

NOTICE OF INTENT

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

Bear Hunting Areas, Seasons, Rules and Bag Limits (LAC 76:XIX.109)

Notice is hereby given that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission proposes to adopt a Louisiana Black Bear hunting season for the 2026 hunting season. The department manages the take of resident game, outlaw quadrupeds and migratory birds in Louisiana and this action defines legal participants, sets the legal season bag limits along with legal methods of take and hunting season dates for the Louisiana Black Bear during 2026 hunting season.

The Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is authorized to take any and all necessary steps on behalf of the commission to promulgate and effectuate this Notice of Intent, including but not limited to, the filing of the Fiscal and Economic Impact Statement, the filing of the Notice of Intent and compiling public comments and submissions for the commission's review and consideration. In the absence of any further action by the commission following an opportunity to consider all public comments regarding the proposed rule, the Secretary is authorized and directed to prepare and transmit a summary report to the legislative oversight committees and file the final Rule.

Title 76

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

PART XIX. Hunting and WMA Regulations

Chapter 1. Resident and Game Hunting Season

§109. Bear Hunting Areas, Seasons, Rules and Bag Limits

- A. Bear Hunting Season ~~2025~~ 2026

1. Hunting is **only** allowed in Bear Areas 1, 2, **3**, **and 4**, **5, 6, and 7**.
2. Bear season opens the first Saturday in December and remains open

through Sunday following the third Saturday in December.

B. General Rules

1. Bears may only be harvested one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.
2. Harvest limit is one bear per harvest permit per season.
3. Bear hunting is limited to still hunt only. The use of dogs when hunting bear is prohibited.
4. Harvest of cubs and females with cubs is prohibited. A cub is defined as any bear 75 pounds or less.
5. Bear hunting is restricted to **bona fide resident** hunters who are properly licensed, hunter safety certified, and possess a valid bear hunting permit issued by the department. The number of bear harvest permits issued will be determined based on Bear Area specific population estimates and vital rate data acquired at regular intervals, **except in Bear Areas 6 and 7 where bear habitat is limiting**. The number of bear harvest permits issued at any given time during the season shall not allow the harvest to exceed the number of bears of either sex in any Bear Area that would compromise the long-term sustainability of the Bear Area population.
6. Harvest of bears without a harvest permit is prohibited. Bear harvest permits will consist of three types in Bear Areas **3 and 4**: Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Private Landowner, and General. Bear harvest permits will consist of two types in Bear Areas 1

and 2: Private Landowner and General. Bear harvest permits will consist of General in Bear Areas 5, 6 and 7. One permit allowed per hunter per season.

a. WMA Permits will authorize bear harvest for specified WMAs.

b. Private Landowner Permits will be allocated to qualifying private landowners, their designee, or lessee in Bear Areas with an open season for that permit year. To qualify for a Private Landowner Permit, applicants must provide evidence of qualifying acreage (40+ contiguous acres), proof of ownership, and payment of property taxes for property within the Bear Area for which they apply. Landowner designees must provide evidence deemed sufficient by the department that they have full agency and authority to act on behalf of a qualifying private landowner. Lessees of qualifying private lands must provide a duly executed and properly recorded lease agreement evidencing they have the right to hunt bear upon the qualifying acreage.

c. General Permits authorize hunting on private property, with landowner permission, within Bear Areas with an open season for that permit year. Individuals receiving a General Permit are responsible for coordinating with landowners to gain permission and access to hunting on their property.

7. Except as otherwise provided by law, bear harvest permits shall only be issued by lottery. Applicants shall apply to LDWF on department-approved applications prior to each season. All applications require a non-refundable application fee. Applicants for the General and WMA Permits must possess a valid resident basic hunting license and bear hunting license, or a combination license conveying equivalent privileges to apply.

a. Applicants not selected will be given an additional preference point for each subsequent year in which they apply. Each preference point serves as an additional

lottery opportunity. Preference points are capped at five. Applicants must apply every year in order to earn and retain preference points. Failure to apply in any given year will result in forfeiture of previously acquired preference points for any subsequent application. Successful lottery applicants are not allowed to apply for another bear permit for two years after being drawn.

