

Black Bears: A Situation Analysis on Baiting and Hounding in the United States with relevance for Maine



Photo by Branson Reynolds

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INTRODUCTION

The American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is currently distributed throughout North America in at least 40 states, northern Mexico, and all the provinces and territories of Canada except Prince Edward Island. Many state wildlife agencies, including Maine, classify black bears as a big game species (McCracken 1995). The population of black bears in Maine is estimated as between 22,000 and 23,000 animals.¹ Maine bear range covers about 67,890 km² (26,215 mi²), or 86% of the State's land area, with bears present in all but the heavily settled southern and central-coastal portions of Maine.² Maine's black bears are managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) to provide hunting, trapping, and viewing opportunities. Three primary management objectives guide the MDIFW's black bear management program. These include objectives are to: 1) stabilize black bear populations by 2005 at no less than 1999 levels (23,000 bears statewide); 2) develop informational and educational programs that target specific audiences and promote traditional hunting methods as preferred tools to manage black bear populations; and 3) develop information and education programs that promote public tolerance of bears in Maine.³ Traditional hunting as defined under these objectives include baiting, hounding, still hunting, trapping, and stalking.⁴

On November 4, 2004, Maine residents will have the opportunity to vote for or against a referendum banning the use of bait stations and hounds for black bear hunting. Specifically, the referendum language reads:

TITLE: An Act Prohibiting Certain Bear Hunting Practices

QUESTION: "Do you want to make it a crime to hunt bears with bait, traps or dogs, except to protect property, public safety or for research?"⁵

The general purpose of this document is to provide an overview of bear baiting and hounding within the context of the current debate in the state of Maine. The specific intentions of this document, therefore, are to:

- § Summarize key elements of what bear baiting and hunting with hounds entails;
- § Review the status of the practices in various portions of the United States;
- § Provide a situation analysis within states recently confronting similar referendums;

This document WILL NOT:

- § Support or reject the merit of either side of the debate.

INFORMATION ON BEAR BAITING AND HOUNDING

This section synthesizes many fundamental questions related to bear baiting and hounding. Please see the appended State Hunt Matrix for additional state specific information.

What is bear baiting?

Baiting involves luring a bear to a bait station with biodegradable materials such as vegetables, meats, pastries or sweets, honey, or other foods. After bears arrive at the bait station, a hunter can choose the size, hide quality, or reproductive state of a bear he/she wishes to harvest. Bait varies, but should be biodegradable material intended to lure, attract, or entice black bears to an area. Agricultural operations are not considered bait stations. Bait stations should be tended to frequently to refresh bait and keep bears interested. The intent of luring a bear to a bait site is to assess the animal's size, sex, quality, whether it has cubs, and provide the opportunity to harvest the animal, if desired.

Baiting is used for sport hunting, for research, and nuisance bear management. Researchers might use bait to lure a black bear to a hair snare, where hair samples can be collected when a bear walks under a wire and snags a few hairs. This hair can be used for genetic testing that can help managers to determine, for example, a population estimate for a region or the amount of genetic variation in a region. Wildlife control officers might bait a culvert trap - essentially a large, steel cylinder used to live-trap bears- to capture a reputed nuisance animal and potentially relocate or aversively condition it. Aversive conditioning is the use of negative stimuli meant to trigger negative gustatory, olfactory, visual, or tactile sensations in bears to repel them from a resource important to humans (Treves and Karanth 2003).

What is hounding?

Hounding is the practice of using dogs to locate, track, pursue, and tree a bear so that the animal may be assessed for size, sex, quality, and whether or not it has cubs, and potentially harvested by a hunter if desired. Dogs are bred and trained specifically for hounding. A team of hounds - typically four to six- works with hunters to locate and tree bears, and once treed, the hunter determines whether the bear is suitable for harvest, based on the above criteria. Dogs are often very valuable.

Hounding is also used for sport hunting, for research, and for nuisance abatement purposes. Again, researchers might use hounds to channel a black bear to a hair snare as described above. Wildlife control officers might use hounds to assist in the capture or aversive conditioning of a reputed nuisance animal.

What is the historical context of baiting and hounding?

Bear baiting and hounding are often considered to be important elements of the sport of black bear hunting. Given the nomadic and reclusive habits of bears, chance encounters between bears and humans are rare. This reason is often given as having led to the use of baiting and hounding; they are a way to increase the odds of these encounters and therefore allow for selective harvest of bears (Treska personal communication). The history of baiting bear in the United States seems to parallel the change in the perception of black bear from vermin to big game species in the 1960's (Servheen 1999). As bears began to be viewed as game by sport hunters (as opposed to vermin), the notion of selective harvest or trophy hunting for bears became more popular. Baiting bear was one technique bear hunters employed to achieve this goal.

