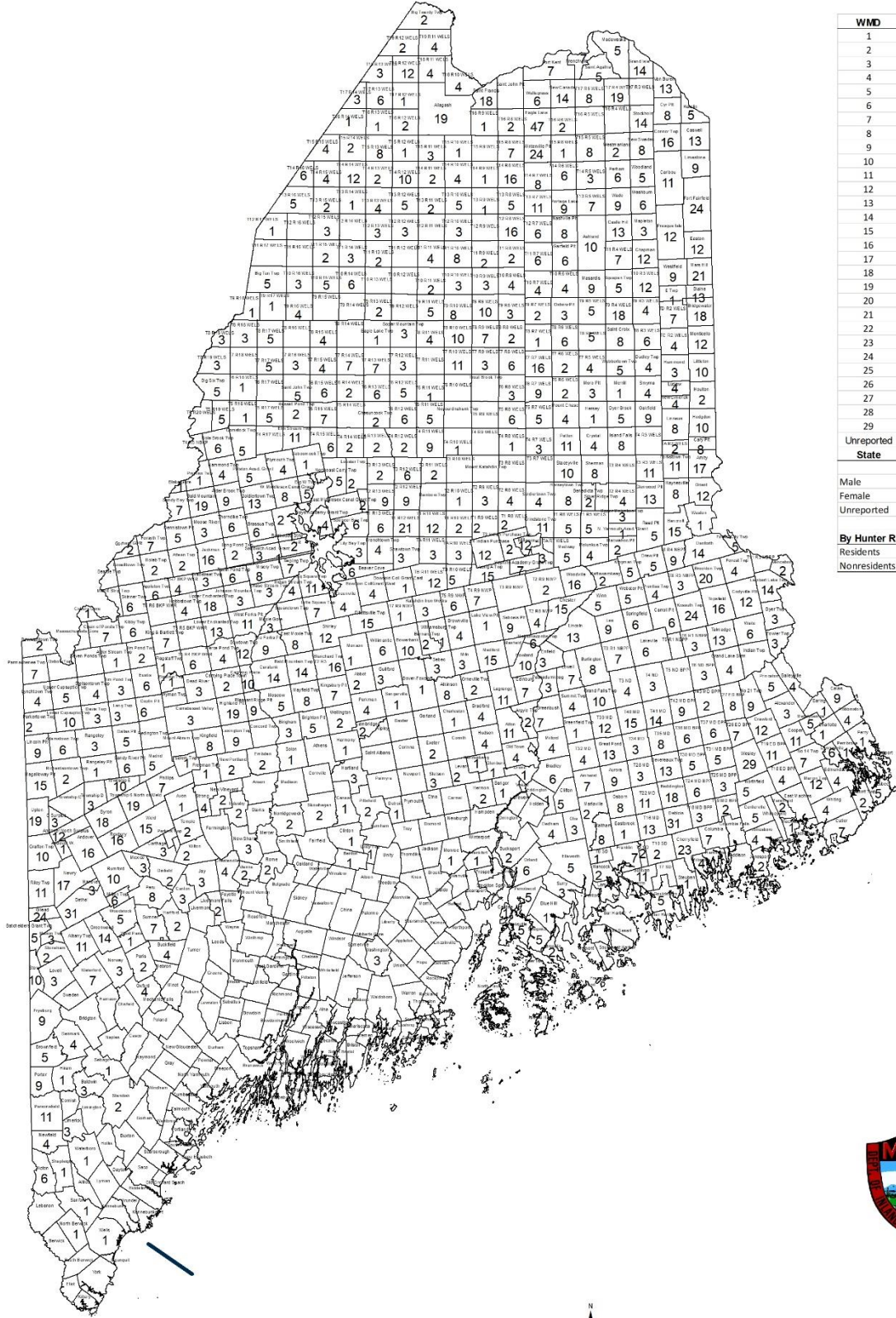


2021 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	137
2	157
3	250
4	193
5	174
6	305
7	198
8	347
9	153
10	116
11	321
12	233
13	49
14	124
15	79
16	19
17	65
18	254
19	198
20	15
21	2
22	0
23	4
24	0
25	3
26	51
27	72
28	248
29	1
Unreported	11
State	3,779
Male	2,063
Female	1,716
Unreported	0
By Hunter Residence	
Residents	1,448
Nonresidents	2,331



