



California Forest Pest Council

Dedicated to protecting California's forests since 1951

www.caforestpestcouncil.org

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) have long been recognized by forest managers as potential pests to conifer reforestation efforts. Feeding damage by black bears was first reported by Fritz (1951) followed by Glover (1955). Giusti provided the first quantitative assessment of the damage (1988a; 1988b) and the Forest Pest Council's annual damage report has repeatedly identified bears as a significant problem to coastal forestland reforestation efforts. Past efforts to introduce alternative food sources (Flowers 1987) as an Integrated Pest Management Strategy during the spring, when most damage occurs, in the hopes of reducing feeding damage to the trees have been rejected by the state wildlife agency. This has resulted in population control of bears in problem watersheds as the primary approach to minimizing damage to trees. Past management efforts have relied on targeted sport hunting as the primary means of population control in specific watershed to help reduce the number of bears that could potentially feed on trees. Recent policy changes in California prohibiting the use of dogs in sport hunting for bears has drastically reduced this option as a viable method to address this on-going problem.

Whereas...

- 1) In 2012, state law (SB 1221 – Lieu) was passed that made the use of dogs unlawful for taking bear. The law took effect on January 1, 2013 and applies to bear hunting seasons from 2013 forward;
- 2) The 2013 California black bear hunting season resulted in 1,078 bears taken, representing a 45.1% decrease from the 2012 season. A total of 23,397 bear tags were issued. Overall hunter success was 4.6%. The bear hunting season closed December 29, 2013, making it the third season since 2010 that the bear season did not close early. The top five counties for reported take were: Shasta (9.9%), Trinity (7.5%), Mendocino (6.7%), Tulare (6.6%) and Humboldt (6.0%).
- 3) The 2015 California black bear hunting season resulted in 1,287 bears taken, representing a 10.7 percent decrease from the 2014 season harvest of 1,441 bears. A total of 27,578 bear tags were issued. Overall hunter success was 4.7 percent. The bear hunting season closed December 27, 2015, making it the third consecutive season where the use of dogs was prohibited and the fifth bear season since 2010 that did not close early.

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The top five counties for reported take were: Tulare (12.8%), Shasta (10.1%), Trinity (7.1%), Mendocino (6.8%) and Humboldt (6.1%).

Of the returned harvest report tags, 39.8 percent (512) indicated a female was taken. Of the successful bear hunters who reported effort, approximately 83.7 percent (1,009) indicated they spent 7 days or less in pursuit of bear. Lastly, bears killed with the assistance of guides only accounted for 0.6 percent of the total bears harvested.

- 4) State law prohibits the taking of a female black bear with cubs;
- 5) The use of dogs often results in bears, and their cubs, climbing a tree to escape, insuring that an ethical hunter is assured of identifying a female bear with cubs and can release the animal unharmed;
- 6) The prohibition of dogs, while bear hunting in places with heavy cover and vegetation, puts an ethical hunter in jeopardy of committing an unlawful act by not being capable of determining a sow with attendant cubs;
- 7) Sport hunting harvest numbers reflect a steady decline in the number of bears harvested annually resulting in more bears on the landscape; and
- 8) Feeding damage from black bears continues to expand in geographic scale and scope; and
- 9) Feeding damage continues unabated over thousands of acres of productive forestland;

Let it be resolved that the California Forest Pest Council:

- 1) Has long established black bear feeding damage as a major pest problem in coastal forestlands; and
- 2) Considers the 2012 change prohibiting the use of dogs in sport hunting for bears a limitation on a proven integrated pest management option to reduce feeding damage; and
- 3) Believes the prohibition of using dogs puts an ethical hunters in jeopardy of the unlawful take of a female bear with attendant cubs;
- 4) Requests that SB 1221 prohibiting the use of dogs in pursuit of bears for sport hunting be amended to allow the use of dogs.

References:

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Sincerely,



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The California Forest Pest Council was founded in 1951 and is a non-profit educational organization of over 800 public and private forest managers, researchers, foresters, entomologists, pathologists, biologists, and others interested in the health of California's forests and protection from damage caused by animals, diseases, insects, pollution, and weeds.