There are many breeds of dogs that share ancestral traits for hunting. The American Kennel Club notes that, "some [hounds] use acute scenting powers to follow a trail."⁶ Some bear hounds were bred originally in the eastern United States specifically for bear; there is a strong breeding tradition for some hounds to track and bring to bay certain game species.⁷

Working and training dogs to function as a team and to locate and tree bears is considered an arduous yet rewarding experience by many hunters. Baiting and hounding also allow hunters to be selective with the animals they harvest, facilitating the assessment of size, sex, and condition of the animal. Both practices are often considered traditional techniques passed on from one generation of hunters to the next. Both practices also generate revenue for regional guides and local communities (including in Maine) by attracting hunters who may not have the knowledge or resources to bait or hunt with hounds on their own.

Those opposed to these two practices consider them to be inhumane and unethical, leading to an unfair advantage for the hunter. Baiting and hounding are often considered, from these perspectives, to be unfair in that they create a reallocation of the resource among hunters; hunters who do not hunt with bait or hounds have less of a chance at a successful hunt. Critics of baiting contend that it habituates bears to human food, leading them to become nuisances when they look for alternative sources of human food. Bait stations can also lead to an unnatural congregation of wildlife, facilitating the spread of disease among animals that are otherwise fairly solitary. Others perceive bait stations as litter or garbage sites causing eyesores or foul smells in public places.

Finally, some critics dispute that hunters are in fact selective when using bait sites, and question whether hunters are able to distinguish female bears who are nursing. Critics of hounding claim that this practice can sometimes lead to private property trespassing when dogs chase or track a bear far from their owners, unaware of property lines or trespassing signs. Dogs can also be killed

or injured during confrontations with bears*. Both baiting and hounding have also been blamed for contributing to conflicts among people.

*These claims are offered on a number of ban supporter's websites, such as the Human Society of the United States, the Animal Protection Institute, and the Maine Fund for Animals. Ban proponents have also offered these reasons in popular press articles, such as those appearing in the Bangor Daily News

How many bears are harvested in various states?

Bears may be harvested in 28 states. Please see the appended State Hunt Matrix for state specific details. Statistics for the most recent data available are provided.

Which states permit baiting and hounding?

Of the 28 states allowing black bear harvesting, 11 allow baiting and 17 allow hounding; state-specific policies exist and are detailed in the appended State Hunt Matrix. Seven states - Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, Utah, and Wisconsin allow both baiting and hounding *in some capacity*. Statistics detailing what proportion of bears are harvested using baiting and hounding vary by state. Please see the State Hunt Matrix for details.

How many bears are harvested using baiting and hounding?

Please see the State Hunt Matrix for state specific details, where available. Some states do not collect specific harvest technique data.

What proportion of the total bear harvest can be attributed to baiting and hounding?

Please see the State Hunt Matrix for state specific details, where available. Popular press articles have noted that up to 78% of Maine's annual black bear harvest (3,500 to 4,000 bears) is achieved by baiting and hounding (MacQuarrie 2003).

How do baiting and hounding affect black bear management?

The impacts of harvest strategies on black bear management, as they relate to human-bear conflict, have long been of interest to black bear managers. Indeed, research has suggested that there is a positive relationship between implemented harvest strategies (such as the elimination of a spring bear hunt) that cause subsequent rises in black bear population numbers and the increasing trend of human-bear conflict in North America (Hristienko 2003). Therefore, long- and short-term black bear management have the potential to be affected by baiting and hounding.

Consider the case of Arkansas. The long-term management goal of Arkansas wildlife managers is a 10% annual harvest of the state's bears. Prior to 2001, black bear harvest was incidental, and sufficient to achieve the 10% annual bear harvest goal. As bears increased in number and expanded in

habitat, incidental harvest was not adequate. Human-bear conflicts increased as bear populations increased. Baiting was thus implemented as both a short-term mitigation strategy to increase hunter success and thereby minimize human-bear conflict, and as a long-term strategy to maintain a 10% annual harvest of bears (Eastridge 2003). Arkansas does not permit hounding. A record high bear harvest was attributed directly to baiting, along with the expansion of bear hunting to a new region. The 2001 harvest record of 372 bears occurred the same year baiting was permitted; the previous harvest record was 207 bears in 1996, when baiting was not permitted (Eastridge 2003).

In Michigan, biologists gather data from hunters that can be used to estimate population parameters, examine genetic distribution within the population, and assess conditions of health. A 2001 Michigan hunter survey reported that hunters hunted over bait 83% of the time and used dogs or a combination of dogs and bait 17% of the time. Hunter success rate was 29% in 2001. One long-term impact of using both baiting and hounding while hunting is that Michigan has compiled a detailed understanding of the biological status of the bear population. This, along with the fact that managers have established a statewide license quota system and have successfully increased interest in recreational bear hunting over the past decade, has led to efficient black bear management (Etter et al. 2003). The use of baiting and hounding resulted in more interest in recreational bear hunting, which in turn led to increased bear harvest and more hunter contact with bears. This increased contact provided the opportunity for managers to gather more biological data about bears and made possible the implementation of a license quota system.