8. Transferability of bear permits: Only the private landowner permits are transferrable. Transferees must be a bona fide Louisiana resident who is properly licensed and hunter safety certified. Permits being transferred must be within 21 days of the lottery draw notification. A permit may only be transferred one time. The department shall be notified once a permit has been transferred and provided the transferees name, address, and phone number.

9. Bear hunter training: All successful applicants or transferees will be required to attend a department bear hunter training course prior to hunting. Individuals not attending a department bear hunter training course will be prohibited from hunting. Successful youth applicants must attend bear hunting training with a properly licensed adult. The adult attending the training is responsible for supervising the youth during the bear hunt and must be within arm's reach or within the same stand or blind as the youth. A bear tag will be issued to harvest permit holders upon completion of the training course.

10. Baiting and scent attractants: Baiting is allowed November 1 to the day the season closes. Hunting over raw or processed bait and the use of a scent lure is allowed. No person shall use raw sweet potatoes or chocolate as bait or scent. The use of salt, grain or other feed that could serve as an attractant to deer is prohibited in CWD Control Areas. The department shall provide a list of approved baits to each successful applicant at the bear hunting training course.

11. Harvested bears must be tagged immediately upon harvest and prior to being moved from site of harvest. All successful bear hunters must immediately contact their designated department biologist (see permit) to report their kill and schedule biological data collection.

12. Hunter Orange or Blaze Pink: Any person hunting bears shall display on his head, chest and/or back a total of not less than 400 square inches of “hunter orange” or “blaze pink”. Persons hunting on privately owned land may wear a “hunter orange” or “blaze pink” cap or hat in lieu of the 400 square inches. These provisions shall not apply to persons hunting bear from elevated stands on property that is privately owned or to archery bear hunters hunting on lands where firearm hunting is not allowed by agreement of the landowner or lessee. However, anyone hunting bear on such lands where hunting with firearms is allowed shall be required to display the 400 square inches or a “hunter orange” or “blaze pink” cap or hat while walking to and from elevated stands. While a person is hunting from an elevated stand, the 400 square inches or cap or hat may be concealed.

13. Harvested bears may be field dressed, but all other portions of the bear shall be removed from the hunting grounds. Thereafter, all edible portions of meat shall be removed from the bear for consumption. “Edible portions” include, at a minimum, all four quarters, all backstraps and tenderloins along the backbone.

14. Methods of take:

a. Bear may be taken with the following firearms, any of which may be fitted with a magnified scope:

- i. Centerfire firearms .25 caliber or larger, rimfire firearms .30 caliber or larger, and shotguns 10 gauge and smaller using slugs, all of which must load exclusively from the breech.
 - ii. Rifles and pistols, .44 caliber or larger, or shotguns 10 gauge and smaller, all of which must load exclusively from the muzzle, use black powder or approved substitute only, take ball or bullet projectile only, including sabot bullets.
 - iii. Pre-charged pneumatic devices that fire a projectile of at least .30 caliber in diameter and at least 150 grains in weight with a minimum muzzle velocity of 800 feet per second or any combination of bullet weight and muzzle velocity that produces muzzle energy of at least 215 foot pounds of energy. Arrows or bolts used with a pre-charged pneumatic device shall only be used with well sharpened broadhead points.
- b. Bear may be taken by legal archery gear with a minimum draw weight of no less than 30 pounds, including traditional bow, compound bow, crossbow, or any bow drawn, held or released by mechanical means.
 - c. All other methods of take are prohibited.

