



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS NEW ENGLAND

March 24, 2025

To Co-Chairs Rick Lopes and John-Michael Parker and the members of the Assembly Committee on Environment

RE: BHA Support 2025 S.B. No. 1523 An Act Concerning Bear Hunting

On behalf of the Connecticut State Leadership Team and the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, we strong support S.B. 1523 An Act Concerning Bear Hunting. This initiative aligns with the principles set forth by the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, effectively addressing the growing challenges posed by the increasing black bear population in our state.

Overview of the Current Situation

Connecticut has experienced a significant uptick in bear-human conflicts, with incidents rising from approximately 500 to more than 3,500 annually over the past decade. This ongoing issue highlights the urgent need for comprehensive wildlife management strategies:

- *Home Intrusions.* The number of bears entering homes has climbed to a record 67 incidents in 2024, markedly higher than neighboring regions.
- *Bear Attacks on Humans.* In the last five years, there have been seven documented bear attacks, including a severe case involving a young child.
- *Increased Demand on Resources.* Responses by the DEEP Environmental Conservation Police to bear-related calls have nearly tripled, emphasizing the critical nature of this problem.

Necessity for a Bear Hunting Season

The current approach of non-lethal management has not sufficiently curbed these rising encounters. While existing public education and outreach by DEEP are invaluable, they alone are inadequate to manage the burgeoning bear population effectively. Establishing a hunting season offers a proactive measure to control the population and enhance public safety. Key components of this approach include:

- *Population Control and Safety.* A regulated hunting season would help maintain a sustainable bear population, minimizing the potential for human-bear conflicts and protecting both people and property.
- *Alignment with Nearby Practices.* Other states have successfully implemented hunting seasons as part of their wildlife management strategies, showcasing its effectiveness in population management.

The Role of the North American Model

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation emphasizes the idea that wildlife is a public resource, and it underscores the importance of science-based management to ensure sustainable use. Under this framework, a regulated bear hunting season would serve as an essential tool for maintaining ecological balance and ensuring human safety. Key principles involved include:

WWW.BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG/NEW_ENGLAND_BHA
NEWENGLAND@BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
NEW ENGLAND

- *Sustainable Use and Scientific Management.* Establishing a bear hunting season will regulate the bear population scientifically, aligning with the model's goal of sustainable resource use.
- *Public Involvement and Benefit.* Hunting seasons afford opportunities for public involvement in wildlife conservation, promoting stewardship and appreciation of natural resources.
- *Protection and Restoration Efforts.* Revenue generated from hunting permits and licenses will support broader conservation efforts, underpinning habitat preservation and conflict mitigation initiatives.

Complementing Existing Programs

In addition to implementing a hunting season, it is vital to continue DEEP's public education and outreach efforts. Providing the public with knowledge about bear behavior, safety measures, and waste management will further reduce conflicts and harmonize human-bear interactions.

In conclusion, I urge the Committee to support S.B 1523 and the establishment of a bear hunting season, we can effectively address current challenges, ensure public safety, and promote the long-term sustainability of Connecticut's natural resources.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Brian Bird
New England Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
bird@backcountryhunters.org
518-307-9187