Map created:
08/11/2022



 Townships

Maine's 2021 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bears opens the last Monday in August and closes the last Saturday in November. Hunters can hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout the entire 3-month season. The bear trapping season spans 2 months opening on September 1 and closing on October 31. Hunting over bait is permitted during the first 4 weeks of the season (August 28-September 25, 2021). The hound season overlaps the last two weeks of the bait season and continues through the following five weeks (September 13-October 29, 2021). Most bears are harvested during the first month of the season and with the use of bait, dogs, or traps. Only 3% are harvested by spot/stalk or still-hunting or by deer hunters during the November firearm season. Starting in 2015, youth hunters were permitted to hunt the Saturday prior to the opening of the season and since 2008, hunters can take two bears if one is taken by trapping and the other by hunting. During the 2021 season, 51 youth hunters shot a bear on youth day, a record high, and 44 hunters harvested 2 bears (twice the average).

Natural food abundance varies from year to year and can have a strong influence on final harvest. This fall, we expected better natural food crops and lower harvest. Although a lower percentage of bears were harvested over bait (66%), this did not equate to a lower bear harvest. In fact, the 2021 harvest reached a near record high of 3,779 likely in response to higher hunter participation (~12,500 bear permits) and record high harvest by hound hunters (929 bears) and trappers (239 bears). Natural food levels also influence bear harvest by deer hunters. In years of higher food abundance, bears stay out foraging longer providing deer hunters greater opportunity to harvest a bear. This year's harvest of 57 bears during the November deer season fell in the middle suggesting that natural foods were good but not as abundant as some years.

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

In 2021, bears were harvested in 14 of the state's 16 counties and in 27 of 29 WMDs. Although the highest harvest occurred in Aroostook County (1,103 bears, 29% of total harvest), the density of harvest, expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of forested land, remains greatest in portions of northern, western and eastern Maine with between 25 and 35 bears/100 mi² harvested in WMDs 3, 6, 12, and 28. Fewer bears were taken in southern portions of the State with only 2 to 7 bears harvested in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, and Waldo counties and less than five bears/100 mi² harvested in WMD 16, 20, 23, and 29. In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between 6 and 21 bears/100 mi². No bears were taken in Lincoln and Sagadahoc counties and in WMD 22 and 24. The statewide average of 13 bears/100 mi² was higher than average.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting was again reflected in the distribution of the harvest by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 2,320 bears (62%) of the 3,779 bears tagged during 2021. Non-resident hunters shot more of the bears (65%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (66%). However, hunting over bait remained popular among resident hunters with 60% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although fewer bears were taken during the deer season, in traps, or by spot and stalk methods, Maine residents accounted for the majority (79%, 81%, and 79% respectively) taken during those seasons.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2021, guides assisted 425 residents (29%) and 2,147 non-residents (93%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounting for 83% of bears harvested with trained bear dogs, 70% of the bears taken over bait, 20% of trapped bears, 24% of bears taken by spot/stalk/still-hunt methods, and none of the bears taken while deer hunting.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 55% (2,063 bears) of the 2021 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 94% (3,536 bears) of the harvest.

Prospects for the 2022 season

Since 1997, the Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods. However, regulations can be modified in response to changes in the bear population or other management concerns. The 2022 season will remain the same, opening with a youth day the last Saturday in August and closing the last Saturday in November. Successful hunts are influenced by a variety of factors, but natural food levels are often the most influential. When soft or hard mast crops are abundant, hunters hunting over bait experience lower success while deer hunters and hunters that pursue bears with hounds have greater opportunity as bears remain out foraging longer when natural food is abundant. Based on past alternate cycles in natural foods, we anticipate that the 2022 season will provide more opportunity to take a bear with the aid of bait and overall higher harvest but less opportunity to hunt over natural food sources or harvest a bear later in the season with bears entering the dens early.