The broader issue of supplemental feeding of wildlife often encompasses baiting, and can also influence both the short- and long-term management of black bear. Health problems in wildlife associated with artificial feeding are receiving increased attention. Briefly, feeding can lead to artificially large groups of bears in close proximity to each other. This close proximity can potentially increase the spread of disease transmission among bears that would not have otherwise encountered each other. While bovine tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease have NOT been shown to impact black bears, the general principles of enhanced transmission of infectious disease, disruption of traditional movement patterns, and alteration of community structure might relate to bears in the long-term, adversely affecting statewide [bear and human] population and health (Fischer 2003). The degree to which bears use supplemental feeding stations can be influenced by natural food availability; during times of reduced natural food crops, bears may increase use of artificial food sources (Cardoza personal communication).

Natural factors influence short-and long-term black bear management. Consider that the distribution and availability of foods appears to be the most important determinant of hunter success (McDonald et al. 1994). Bears are more concentrated and more accessible, especially to less skillful hunters, when

natural foods are scarce and bears congregate in cornfields. This was the case in Massachusetts in 1995, when record bear (until 2003), deer (until 2002), and fall turkey harvests were achieved. "Food abundance directly influences bear distribution and may increase bear vulnerability to hunters as bears become concentrated at human-related food sources when natural food sources are scarce" (McDonald et al.:59).

Bear harvests are affected by weather; during hunting season, foul weather impedes hunter effort and often success. Bear population trends also affects harvest, for example, the bear population in Massachusetts is increasing about 7% annually (Cardoza personal communication).

A final consideration for short- and long-term black bear management is hunter satisfaction. Hunter satisfaction is a component of the MDIFW charge to provide bear-related hunting and viewing opportunities. Hunter success rates are often looked at as an indicator of hunter satisfaction; McDonald et al. (1994) found that traditional hunter-success rates measuring harvest per unit effort might not accurately reflect hunter satisfaction if the opportunity to observe bears while hunting is common. In 1992, a Massachusetts bear hunter survey found that many hunters said that sighted bears during the hunting season were much greater than the success (harvest) rate; 3 to 20 times more hunters reported sighting bears than killing bears. Bear sightings may increase due to baiting; as noted earlier, bait stations can artificially concentrate groups of bears that otherwise would not be in groups.

What are the economic considerations related to baiting and hounding?

Hunter participation influences the economic impacts of hunting. Caution should be used in interpreting these economic considerations; information gathered by federal sources group deer, elk, and bear hunting together in the "big game" category. A key factor to keep in mind is that deer hunting and related expenditures likely comprise a disproportionate amount of the dollar amounts discussed here.

In the United States in 2001, 10.4 million hunters participated in in-state hunts and 1.5 million hunters participated in out-of-state hunts for big game (e.g., deer, bear, elk, etc.) (U.S. Department of Interior 2001a). Ninety-five percent of big game hunter days were in-state; the average total expenditure for hunting (including food, lodging, transportation, hunting equipment, auxiliary equipment, etc.) was \$1,638 per hunter in 2001. Guiding costs could be in addition to this dollar amount. The average number of days hunting per big game hunter was 14, with \$23 per day in trip expenditures, totaling \$322 per hunter in trip expenditures for big game. The national tally of licensed black bear hunters in 2001 was 360,000; if each hunter spent an average of \$322, then approximately \$11.6 million dollars per year is generated nationally by black bear hunters (U.S. Department of Interior 2001a). In Michigan, during the 1998 bear-hunting season, 7,196 hunters spent an average of \$474 per individual (for food, lodging,

transportation, equipment, etc.) for an estimated total of \$3.4 million (Etter et al 2003).

Maine hunting economics can be compared to national hunting economics; in 2001, average annual per sportsperson expenditures in Maine (including food, lodging, transportation, hunting equipment, auxiliary equipment, etc.) were \$922 (U.S. Department of Interior 2001b). The Boston Globe has noted that, “the financial benefit to the guiding industry in Maine is more than \$4 million annually” (MacQuarrie, 2003). In 2001, 75% of the 164,000 hunters (of all game species) were Maine residents. Guides helped harvest 81% of all bears with hounds and 74% of all bears with bait.⁸

One outfitting company in Maine charges between \$1,100 and \$1,600 per trip for meals, lodging, and travel to and from hunting sites between September and October.⁹ Another Maine outfitter charges \$1,500 per trip and limits reservations to twelve hunters per season. Many guides rely exclusively on bear to make a living. The Bangor Daily News noted that many guides “feel baiting is key to keeping the hunt popular. If baiting is banned...potential customers will just drive a few more hours to Quebec, which has a huge bear-hunting industry” (Edgecomb 2003). Please see the appended State Hunt Matrix to compare Maine statistics, such as license fees, to other states’ bear-hunting related statistics.

What is the role of non-resident hunters using baiting and hounding in Maine? Will that role change if the practices are disallowed?

