



May 19, 2025

Chairman Rodney Barreto
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
620 S. Meridian St.
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Re: 68A-12.012 and Associated Rule Changes – Re-Establishing a Black Bear Hunting Season

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Barreto and Commissioners,

We respectfully encourage you to adopt the proposed rule amendments to re-establish Florida's black bear hunting season. The data provided by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff supports a highly regulated harvest of black bears within the proposed East Panhandle Bear Hunting Zone, North Bear Hunting Zone, Central Bear Hunting Zone, and the South Bear Hunting Zone. The FWC is the entity best equipped to address fish and wildlife management issues in Florida, 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; and 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 Florida has put into place have resulted in a successful rebound of black bears. 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), which generated over \$92 million for conservation in Florida in 2023 alone.

Hunters in the Sunshine State should be afforded the opportunity to pursue black bears through regulated hunting supported by science-based wildlife management decision making. Sportsmen generated conservation dollars played a critical part in its recovery and would further support black bear conservation in the state.

In closing, CSF strongly supports the proposed rule changes as they are a testament to the sound conservation work that the FWC has undertaken to re-establish healthy populations of black bears to the point where a hunting season can even be considered. Establishing a hunting season for this iconic species will increase its value to the public, incentivize private landowners to conserve and manage critical wildlife habitat, and further the state’s efforts to maintain well-balanced, genetically diverse populations. Thank you for considering our comments, and please feel free to contact us for further information.

Sincerely,



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