



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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Garrett County Farm Bureau and DNR Discuss Bear Management in Maryland

Davidsonville, MD (May 28, 2015) – There is a lengthy history when it comes to the bear population in our state. Maryland's current occupied Bear Range is from Garrett County through Frederick County. Similar to surrounding states, Maryland's bear density is 0.25 per square mile, with the highest population density in Garrett County and western Allegany County. Harry Spiker, Game Mammal Section Leader for Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), went into great detail about the history and current bear management policy at a meeting hosted by the Garrett County Farm Bureau last week.

During this meeting with Garrett County farmers, the main concerns were focused around the amount of crop damage caused by the black bear population. While measures have been taken to help farmers recover lost income, there continues to be an increase in crop damage. Farmers who suffer large amounts of damage would like more consideration to partake in the season hunt.

Garrett County farmers would like to see a system where if they can show excessive damage due to black bear, they would be issued a permit to hunt during the managed hunt. These farmers hope that last week's healthy dialogue with the many DNR officials will lead to significant relief to the amount of crop damage currently being caused by black bear.

While there have been confirmed black bear sightings as far east as Maryland's Eastern Shore, the general population and breeding patterns are currently confined to Maryland's four western counties (Garrett, Allegany, Washington, and Frederick). Black bear management dates back to 1949, when bear hunting was prohibited statewide. The black bear went through several different listings from 1972 to 2004, when the first modern bear hunt was conducted by DNR.

Since the first hunt in 2004, about 663 bears have been harvested. The current bear population is more than 1,000 adult and subadult bears in Garrett and Allegany counties, according to DNR estimates. DNR continues to use a lottery system to issue bear hunting permits. A managed hunt has evolved over time to address concerns from many groups including farmers, landowners, hunters and other citizens.

For more information on the black bear population in Maryland, visit <http://dnr2.maryland.gov/>. Become a member of Farm Bureau and join the conversation by calling 410-922-3426 or visit www.mdfarmbureau.com.