Non-resident hunters play a role in Maine’s annual black bear hunt. They comprise approximately one half of annual black bear hunters. In 2001, non-residents took 72% of the total state bear harvest. Hunter numbers remained stable in Maine through much of the 1990’s; with between 10,000 and 11,000 bear permits sold annually. In 2000, approximately 13,000 permits were sold. The increase in permits sold is credited to non-resident hunters. The black bear population in Maine, estimated by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), has been around 23,000 animals since the late 1990’s. This matches MDIFW’s objective population level of 23,000 animals. Hunting pressure on the state’s population has increased over time as more Wildlife Management Districts (WMD’s) have been opened to black bear hunting (26 before 2000, 27 in 2001).¹⁰

If baiting and hounding are disallowed, it is possible that the number of non-resident hunters harvesting black bear in Maine will decrease. Non-resident hunters account for 75% of the bear harvest prior to the opening of the firearms deer season, which usually opens around November 1, after which time you can still hunt bear. That is, non-resident hunters are visiting during the general bear season when baiting and hounding are allowed. Fewer non-residents are responsible for taking bear after the baiting and hounding seasons end. If non-resident hunter populations decrease, it is possible economic effects will be felt

by hunting-related industries. For example, Maine guides helped to harvest 81% of the bears killed by hounds and 74% of the bears harvested by bait in 2001.¹¹

Biological and management effects could also be felt if fewer non-residents participate in Maine's black bear hunt. Wildlife managers can expand or contract season lengths to limit black bear harvest; if fewer bears are being harvested annually due to a decrease in non-resident hunter participation, the black bear population may increase. A change in the black bear population might alter bear-related impacts, such as those involving recreation, health and safety, economics (e.g., license and guide fees), etc. These impacts can be both positive and negative, but a change in bear-related impacts might necessitate a change in bear management policy. Managers will have to reevaluate their stated bear management goals of providing hunting and viewing opportunities for bears, educating and informing interested parties about black bears, and promoting public tolerance of Maine's black bears.

BAITING AND HOUNDING BALLOT INITIATIVES OUTSIDE MAINE

A number of states precede Maine in addressing the practices of baiting and hounding on a political front. Some of these states have banned baiting and hounding by administrative rule, legislation, or ballot initiative. Other states have voted down such referendums to allow continued baiting and/or hounding. Maine is among the states addressing the issue via ballot initiative.

Considering brief situation analyses from other states where ballot initiatives addressed baiting and hounding can: 1) highlight recurring themes in the baiting and hounding debate; 2) illustrate the outcomes associated with each ballot initiative; 3) stress similarities and differences among states. These ballot initiatives are noted in the appended State Hunt Matrix.

Colorado (1992)

Colorado was the first state in the union to address a baiting and hounding ban with a ballot initiative. On 3 November 1992, 70% of Colorado voters supported "Amendment #10," to ban baiting, hounding, and a spring bear hunt. Prior to this vote, a Colorado Division of Wildlife task force convened to evaluate and explore concerns about black bear management in the state. Many concerns brought up during task force meetings were highly contentious. Themes present throughout the debate included antihunting vs. hunting issue interpretation, biological concerns, ethical acceptability of hunting, hunting culture, management responsibility, and economic impact (Loker 1994). A number of stakeholder groups were involved throughout the ballot initiative, including hunting organizations, animal rights organizations, various media, wilderness societies, sportspersons groups, and bear biologists. A number of activists formed groups specifically to advance their agenda related to the initiative (e.g., Coloradans United for Bears, Coloradans for Wildlife Conservation).

In the few years prior to the ban, hunters enjoyed success rates of over 10% and harvested between 483 and 673 bears total; the total number of hunters participating in the annual hunt did not exceed 4,500. In the years after the ban, hunter success has ranged from 5% to 9% and total harvest has ranged from 278 to 983; the total number of hunters participating in the annual harvest has risen steadily to just over 14,000 in 2000.¹² In 2000, with ONLY residents purchasing licenses at \$30 each, \$420,000 minimum was generated in economic revenue. Non-resident licenses cost \$250 each, so the economic gain is much greater than \$420,000.

Oregon (1994)

In 1994, 52% of Oregon voters approved Measure 18, which banned the hunting of cougars and black bears with hounds and by baiting. There was intense debate over the measure, which pitted the Humane Society of the United States, Animal Protection Institute, and other animal welfare advocacy groups against opponents such as Safari Club International which noted that “direct reductions in state revenues from licenses, tags, and fees will be \$100,000 annually.”¹³ The estimated black bear population in Oregon is between 25,000 and 30,000 animals.¹⁴

During the five years before Measure 18 was passed, Oregon sold between 12,000 and 20,000 bear tags, harvested between 660 and 1,100 bears total, with success rates ranging from 5% to 12%. In the five years after Measure 18 was passed (not including 1994), Oregon sold between 13,900 and 34,600 bear tags, harvested between 620 and 880 bears total, with success rates between 3% and 5%.¹⁵ Simple arithmetic reveals that before the ban, if ONLY residents purchased licenses (\$11.50/each), revenue from sales would be between \$138,000 and \$230,000. Non-resident licenses are substantially more in price (about \$150), so the above dollar amounts are grossly underestimated. After the ban, if ONLY residents purchased license, revenue from sales has been \$159,000 and \$397,000. Again, this is a gross underestimate of revenue, but the overall economic impact is clear. In 1996, Measure 34 was introduced to overturn Measure 18; however voters rejected a repeal on the baiting and hounding ban.

