

**BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
BEAR DAU B-11
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
35, 36, 43, 44, 45, 47, 444, & 471**

Prepared for:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
West Region

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DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA, HABITAT, AND PAST MANAGEMENT

This bear unit is located in the Roaring Fork and Crystal River valleys of west central Colorado. It is composed of eight Game Management Units (GMU) that include GMUs 35, 36, 43, 44, 45, 47, 444 and 471. The CDOW designation of this bear data analysis unit is B-11.

Portions of this DAU are considered to be good to excellent bear habitat and it generally supports one of the highest bear harvests in NW Colorado. The vegetation varies in relation to elevation and aspect. Pinyon-juniper woodlands occur in the lower elevation and are not considered to be good bear habitat except during years when Pinyon nuts are abundant. At higher elevations, the habitat becomes more diverse as annual precipitation increases. This is where most of the bears are found in this DAU. Oakbrush, serviceberry, chokecherry and elderberry are common shrubs and provide food and cover for a healthy bear population.

The area has experienced a tremendous growth in land development and some of the highest human densities for the mountains occur in this area of the state along the I-70 corridor and in the Roaring Fork Valley. Major towns in the DAU include Vail, Avon, Eagle, Gypsum, Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt, Snowmass Village and Aspen. Human conflicts with black bear are common in the summer and fall in Vail, Snowmass Village, and Aspen. Domestic sheep graze some of the National Forest land in GMUs 43, 444, 45, and 36 and bear damage can be a problem. Each year approximately 5-10 black bear are killed by woolgrowers to protect their domestic sheep.

The average harvest for bear in the DAU for the last three years has been 28 animals. Since 1993 bear licenses have been limited in the September hunting seasons. Licenses have been unlimited in number during the regular rifle seasons. During the 1993 and 1994 seasons, 1,000 licenses were issued on a statewide basis. Beginning in the 1995 seasons through the 1998 seasons, 2,000 licenses were issued statewide for the September season. Starting in 1999, September limited bear licenses will be issued by DAU and all archery and muzzleloader hunters will be able to purchase over-the-counter or unlimited bear licenses.

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ISSUES: There are several issues regarding this bear population. These include; 1) bear nuisance complaints and damage to personal property in the Vail, Aspen, Glenwood Springs and Snowmass Village; 2) livestock damage (predator losses) to domestic sheep, predation to deer fawns and elk calves; and 3) the maintenance of a secure, healthy population of bear.

Bear damages to agricultural products (livestock and beehives) have averaged \$13,093 over the last three years. In the last 11 years (1987-1997) claims were submitted to CDOW for reimbursement in 7 of 11 years. The annual average for 11 years was \$4,380. The highest losses were in 1997-98 when claims totaled \$23,360.

Research has never revealed that bear depredation has a large impact on mule deer. Bear may be a factor in elk calf depredation. The elk herd in this area is currently over the population objective.

Bear damage to personal property has averaged \$9,456 over the last three years. In the last 11 years claims were submitted to CDOW for reimbursement in 6 of 11 years. The annual average for these 11 years was \$7,751. The highest losses were in 1997-98 when claims totaled \$47,779.

The CDOW is concerned about maintaining a viable bear population that is generally in balance with habitat and societal values.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: The management of black bears populations is demanding due to the difficulty and cost of obtaining accurate census information. Inventory techniques involves the capturing and marking of bears currently is cost prohibitive on a statewide basis. Management of bears in this plan will be based on three elements or objectives: 1) a sport hunting harvest objective; 2) a game damage objective; and 3) a nuisance objective.

SPORT HUNTING HARVEST OBJECTIVE: The preferred management recommendation is to increase the annual harvest objective to 30-35 bear per year. Limited bear licenses for the September season will be issued based on previous three years success rates. The three-year average regular rifle season harvest will be subtracted from the total harvest objective and then September licenses will be determined from that number. The CDOW believes that the current population of bears in this DAU can support a larger harvest and recommends an increase in licenses.

GAME DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: Game damage and nuisance objectives are based on allowable levels, when the threshold level is reached, remedial actions can be used to ameliorate problems. Remedial actions include 1) DOW employee trap and move problem bear; 2) initiation of control of offending animal(s) by Wildlife Services; 3) employ an investigator to look into and document predator losses; and 4) utilize the option of immediate euthanasia of the offending bear rather than trap and transplanting to another site (one strike

option). The DAU will be managed to keep the bear related game damage less than \$15,000 for a three year average.

DAU	GMU	3 YR. AVERAGE DAMAGE COST	OBJECTIVE LEVEL
B-11	35, 36, 43, 44, 45, 47, 444 & 471	\$24,325	\$15,000

NUISANCE OBJECTIVE: The nuisance object is 10 conflicts per year.

DAU	GMU	3 YR. AVERAGE NUMBER OF NUISANCES	NUISANCE OBJECTIVE
B-11	35, 36, 43, 44, 45, 47, 444 & 471	11	10