



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

BLACK BEAR HARVEST SUMMARY 2025



Heidi Buley with a bear harvested during the regular firearms season in WMU 3J. Photo courtesy of the hunter.



This document was funded by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. Grant WE-173-G

Black Bear Harvest Summary & Trends

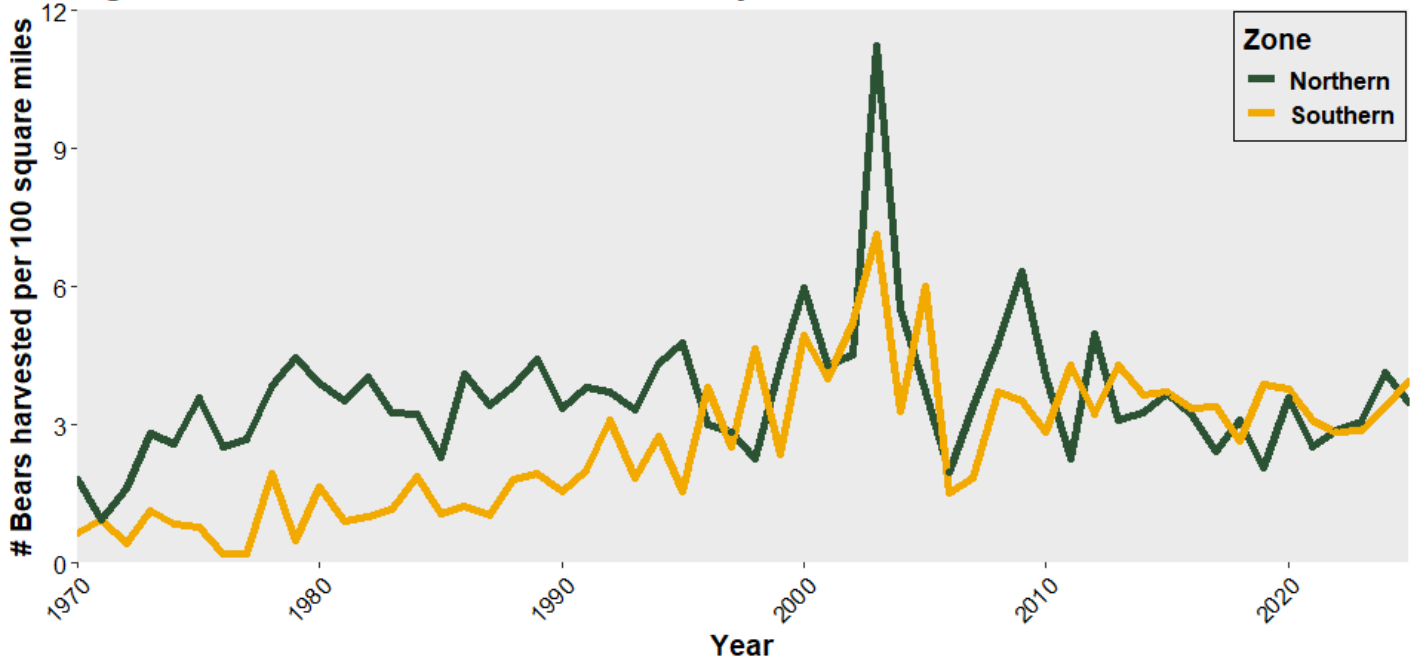
During New York's 2025 big game hunting seasons, hunters harvested an estimated 1,759 black bears (95% confidence interval: 1,631 to 1,887), with an estimated 557 bears harvested in the Northern Zone (95% confidence interval: 479 to 634) and an estimated 1,202 bears harvested in the Southern Zone (95% confidence interval: 1,152 to 1,253). This was a 4% increase in bear harvest from the 2024 seasons (# = 1,589), and ~15% increase from the the five- and ten-year bear harvest averages. An estimated 1,103 bears were harvested during the regular season, followed by the bow (# = 454), early (# = 182), muzzleloader (# = 14), and youth (# = 6) seasons (Table 1). Long-term trends in bear harvest density suggest that bear populations remain relatively stable in both the Northern and Southern Zones following population expansions that contributed to peak bear harvest densities throughout the early 2000s (Figure 1).

Table 1. 2025 bear harvest & comparisons

	2025	2024	5-Year Average (2021 - 2025)	10-Year Average (2016-2025)
Northern Zone	557	657	512	485
Early	NA*	NA*	NA*	188
Bow	18	15	15	27
Muzzleloader	6	9	9	28
Regular	533	632	486	35
Youth	0	1	2	1
% Female : % Male	41% : 59%	42% : 58%	42% : 58%	43% : 57%
Southern Zone	1,202	1,028	982	1,010
Early	182	207	166	194
Bow	436	423	366	360
Muzzleloader	8	21	15	13
Regular	570	375	431	436
Youth	6	3	5	7
% Female : % Male	42% : 58%	41% : 59%	41% : 59%	42% : 58%
New York State	1,759	1,685	1,494	1,495
Early	182	207	166	288
Bow	454	438	381	387
Muzzleloader	14	30	24	42
Regular	1,103	1,007	918	771
Youth	6	3	5	8
% Female : % Male	42% : 58%	42% : 58%	41% : 59%	42% : 58%

*In 2021, DEC simplified the bear hunting seasons in the Adirondack Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) by expanding the regular season to incorporate the early, bow, and muzzleloader season.