Washington (1996)

In November 1996, 63% of Washington voters agreed with Initiative 655, banning the baiting of black bears and the hounding of black bears and cougars. Petitioners collected 228,000 signatures to bring the ballot initiative to the polls (Gerhardt 1996). The controversy, debate themes, stakeholders, and outcomes in Washington all closely paralleled the situation in Colorado some four years prior. Many stakeholders such as the Washington Wildlife Alliance were unhappy with the hunting policies set forth by the Wildlife Commission and in response approached the state legislature with Initiative 655. Proponents (animal activists, some hunters, and civic groups) argued that baiting may change feeding habits of bears. Opponents, mostly hunters, claimed the initiative would allow black bear, cougar, bobcat and lynx populations (and therefore negative human-wildlife

interactions) to increase. Overpopulation could lead to changes in the predator-to-prey ratio (Staff 1996). Many opponents of the ban argued it was full of loopholes, as timber companies and wildlife agents would be exempt from the ban to control animal populations (Staff 1996). After the vote, many opponents argued it was unconstitutional, based on precedent lawsuits and existing animal welfare codes (Murray 1996). A number of efforts to repeal Initiative 655 were met with varying success in relation to cougars but not to black bears.

Hunting-related statistics since the 1996 passage of Initiative 655 are available. In 1997 Washington state issued 12,316 permits and 90% of those issued permits actually hunted bear with 7.6% success for a total harvest of 844 bears. In 1998, the state issued 23,775 permits and 88% of those issued permits actually used them with an 8.6% success rate for a total harvest of 1,802 bears. In 1999 the state issued 54,056 permits to hunters and 68% of those with permits used them with a 2.9% success rate for a total harvest of 1,113 bears. In 2000 the state issued 57,241 permits and 65% of hunters with permits hunted with a 3.1% success rate for a harvest total of 1,165 bears. In 2001 the state issued 57,580 permits and 44% of hunters with permits hunted with a 5.7% success rate for a harvest of 1,439 bears. In 2002, the state issued 57,152 permits and 44% of hunters with permits actually hunted with a 6.9% success rate for a harvest total of 1,725 bears.¹⁶

These statistics show that total harvest has increased since the ban, along with a substantial increase in permits issued and a decrease in the proportion of hunters being issued a permit actually hunting. A similar economic thought exercise to the one conducted with Oregon can be conducted with Washington. Resident big game package fees are approximately \$70 (the non-resident equivalent is \$722. If ONLY resident licenses are multiplied by the 57,241 permits issued in 2000, the economic gain is over \$4 million dollars after the ban. In 1997, the first year of the ban 12,316 permits were issued for an economic gain of \$862,120. License sales and associated revenues have increased in the years after the ban. Population estimates for the state have hovered at about 25,000 animals.¹⁷

Michigan (1996)

Proposal D, rejected by 62% of voters in 1996, would have banned the use of baiting and hounding of black bears. Petitioners generated 341,000 signatures to bring the ballot initiative to the polls (Gerhardt 1996). Another contentious debate between opponents and proponents of baiting and hounding, Proposal D became a campaign issue platform for a number of legislative candidates in 1996, such as incumbent David Palsrok. The political nature of Proposal D is apparent in pamphlets distributed stating, "Proposal D is dangerous...it would strip Michigan wildlife professionals of their authority to scientifically manage the state's thriving bear population."¹⁸ Debate raged over the authority and ability of wildlife officials to manage bears and was as contentious as the debate that ensued over banning baiting and hounding.

An excerpt from a local paper illustrates this, "...this year in Michigan, an estimated 23,000 applicants will apply for the 6,410 available bear hunting permits. The DNR estimates that between 1,500 and 1,600 bears will be harvested. This computation is based on a past success rate of 33 percent, in which hunters utilized bait and dogs. Pennsylvania law prohibits the use of bait and dogs to hunt bear, and experiences a 2 percent to 3 percent success rate. Michigan can expect a similar success rate if Proposal D passes. With that success rate, Michigan would need more than 50,000 bear hunters to maintain the desired number of bears harvested. As evident by the number of applications for the bear hunting lottery, Michigan does not contain that number of interested bear hunters, resulting in an increased bear population" (Fry 1996).

Applications, tags available, tags issued, hunter-days, and hunter success have all increased annually since the failed ballot initiative in 1996. Simultaneously, and based in part on data supplied by hunters, black bear populations are projected to be increasing in many portions of the state (Etter et al. 2003).

