



Featured Species Habitat Management Guidance for Black Bear

Latin Name: *Ursus americanus*

Scope: Statewide

Rationale - *why we value the species and the problem for the species:*

The black bear is a highly valued big game species. In 2014, 49,109 hunters applied for 7,381 available bear licenses (Frawley 2013). There are several well-established stakeholder groups who support bear management. Viewing bears is an activity, valued by hunters and non-hunters alike. Although bear numbers are relatively stable at present, there are concerns that land use changes and urbanization may adversely affect numbers in the future. Improving existing habitat could offset potential population declines due to changes in land-use.

Habitat Need - *the cause & effect relationship between habitat and species and its primary limiting habitat need:*

Black bears have large home ranges and require large contiguous tracts of diverse forests with a mixture of cover types. In Michigan, bears use deciduous lowland forests, conifer swamps, young and mature upland forests, and forest openings (Carter 2007). Bears can move long distances in search of new territories and move frequently between cover types to acquire seasonally available foods. They tend to follow forested riparian corridors in their movements (Rudolph 1999). Hard mast is critical in the fall for bears to achieve adequate weight gains before denning (Ryan et al. 2007).

Habitat Objectives - *the treatment or management to address the primary limiting habitat need:*

The Black Bear Management Plan (DNR 2009) identifies three habitat management actions that would most benefit this species:

- 1) Maintain or increase the oak component of hardwood forests;
- 2) Maintain or increase the size of forested areas focusing attention on larger tracts;
- 3) Maintain, develop, or restore forested corridors that connect larger forested tracts, paying particular attention to riparian zones.

Priority Geographic Areas – *the specific geographic areas where we should focus management for the species:*

The 16 NLP counties of Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Missaukee, Montmorency, Oscoda, Roscommon, and Wexford; the 7 UP Bear Management Units (Amasa, Baraga, Bergland, Carney, Drummond Island, Gwinn, and Newberry); and the 58 Regional State Forest Management Plan Management Areas (23 WUP, 14 EUP, and 21 NLP) and 2 WLD Project Areas which identify black bear as a featured species.

Priority Landscapes – *the landscape, setting, or cover-type where we should focus management within the areas above:*

Forested landscapes, private land inholdings as potential acquisitions and areas not associated with large openland/grassland complexes. Habitat management opportunities exist across the northern two thirds of the state, however, management to increase bear density should be determined locally and support bear management unit goals. Bears are moving into the southern LP and their presence is likely to exceed social carrying capacity without improving bear habitat.

Population Goal - *the goal for the species, its habitat, or a stakeholder's actions:*

Maintain statewide numbers at 2010 bear levels. However, bear population goals are set locally and hunting quotas are set for each BMU to accomplish the objectives for each region.

Evaluation Method - *the monitoring method to measure progress towards the goal above:*

- 1) Estimate numbers annually using various harvest data and numerous population indices.
- 2) Evaluate harvest distribution at the BMU scale yearly.

Incidental Species – *other species which may benefit from management for this species:*

American marten; elk; northern goshawk; red-headed woodpecker; ruffed grouse; wild turkey; white-tailed deer; wood duck; and wood thrush.

References - citation for documents referenced in this guidance:

- T Albert, D.A. 1995. Regional landscape ecosystems of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin: A working map and classification. North Central Forest Experiment Station. Forest Service- U.S. Department of Agriculture. St. Paul MN. 250pp.
- Carter, N.H. 2007. Predicting ecological and social suitability of black bear habitat in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. M.S. Thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. 135 pp.
- Frawley, B. J., 2013. 2012 Black bear hunter survey - Wildlife Division Report No. 3570. Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources. 2009. Michigan Black Bear Management Plan – Wildlife Division Report No. 3497. 133pp.
- Rudolph, B. M. 1999. Habitat utilization and autecology of the black bear (*Ursus americanus*) in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. M.S. Thesis. Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.
- Ryan, C.W., J.C. Pack, W.K. Igo, and A. Billings. 2007. Influence of mast production on black bear non-hunting mortalities in West Virginia. *Ursus* 18(1):46–53.