Figure 1. Estimated bear harvest densities by zone since 1970



Black Bear Population Management Objectives & Progress

In 2014, DEC established a black bear population management objective for each Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) to help achieve the goals articulated in DEC's [Management Plan for Black Bears in New York State](#). That same year, DEC initiated an early bear season in certain WMUs located in the southeastern portion of the Southern Zone to reduce high density bear populations (Map 1). Since 2014, DEC has continued to document progress in meeting most of these bear population management objectives. However, bears are now established in some WMUs originally defined as "Incompatible for bears", primarily WMUs 3R, 3S, and 4B (Figure 2 & 4). DEC is in the process of adapting its management in these areas to foster greater public understanding for how to live responsibly with bears. Please see the "Be Bearwise" section of this report for more information.

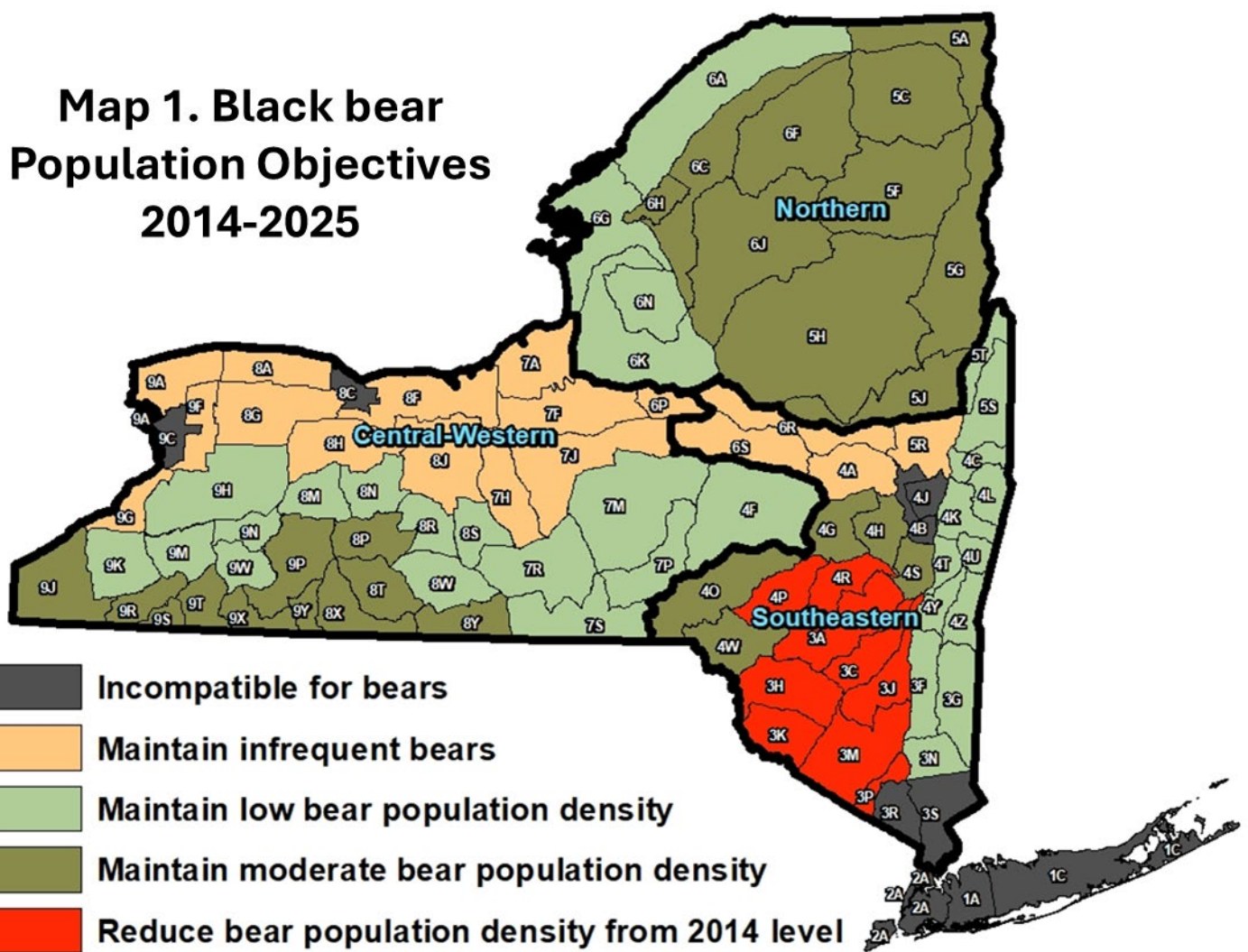
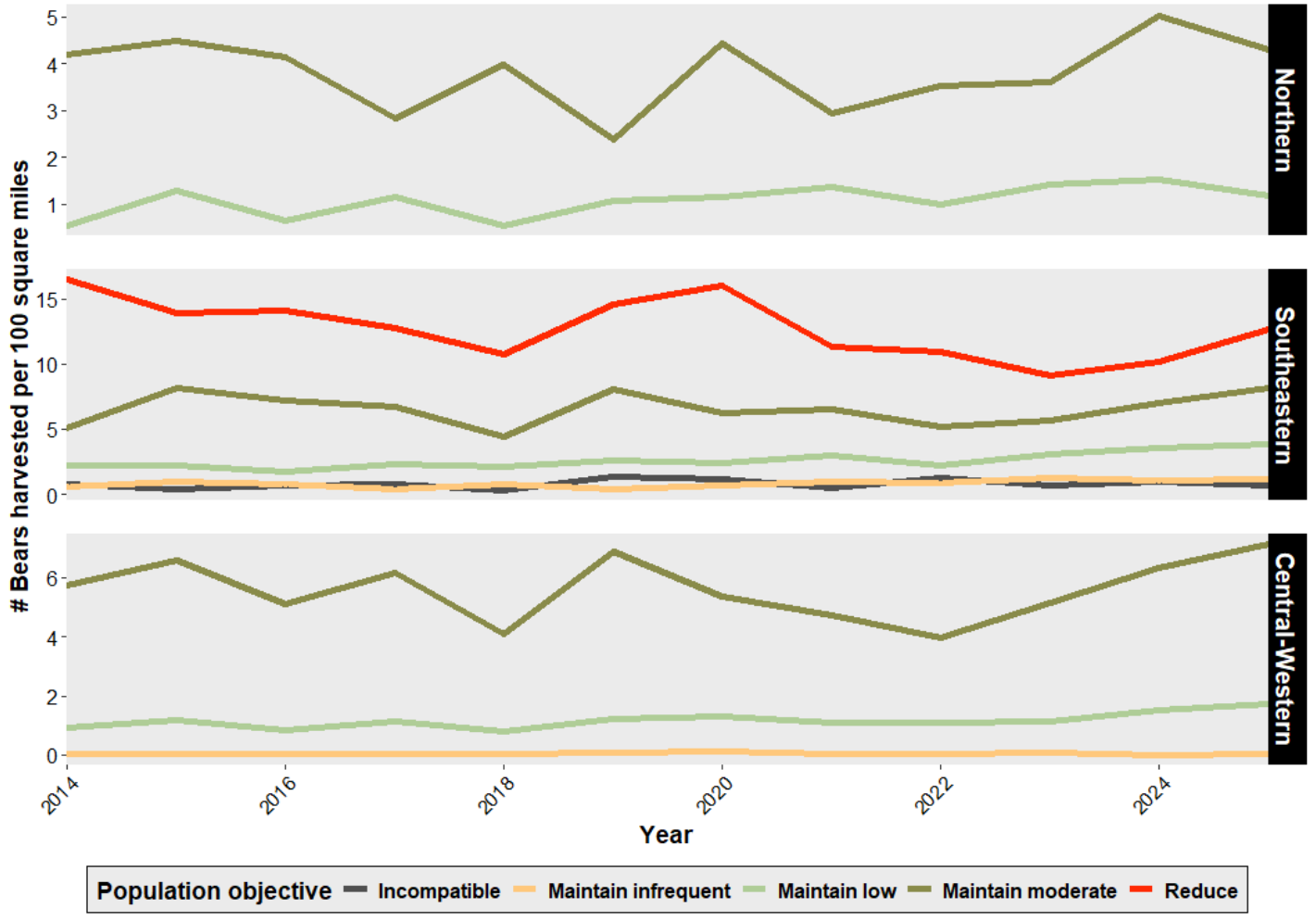