Massachusetts (1996)

Question 1, voted on in November 1996, established the Massachusetts Wildlife Protection Act. Petitioners collected 155,000 signatures to bring the ballot initiative to ban bait and hounds to the polls (Gerhardt 1996). The law prohibited any person from using, setting, manufacturing, or possessing any trap for the purpose of capturing a fur-bearing animal. The law also prohibited the pursuit of bears and bobcats with hounds, and the baiting of bears; 55% of voters supported Question 1 (Deblinger et al. 1999). While this legislation referenced management of bear, beaver, coyote, other furbearing species figured prominently in the public debate surrounding the ballot initiative. Furbearer management had a complex history in Massachusetts; Question 1 was the latest modification in almost a century of management policy. Large sums of money were spent on media campaigns advocating passage of Question 1 (over \$400,000 by MSPCA for television ads); opponents blamed the media blitz for its passage.¹⁹

During the years before the ban, total black bear harvest was 59 (1993), 62 (1994), 134 (1995), and 56 (1996). After the ban, total black bear harvest was 78 (1997), 59 (1998), and 98 (1999).²⁰ Examining license sales over time as an indicator of how the ban affected hunting-related economics is appropriate; however, Massachusetts licenses are valid from January 1 to December 31 yet are tallied on a fiscal year (July 1 - June 30) basis. Thus, a tally of license sales is misleading if comparing to bear harvests, since the tally would include 6 mos. of sales to people who cannot hunt bear. It is more appropriate to use bear permit sales, because hunters need a bear permit in addition to their basic hunting license. Permit sales in 1995 were 2,063; 1,884 in 1996; and 1,846 in 1997. Hunter success rates for the years surrounding the ban were 6.5% in 1995; 3% in 1996; and 4.2% in 1997. Recall that hunter success rate is based on

the total number of permit holders hunting; it is unlikely that all permit holders hunt [in any state] (Cardoza personal communication). Recent harvest data is available on the State Hunt Matrix.

Idaho (1996)

In 1996, Proposition 2 was rejected by 60% of voters. It proposed banning baiting and hounding during the fall black bear hunt and banning the spring hunt all together. Similar to other debates in the western US, sportsmanship and hunter ethics were called into play, and animal rights values were questioned (Hanscom 1996). Baiting and hounding have played an important role in total harvest since Proposition 2 was rejected. Although not the primary method of harvesting bears, successful hunts using bait and hounds have increased.²¹ Stakeholders such as the Idaho Coalition United for Bears and Sportsmen's Heritage Defense Fund worked to have Proposition 2 rejected. Both agreed almost two years later that the issue remained contentious and could easily become a ballot initiative and campaign issue in the future (Press 1998).

One factor of note is that Idaho, unlike many states profiled in this report, has a 2 bear bag limit per hunter in 9 Game Management Units. This means a hunter may harvest two bears with his/her license in certain areas (Nadeau 2003). While total bear harvest has increased annually since 1983 and license sales have increased since 1998 (most recent available data), state-wide bear population has continued to be estimated at approximately 20,000 animals distributed throughout the state in much the same way over the past 30 years (Nadeau 2003).

CONCLUSION

The intent of this document was to provide a situation analysis on bear baiting and hounding within the context of the current ballot initiative in Maine. These two hunting practices are debated among many stakeholders across the country. Traditionally, hunters and animal rights stakeholders take polarized stances on baiting and hounding, but there are examples where these groups have stood together to address issues such as wildlife management authority (e.g., Michigan). While this issue is not black and white, simplifying the debate into two camps may help Maine voters better decide which they support. This situation analysis is intended to increase voter understanding of the ballot initiative and assist in making educated, informed policy decisions. Recall the language of the initiative:

TITLE: *An Act Prohibiting Certain Bear Hunting Practices*

QUESTION: *"Do you want to make it a crime to hunt bears with bait, traps or dogs, except to protect property, public safety or for research?"*

Many of the arguments used by proponents of the ban include:

- § Baiting and hounding gives unfair advantages to hunters;
- § Baiting and hounding are unethical;
- § Hounding can be harmful to dogs;
- § Hounding can upset private property owners when hounders trespass;
- § Baiting can potentially spread disease among animals;
- § Baiting habituates bears to unnatural sources of food;
- § Baiting can cause sites to smell foul and are like garbage dumps;
- § With baiting, humans can contribute to landscape level redistributions of bears;
- § Baiting and hounding bans will not lead to license sale drop-offs;
- § Baiting and hounding bans still allow for successful hunts;
- § Baiting can increase occurrence of human-bear conflicts, because bears become habituated to bait stations.

Many of the arguments used by opponents of the ban include:

- § Hounding is a challenging sport with dogs bred for working;
- § Baiting and hounding allow for selective harvest;
- § Baiting and hounding assist managers in achieving population goals;
- § Baiting and hounding increase the chances of a successful hunt;
- § Baiting and hounding provide guides and taxidermists with their living;
- § Baiting and hounding can make financial contributions to the economy;
- § Baiting and hounding ban could lead to large financial losses (non-residents will go to Quebec);
- § Hounding is a traditional harvest technique;
- § Baiting and hounding contribute to long-term detailed biological status of bear populations;
- § Baiting and hounding ban could cause license sales to drop because non-residents will not visit Maine to hunt, as most non-residents mainly use both practices;
- § Baiting and hounding prevent increased human-bear conflict vis-à-vis increased bear populations

A number of overarching black bear management implications emerge from both sides of the debate:

- ∅ As wildlife agencies set target bear populations, collect biological data on state populations, mitigate human-bear conflicts, and provide recreational opportunities for hunters, they need to determine the most effective, efficient, and feasible manner with which to achieve management goals. There are many management

actions available [that are not discussed in this report]; baiting and hounding have shown to be two viable management tools.