C. Description of Bear Areas

1. Area 1
 - a. All of the following parishes:
 - i. Acadia, Assumption, Cameron, Iberia, Lafayette, Lafourche, St. Mary, Terrebonne, and Vermillion.
 - b. Portions of the following parishes:
 - i. Allen—that portion south of US 190 and east of US 165;
 - ii. Ascension—that portion west of the Mississippi River;

- iii. Calcasieu—that portion south of Interstate 10;
- iv. Iberville—that portion south of Interstate 10 and west of the Mississippi River;
- v. Jefferson—that portion west of the Mississippi River;
- vi. Jefferson Davis—that portion south of US 190 and east of US 165;
- vii. Orleans—that portion west of the Mississippi River;
- viii. Plaquemines—that portion west of the Mississippi River;
- ix. St. Charles—that portion west of the Mississippi River;
- x. St. James—that portion west of the Mississippi River;
- xi. St. John the Baptist—that portion west of the Mississippi River;
- xii. St. Martin—that portion south of Interstate 10;
- xiii. West Baton Rouge—that portion south of Interstate 10.

2. Area 2

- a. All of the following parishes: Pointe Coupee, West Feliciana.
- b. Portions of the following parishes:
 - i. Iberville—that portion north of Interstate 10;
 - ii. St. Landry—that portion east of Interstate 49;
 - iii. St. Martin—that portion north of Interstate 10;
 - iv. West Baton Rouge—that portion north of Interstate 10.

3. Area 3

- a. All of the following parishes: Avoyelles, Concordia, LaSalle.

- b. Portions of the following parish:
 - i. Catahoula—that portion west of US Highway 425.

4. Area 4

a. All of the following parishes: East Carroll, Franklin, Madison, Tensas, West Carroll.

- b. Portions of the following parishes:
 - i. Catahoula—that portion east of US Highway 425;
 - ~~ii. Franklin—that portion east of US Highway 425;~~
 - ~~iii.~~ ii. Richland—that portion east of US Highway 425.

5. Area 5

a. All of the following parishes: Caldwell, Ouachita, Morehouse, Union.

- b. Portions of the following parishes:
 - ~~i. Franklin—that portion west of US Highway 425;~~
 - ~~ii.~~ i. Richland—that portion west of US Highway 425.

6. Area 6

a. All of the following parishes: Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, Desoto, Evangeline, Grant, Jackson, Lincoln, Natchitoches, Rapides, Red River, Sabine, Vernon, Webster, Winn.

- b. Portions of the following parishes:
 - i. Allen—that portion north of US 190 and west of US 165;
 - ii. Calcasieu—that portion north of Interstate 10;

iii. Jefferson Davis—that portion north of US 190 and west of US 165;

iv. St. Landry—that portion west of Interstate 49.

7. Area 7

a. All of the following parishes: East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Bernard, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington.

b. Portions of the following parishes:

i. Ascension—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

ii. Iberville—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

iii. Jefferson—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

iv. Orleans—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

v. Plaquemines—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

vi. St. Charles—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

vii. St. James—that portion east of the Mississippi River;

viii. St. John the Baptist—that portion east of the Mississippi

River.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:115, R.S. 56:109(B) and R.S. 56:141(C).

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR 50:1012 (July 2024), amended LR 51:822 (June 2025), LR.

Family Impact Statement

In accordance with Act 1183 of 1999 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby issues its Family Impact Statement in connection with the preceding Notice of Intent. This Notice of Intent will have no impact on the six criteria set out at R.S. 49:972(B).

Poverty Impact Statement

This proposed Rule will have no impact on poverty as described in R.S. 49:973.

Provider Impact Statement

This proposed Rule has no known impact on providers as described in HCR 170 of 2014.

Small Business Analysis

This proposed Rule has no known impact on small businesses as described in R.S. 49:965.2 through R.S. 49:965.8.

Public Comments

Interested persons may submit written comments relative to the proposed Rule through 4 p.m., April 28, 2026, to John Hanks, LDWF Wildlife Division, 368 Century Link Drive, Monroe, LA 71203, phone 318-343-4044 or via e-mail to jhanks@wlf.la.gov.

Kenneth A. “Andy” Brister

Chairman