Figure 2. Estimated bear harvest densities by population objective and subzone since 2014



Angel Gonzalez with a bear harvested during the archery season in WMU 3P. Photo courtesy of the hunter.

Black Bear Harvest Trends by Wildlife Management Unit (WMU)

Hunters harvested black bears from 74 of 88 WMUs open to bear hunting during the 2025 big game hunting seasons. Bear harvest densities were highest in WMUs within the Catskills, Adirondacks, and Allegheny Mountains (Map 2; Table 2). Within Northern Zone WMUs, bear harvest has varied considerably year-to-year over the past decade but the overall 10-year trends have been stable in most WMUs, with the exception of WMU 6C which has an increasing trend (Map 2; Figure 3). In the Southeastern portion of the Southern Zone, decreasing trends in bear harvest density continued in several WMUs with a bear population objective of “reduce” (ex. 3A, 3C, and 3K), suggesting that the early bear season may be having the desired effect. However, several other WMUs with the a “reduce” bear population objective have relatively stable trends in harvest despite having an early season (ex. 3M, 4P, and 4R). Slight increasing trends in bear harvest density also continued in WMUs 4S and 4Z, suggesting that these units may have increasing bear populations despite the objective to maintain those bear populations at the 2014 levels (Map 2; Figure 4). In the Central-Western portion of the Southern Zone, most WMUS show year-to-year variability but stable 10-year harvest trends with the highest 2025 harvest densities in WMUs 9S, 9R, and 9Y (Map 2).

