



Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

Meeting date:

9/8/2023

Agenda item:

A petition that asks the commission to begin rule making for the 2024 recreational spring bear hunting season.

Presenter(s):

Eric Gardner, Wildlife Program Director.

Background summary:

In this petition dated July 14, 2023, the petitioner is asking for rulemaking on a 2024 recreational spring black bear hunting season and argues that a spring season would protect female bears and cubs from male bears that could prey on cubs in the spring (termed infanticide). This behavior has only been documented a handful of times in black bears, it is not widespread and may be more prevalent in high density black bear populations where competition for females in estrus is high. The literature related to this topic on black bears is extremely limited and tends to be more common in territorial species like grizzly bears. We currently harvest enough black bears in the fall to maintain healthy black bear densities, so a spring season is unlikely to have the outcome desired by the petitioner. The only direct benefit of a spring season for this purpose would be the timing, as removing adult males from the landscape would reduce the chances of infanticide from occurring while cubs are most susceptible. Given the limited geographic scope, the number of permits that have traditionally been issued in spring are unlikely to have a population level effect. Therefore, given the Commission's policy direction, department staff do not consider this a management necessity that would require a special spring bear hunting season.

Staff recommendation:

Department staff recommend denying this petition as it is unlikely to have the intended result.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

If this petition is denied no rule making will take place to contemplate a 2024 spring black bear recreational hunting season.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

The fiscal impact of this decision is minimal and is not different from the status quo, based on commission direction.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The public were given notice of these petitions through the commission agenda and had an opportunity to submit written comment. There was no public involvement directly related to this petition prior to its submission. A public engagement process will occur if rule making occurs in the future.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Dependent on Commission decision.

Draft motion language:

I move we deny this petition.

Post decision communications plan:

Communicate the outcome of the Commission’s decision to the petitioner.
