

**BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES  
FOR  
BEAR DAU B-14  
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS  
48, 481, 49, 56, 561, & 57**

Prepared for:  
Colorado Division of Wildlife  
Southeast Region

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**INTRODUCTION**

The goal of the Division of Wildlife is to maintain a healthy, self-sustaining population of black bear that is in balance with its habitat with a minimum of game damage and nuisance complaints. This management plan establishes guidelines for black bear management in the upper Arkansas River valley. Bear hunting and harvest will be adjusted as necessary to achieve the unit objective.

**DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT**

This management unit is located in the upper Arkansas River valley, from the headwaters downstream to Badger Creek, approximately 8 miles east of Salida. It also includes a small part of the South Platte drainage west and south of Fairplay in South Park. It includes game management units 48, 481, 49, 56, 561, and 57. Elevation ranges from 6,800' to 14,433', the highest point in Colorado. Approximately 75% of the 1,855 square miles in this unit are public lands.

Habitat quality ranges from poor to good, largely depending on elevation and aspect and the resulting vegetative stands. Habitat types include riparian, pinion-juniper woodland, semi-desert shrubland, grassland, montane shrubland, mountain meadow, montane forest, subalpine forest, and alpine tundra. Much of this area is not considered good bear habitat because of high elevation and lack of significant stands of mast producing plants such as oakbrush.

Land use in this unit is primarily agricultural or recreational/forest use. Agricultural use has primarily been livestock grazing or grass and alfalfa hay production. Recently a large amount of private land has been converted to seasonal or year-round residential land use. Much of this conversion has occurred at lower elevations and impacted the better quality bear habitat.

Recreational activities, which primarily occur on public land, include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, off-road

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vehicle use, snowmobiling and skiing.

**SPORT HARVEST OBJECTIVE:** The annual sport harvest should not exceed 10-15 bears per year on a three year floating average. Harvest over the last 10 years has averaged 6 per year ranging from 2 to 12. The three-year floating average has ranged from 3.0 to 10.3 over the same time period. The current population can support a larger harvest on a sustained basis.

**PRESCRIPTIONS:** If sport harvest exceeds the three-year floating average, permits in the September season will be reduced. We will also attempt to redirect hunting pressure during the regular rifle seasons by informing the public of other areas where an increase in harvest is desired.

**DAMAGE OBJECTIVE:** Damage caused by bears should not exceed \$500 per year on a three-year floating average. Damage payments over the last ten years have averaged \$345 per year ranging from no payments (in four years) to \$1,040. The three-year floating average has ranged from \$0 to \$613. Annual non-sport harvest/removal of bears causing damage has averaged 1.4 bears over the last 10 years ranging from none (four years) to 5.

**PRESCRIPTIONS:** If damage caused by bears exceeds the annual objective we will focus management activities on the individual bears causing damage. We will follow Division directive W-2 to guide decisions on individual cases and consider a one-strike policy if damage situations fall within the guidelines of W-2. Wildlife Services will be requested to remove bears involved in significant livestock depredations

**HUMAN/BEAR CONFLICT OBJECTIVE:** Bear conflict reports should not exceed 30 per year. During the last five years reports have averaged 30 per year, ranging from 9 to 52. This variation is generally in response to annual changes in natural food supplies.

**PRESCRIPTIONS:** Information will be provided to the public, land use agencies, campground managers and law enforcement agencies on how to reduce or eliminate conflicts. Site inspections will be conducted and reporting parties will be advised on how to avoid bear conflicts. Information on potential wildlife conflict areas will be provided to county planners, Realtors and developers.