Map 2. 2025 Black Bear Harvest Density by WMU

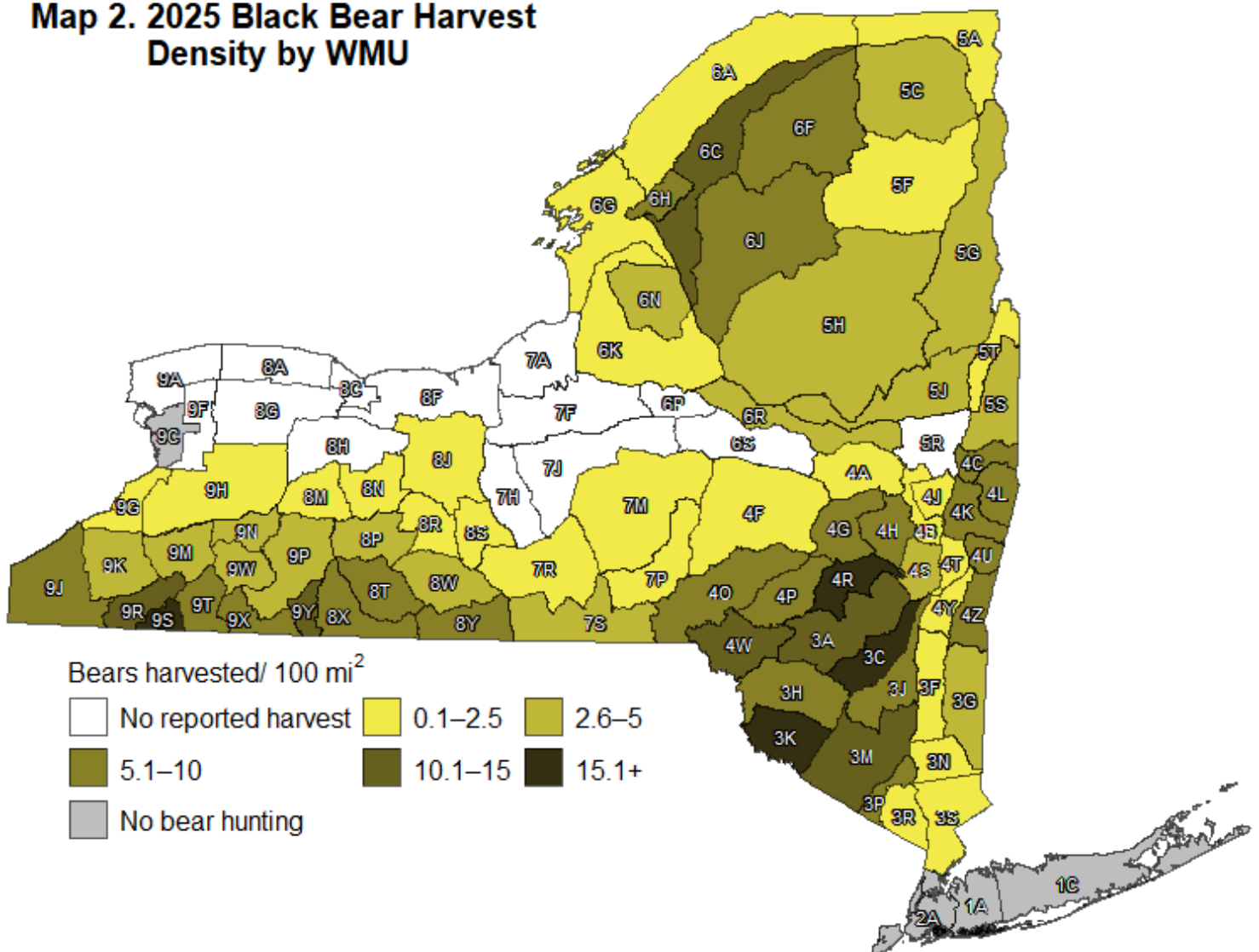
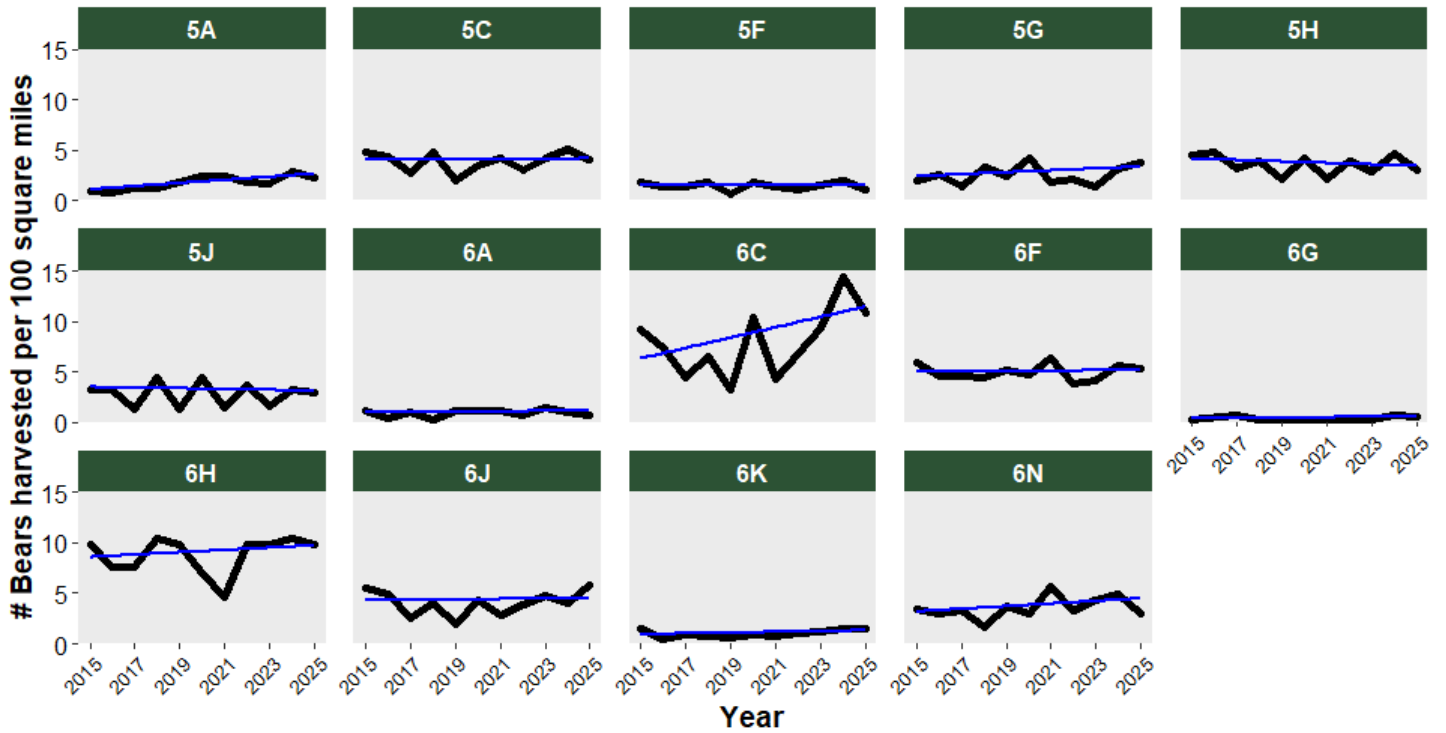


