



February 2, 2024

Chairman Brandon DeCuir
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
P.O. Box 98000
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70898

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

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Decuir and Commissioners,

We respectfully encourage you to adopt the Notice of Intent (NOI) to establish Louisiana's first black bear hunting season since the late 1980s. As the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (Department) has reiterated over the past several months, you have the data to support a highly regulated harvest of black bears within Bear Area 4. The Department, as well as its Commission, is the entity best equipped to address fish and wildlife management issues in Louisiana, and hunting is the best management tool for maintaining wildlife populations at a level that minimizes human/wildlife conflict while also ensuring their continued sustainability.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Since the 19th Century, sportsmen and women have played a leading role in conservation policy in the United States, including advocating for the passage of state fish and game laws to regulate which species can be pursued, methods of take, hunting seasons, and bag limits; establishing state

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and federal fish and wildlife agencies; creating federal land management agencies and establishing National Forests, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and other lands to conserve natural resources; spearheading efforts to end commercial hunting; pioneering “fair chase” ethics; creating hunting and fishing licenses fees to support professional fish and wildlife management; lobbying for the passage of landmark wildlife conservation legislation, including the Lacey Act (1900), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918), the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act (1934), the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (1937), and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (1950), among many others. A key focus of many of these conservation policy initiatives has been the restoration of wildlife species, including many game species that are now common.

Continuing the tradition of the sportsmen’s community championing wildlife restoration, the conservation efforts that Louisiana has put into place since the late 1980s have resulted in a successful rebound of black bears in Louisiana. Those efforts were funded in large part by dollars generated by sportsmen and women through the “user pays – public benefits” structure of the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), and Louisiana is no stranger to recognizing that regulated hunting and science-based management ensures the long-term sustainability of game species. Case in point, the American alligator was once on the brink of extinction. However, through active management, which has included regulated hunting since the early 1980s, their populations are stable and robust to the point where it has become one of the state’s most valuable resources. This has further incentivized private landowners to conserve and manage critical wildlife habitat to ensure the continued success of a species that was brought back in large part by funding through the ASCF. The American alligator, whitetail deer, and eastern wild turkey are some of America’s greatest conservation success stories and all are pursued by sportsmen and women in Louisiana. The millions of dollars generated annually by their pursuits support the continued management of these species.

We would submit that hunters in the “Sportsman’s Paradise” should be afforded the opportunity to pursue black bear, through regulated hunting supported by science-based wildlife management decision making, that their conservation dollars played a critical part in its recovery which would further support black bear conservation in the state.

In closing, CSF strongly supports this NOI as it is a testament to the sound conservation work that the Department has undertaken to re-establish healthy populations of Louisiana black bears to the point where a hunting season can even be considered. Establishing a new hunting season for this iconic species will increase its value to the public and further the state’s efforts to maintain well-balanced, genetically diverse populations.

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Thank you for considering our comments, and please feel free to contact us for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Lance". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mark Lance
Senior Coordinator, Southeastern States
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
mlance@congressionalsportsmen.org

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