- ∅ Economic considerations are important. Potential financial effects of the ban could affect adversely registered Maine guides, nonresident license sales, and local and regional economies. However, some states with a ban, such as Colorado, have reportedly not seen drastic declines in license sales or hunter participation (and related economic benefits).
- ∅ There are potential long- and short-term management impacts associated with the proposed ban, including: financial revenue for black bear management and conservation; hunter-facilitated data collection for biological information; bear population growth or decline; and increased or decreased human-bear conflicts. There are costs and benefits associated with each management impact.
- ∅ Public concern and input regarding black bear management is important and significant to the wildlife decision-making process. Different stakeholders are involved in the debate; ballot initiatives are becoming an increasingly popular and effective method used by stakeholders to push for policy change.

Acknowledgements

The information presented in this report attempts to be objective, and represents the best attempt by the author to present and synthesize available information. It does not reflect the endorsement of any stakeholder group or organization associated with the current Maine ballot initiative. Many thanks to the stakeholders who provided information for or review of this document.

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State Black Bear Hunt Matrix

STATE [w/ bear hunting]	HOUNDING	BAITING	DATE LAWS RELATED TO CURRENT HOUND/BAIT	COMMENTS RELATED TO MANAGEMENT	ECONOMIC FACTORS	HUNTING STATISTICS (most recent available data)	SOURCE
Alaska	Yes, (black bears only)	Yes, with permit			\$25 resident; non-resident \$225; non-resident alien: \$300		Alaska Fish and Game Website
Arizona	Yes, in fall season only, with permit	No		Abundant acorn crop in AZ during the 2002 bear season made it difficult for our hunters to attract bears to their bait sites.	Between 4150 and 4500 tags issued annually; \$13 in state, \$183 out of state	2001: 178 total bears. 2000: 320 total bears	Arizona Status Report 2003
Arkansas	No	Yes, private lands only; can be established up to 30 days prior to opening of season and must be removed at end of bear season. Rules	2001	Bear baiting attributed (along with expansion of bear hunting to new regions) lead to record 2001 harvest of 372 bears). Non-resident hunters (total, from when records began being kept) from: TN, AL, MO, KS, OK, IL, MS, LA, MD, TX, OH, CA		2002: 54 bears taken w/bait. 2001: 125 bears taken w/bait	Eastridge 2003

California	Use of more than one dog to take bears permitted after close of general deer season	No	Hounding rule since 1972	Three efforts to eliminate hounding: 1993 would have eliminated practice until departmental study of affects; 1997 would have eliminated use of dogs to hunt and take fur bearing animals; 2003			Updike 2003
Colorado	No	No	Amendment 10 (1992) to ban baiting/hounding passed (70%)	From 1999 – 2002 hunter harvest has averaged 823 per year, a 58% increase over the previous four year (1995 – 1998) average of 519.	Resident tag: \$30; Non-resident tag: \$250		Apker 2003
Georgia	Yes, in South Georgia, but only outside wildlife management areas; No in North	No in North Georgia; No in Central Georgia				2002: 262 total bears	Gregory et al. 2003

Idaho	Yes; non-resident hound permits limited	Yes	Proposition 2 (1996) to ban baiting/ hounding rejected (60%)	In 2001, the state sold 3,173 resident and 115 non-resident hound permits. Baiting is also allowed, but requires a permit; in 2001, 1,865 baiting permits were sold.	Non-resident hunting license:\$128.5 0; regular bear tag costs \$235; a reduced bear tag costs \$31.50; and a second tag costs \$31.50. Hound hunter: \$128.50; bear baiting permit: \$11.50. Resident hunting license: \$11.50, a bear tag costs \$10.50; hound and baiting permits cost	2002: 2,371 total bears ; 581 w/bait, 407 w/hounds. 2001: 2,000 total bears; 455 w/bait, 337 w/hounds	Nadeau 2003
Maine	Yes, no more than 4 dogs allowed	Yes, with certain stipulations; permit required to bait on National Forest Lands and Bureau of Public Lands		Sunday hunting illegal. In 2001, non-resident hunter accounted for half of hunters in Maine, but killed 72% of 2001's bear harvest. 76% of these bears taken with bait and 75% with hounds. Maine residents took 76% bears by unreported methods. 69% of successful bear hunters used guides. Guides helped take 81% of all	\$25.00 for residents and \$65.00 non-residents; \$1 bear registration	2001: 3,903 total bears, 3,173 w/bait, 401 w/dogs. 2, 801 non-residents , 1,102 assisted by guide	Maine Fish and Wildlife website