Table 2. 2025 New York State Black Bear Harvest by WMU & Season

Key: **E** = Early, **B** = Bowhunting, **Y** = Youth, **R** = Regular, **M** = Muzzleloading, **T** = Total, **D** = Density (Bears/100 Square Miles)

Northern							Southeastern							Central-Western							
WMU	B	Y	R	M	T	D	WMU	E	B	Y	R	M	T	D	WMU	B	Y	R	M	T	D
5A	0	0	14	0	14	2.3	3A	19	10	0	64	2	95	13.7	4F	3	0	13	0	16	1.4
5C	0	0	46	0	46	4.1	3C	41	11	0	14	0	66	20.9	6P	0	0	0	0	0	0
5F	0	0	15	0	15	1.1	3F	0	2	0	3	0	5	1.5	7A	0	0	0	0	0	0
5G	0	0	43	0	43	3.9	3G	0	8	0	10	0	18	3.9	7F	0	0	0	0	0	0
5H	0	0	93	0	93	3.1	3H	16	16	0	20	0	52	9.4	7H	0	0	0	0	0	0
5J	0	0	20	0	20	3	3J	4	8	0	11	0	23	6.5	7J	0	0	0	0	0	0
6A	5	0	5	0	10	0.7	3K	22	13	0	25	0	60	15.7	7M	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
6C	0	0	106	0	106	10.9	3M	31	33	1	28	0	93	12.4	7P	7	0	4	0	11	2.3
6F	0	0	64	0	64	5.3	3N	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.4	7R	2	0	1	1	4	0.5
6G	1	0	3	1	5	0.5	3P	0	7	0	2	0	9	7.2	7S	15	1	16	0	32	4.8
6H	0	0	17	0	17	9.8	3R	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	8A	0	0	0	0	0	0
6J	0	0	90	1	91	5.8	3S	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2	8C	0	0	0	0	0	0
6K	7	0	8	3	18	1.6	4A	0	2	0	1	0	3	0.7	8F	0	0	0	0	0	0
6N	5	0	9	1	15	3.1	4B	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.6	8G	0	0	0	0	0	0
							4C	0	4	0	5	0	9	5.5	8H	0	0	0	0	0	0
							4G	0	10	0	12	0	22	5.9	8J	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
							4H	0	8	0	12	0	20	6.9	8M	1	0	1	0	2	0.7
							4J	0	1	0	1	0	2	1.3	8N	0	0	4	0	4	1.3
							4K	0	7	0	8	0	15	5.9	8P	5	0	6	0	11	3.1
							4L	0	4	0	8	0	12	5.4	8R	2	0	1	0	3	1.1
							4O	0	22	1	34	1	58	7.6	8S	0	0	1	0	1	0.4
							4P	16	8	0	6	0	30	8.3	8T	20	0	17	0	37	9.6
							4R	17	9	0	29	2	57	19.6	8W	6	0	10	0	16	3.6
							4S	0	6	0	4	0	10	4.5	8X	24	0	16	0	40	10
							4T	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.8	8Y	16	0	13	0	29	8.2
							4U	0	4	0	7	0	11	8.7	9A	0	0	0	0	0	0
							4W	16	14	0	30	0	60	13.5	9F	0	0	0	0	0	0
							4Y	0	0	0	4	0	4	2.3	9G	1	0	0	0	1	0.4
							4Z	0	9	0	12	0	21	8.4	9H	4	0	0	0	4	0.4
							5R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9J	23	0	20	0	43	6.2
							5S	0	7	1	8	0	16	3.8	9K	8	0	6	0	14	3.1
							5T	0	1	0	0	1	2	0.9	9M	5	0	10	0	15	4.5
							6R	0	7	1	11	0	19	3.5	9N	4	0	3	0	7	3.4
							6S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9P	14	0	10	0	24	4.1
															9R	8	0	13	1	22	10.1
															9S	1	0	13	0	14	15.3
															9T	5	0	9	0	14	5.6
															9W	6	0	4	0	10	4
															9X	10	0	5	0	15	6.8
															9Y	9	0	4	0	13	10.4
Total	18	0	533	6	557		Total	182	235	4	371	6	798		Total	201	1	200	2	404	
Statewide Total								182	454	5	1104	14	1759								

