation, SCI supports issuing tags based on sustainable female harvest levels.

I realize there may be some mixed feelings about this, but we rarely get a chance to get something back that was taken away. Hunting done right is ethical and supported by 75% of Americans!

Thank you all,

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