Massachusetts	No	No	Question 1 (1996) ban baiting/hounding passed (64%)			2002: 115 total bears. 2001: 104 total bears	Cardoza 2003
Michigan	Yes	Yes	Proposal D (1996) to ban baiting/hounding rejected 62%	In 2001, hunters hunted over bait 83% of the time (Frawley 2001). 17% hunters used dogs or combination of dogs/bait. 2002 rule governing "participation licenses" (license to accompany successful hunter with dogs, but not allowed to shoot bear). Statute limits number of non-resident harvest tags issued to no more than 2% of total number of	1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation in Michigan found individuals spend \$474/food, lodging,	2000: 1890 (27% success rate); 2001: 2110 (29% success rate)	Etter et al. 2003
Minnesota	No	Yes, but in restricted hunting zones			Resident bear license is \$ 39.00 and \$196.00 for a non-resident		Kennedy 2003
Montana	No	No	Hounding rule since 1921	From 1996-2001, Montana black bear hunting produced a range of 9,000-11,00 hunters spending a total of 84,000-102,00 days a field. The average black bear hunter hunts for 9 days, with 9%-13%	Resident licenses are \$15.00 plus a \$4.00 conservation license. Non-residents		Olson 2003

New Hampshire	Yes	Yes				2002: 203 still, 92 bait, 43 hound. 2001 295 still, 169 bait, 63 hound. 2000: 294 still, 118 bait, 37 hound	Timmins 2003
New Jersey	No	Yes	Hunt passed in 2003				Carr 2003
New Mexico	Yes; required in Sandia/Manzano Mountains short fall season	No			\$33.00 resident, \$160 non-resident.	2002: 649 total bears. 2001: 525 total bears. 2000: 325 total bears	Winslow 2003
New York	No	No		1,000 to 2,000 non-resident bear tags sold each year (additional \$30/tag)		2001: 801 total bears. 2000: 1070 total bears.	Berchielli et al. 2003

North Carolina	Yes	No	1985 prohibited use of bait			2001: 1533 total bears	Jones 2003
Oregon	No	No	Measure 18 (1994) banned baiting/hounding (passed 52%); Measure 34(1996) repeal of Measure		resident: 11.50; non-resident 151.50	2000: 977 total harvest (3% success). 1999: 856 total harvest (3% success). 1998: 836 total harvest (3% success)	Oregon Fish and Wildlife website
Pennsylvania	No	No		3% hunter success rate, or 1 in 35. Success attributed to high bear abundance, favorable weather, and abundant fall food supplies	general license :\$20 resident; \$101 non-resident; bear license: \$16 resident; \$36	2001: 3063 total bears. 2000: 3075 total bears	Ternet 2003
South Carolina	Yes, restricted to Mountain Hunt Unit	No	Limit for dog hunts is three per party	833 permits issued in 2001; 932 permits issued in 2002		2002: 27 total bears. 2001: 21 total bears	Stokes 2003

Tennessee	Yes, in restricted hunting zones; No in bear sanctuaries	Prohibited unless bait removed from station 10 days prior to hunt					Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Website
Utah	Yes; no limit on number of hounds	Yes, restricted to archery tackle; Certificate of Registration required	The COR will permit a properly licensed hunter to establish 1 bait station, and will specify the bait items		\$88 for residents and \$313 for non-residents. Only 10% permits allotted to non-residents	2002: 88 total bears, overall hunter success rate 31%; 68 w/dogs, 8 w/bait, 12 other. 2001: 70 total bears, overall hunter	McLaughlin 2003
Vermont	Yes, requires permit	No				2002: 286 total bears. 2001: 527 total bears	Darling 2003
Virginia	Yes (with restrictions)	No		<i>Hunter participation:</i> since 1995, 39% of total harvest from gun hunters with dogs	Resident: \$12 ; Non-resident: \$80	2002: 689 total bears; 2003: 916 total bears	Virginia Dept. Off Game and Inland Fisheries Website

Washington	No	No	Initiative 655 (1996) banned baiting/hounding (passed 63%)				Washington Fish and Wildlife website
West Virginia	Yes	No	Baiting 2003			2002: 1,335 total bear, 138 w/dogs and 77 w/o dogs. 2001: 1,253 total bear	Igo 2003, and Ryan 2003
Wisconsin	Yes (Class B permit required), in designated hunting zones w/ no more than six dogs	Yes (not in excess of 10 gallons)			\$48 +\$8 resident (Class A and B) \$201 +\$100 non-resident (Class A and B)	2002: 2,437 (est.) total bear. 2001: total bear harvest: 2,897.	Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resource website
Wyoming	No	Yes	Baiting allowed in 1994; must register bait site; only black bears can		\$30.00 resident and \$250.00 non-resident; 2001: 157 non-residence hunters; 2002:	2002:323; 79% of all bears harvested in the spring since 1993 were killed	Becker et al. 2003

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