Figure 3. Estimated bear harvest density and 10 year trends in Northern Zone WMUs



Andrew Ritz with a bear and deer harvested on the same morning during the regular firearms season in WMU 3K. Photo courtesy of the hunter.

Figure 4. Estimated bear harvest density and 10 year trends in Southeastern WMUs

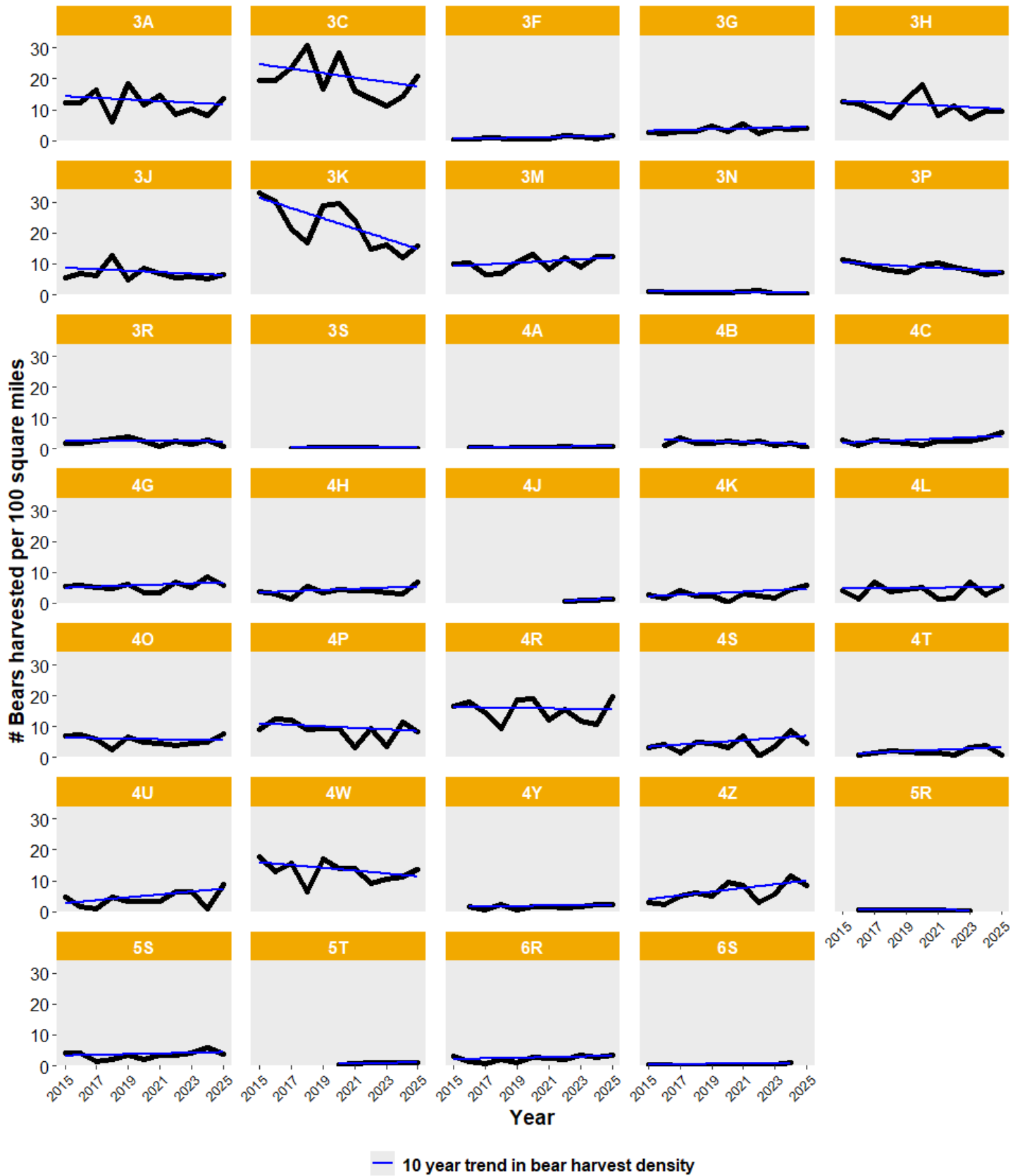
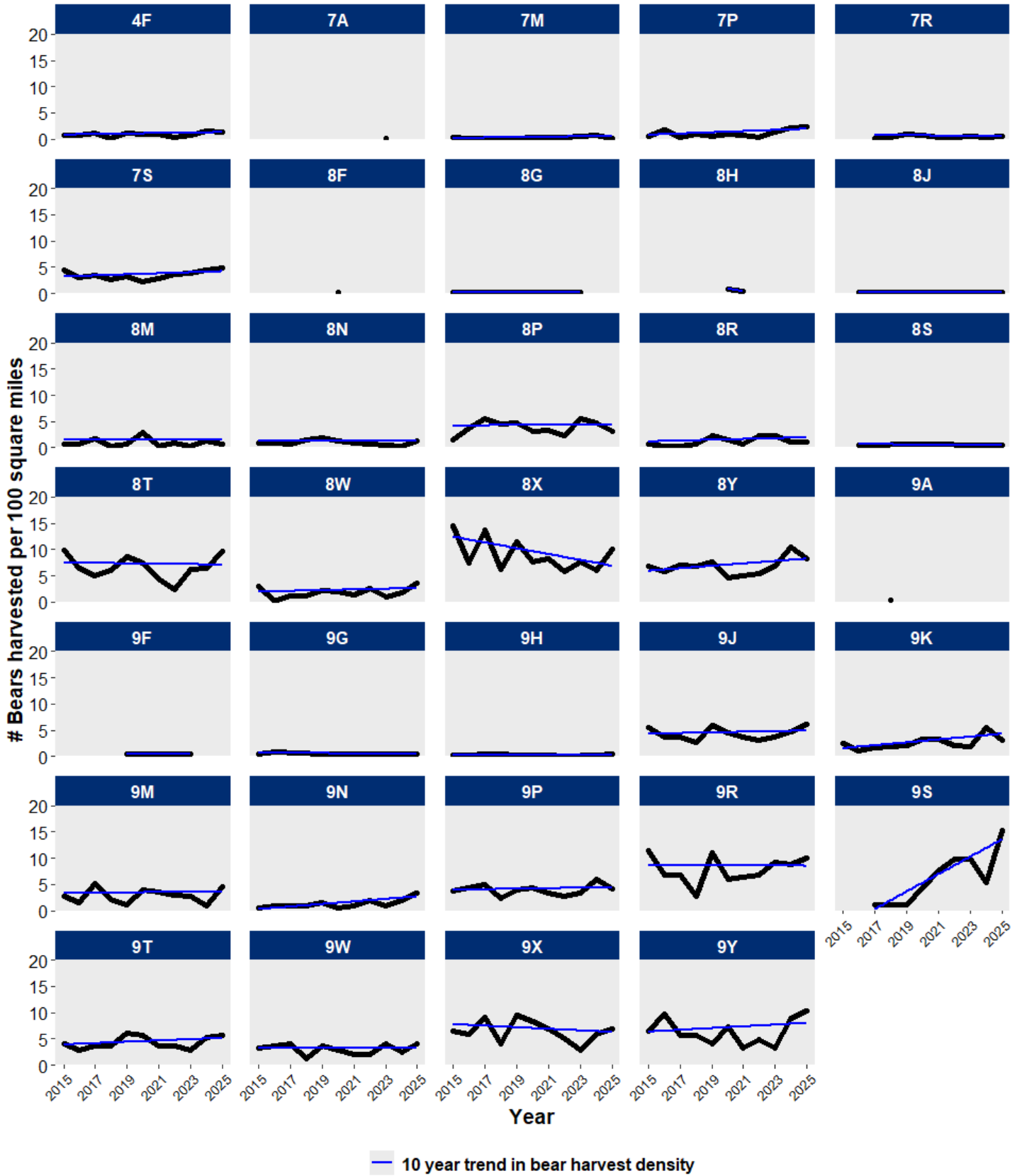


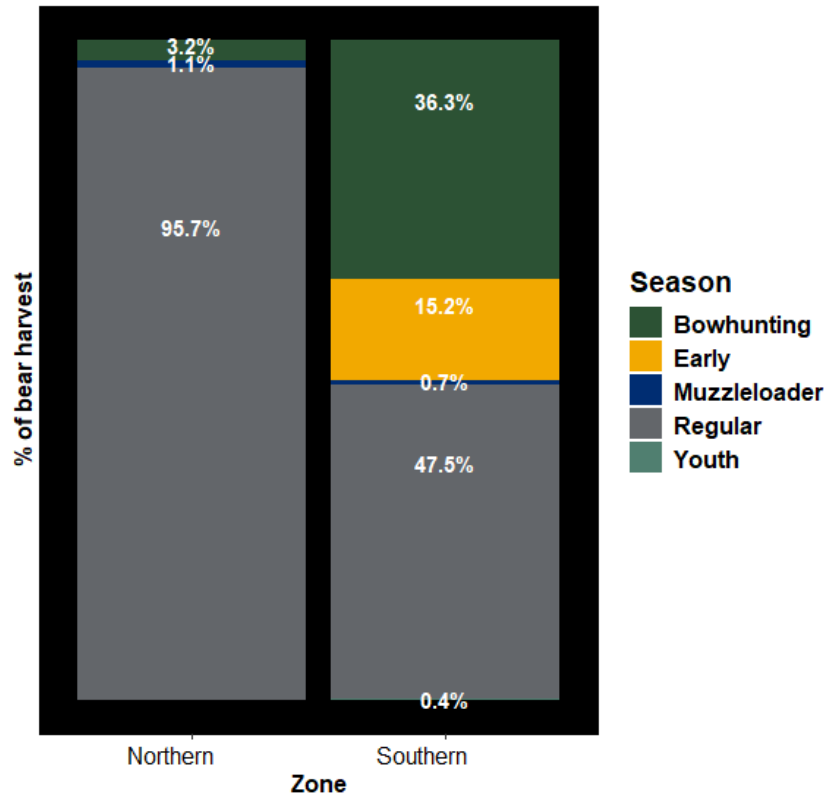
Figure 5. Estimated bear harvest density and 10 year trends in Central-Western WMUs



Black Bear Harvest by Season and Day

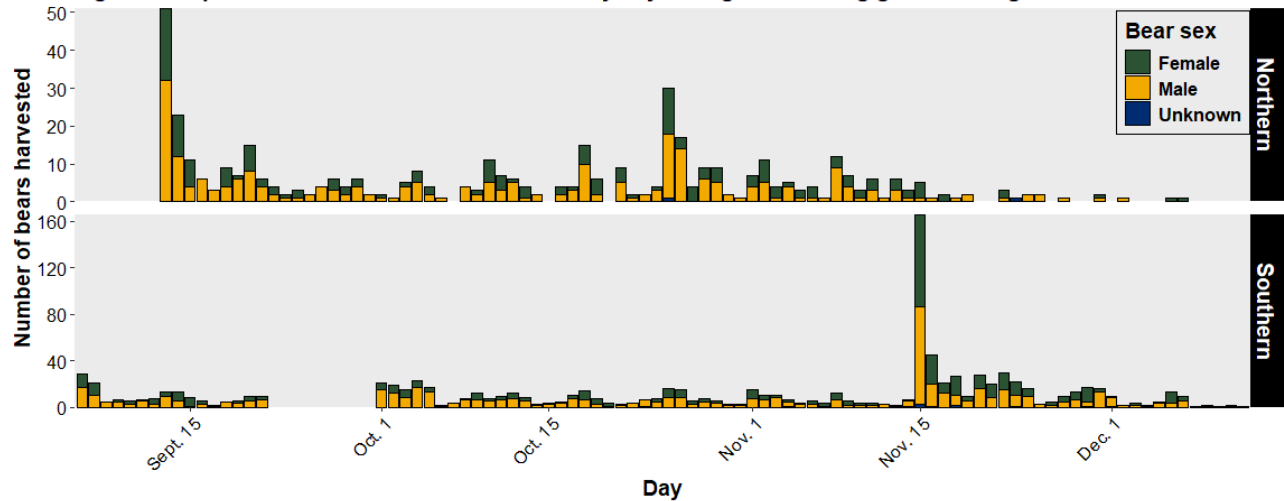
In the Northern Zone, the greatest percentage of the black bear harvest occurred during the regular season, particularly during opening week of the regular bear season, which began on September 13th, and throughout the first two weeks of the regular deer season, which began on October 25th. In the Southern Zone, most of the bear harvest occurred during the bowhunting and regular seasons, particularly during opening week of the regular deer season which began on November 15th (Figures 6 & 7).

Figure 6. Percent of 2025 bear harvest by season



Joel Lape with a bear harvested during the regular firearms season in WMU 4G. Photo courtesy of the hunter.

Figure 7. Reported and/or checked bear harvest by day during the 2025 big game hunting seasons



Weights & Ages of Harvested Black Bears

Weights were submitted for 30% of the bears reported and/or checked in 2025. The heaviest bear weighed 562 lbs. and was taken in WMU 3C (Table 3; Figure 8). All of the 10 heaviest bears reported in 2025 were taken in the Southern Zone. Weights of female bears tend to peak by the age of five at around 175 lbs. in both the Northern and Southern Zones (Figure 9). Weights of male bears tend to continue to increase with age, but male bears in the Southern Zone tend to achieve heavier weights at a younger age than male bears in the Northern Zone. This is due to variation in habitat productivity, growing season length, and food availability between the Northern and Southern Zones. Bear ages are determined by examining cross-sections of a premolar tooth submitted by hunters or cooperating taxidermists and meat processors. Bear teeth from the 2025 season are still being analyzed, so 2025 bear data is not included in Figure 9.

Table 3. Heaviest bears - 2025

Rank	Dressed Weight (lbs.)	Sex	Season	County	Town	WMU
1	562	Male	Regular	Ulster	Olive	3C
2	550	Male	Early	Ulster	Rochester	3C
3	544	Male	Regular	Albany	Bethlehem	4J
4	528	Male	Regular	Steuben	Woodhull	8X
5	511	Male	Regular	Orange	Tuxedo	3P
6	509	Male	Regular	Greene	Jewett	3A
7	499	Male	Bowhunting	Chemung	Horseheads	8Y
8	481	Male	Regular	Schoharie	Middleburgh	4G
9	479	Male	Regular	Ulster	Wawarsing	3J
10	461	Male	Early	Orange	Warwick	3M

Figure 8. Weight (lbs.) distribution of bears harvested in 2025

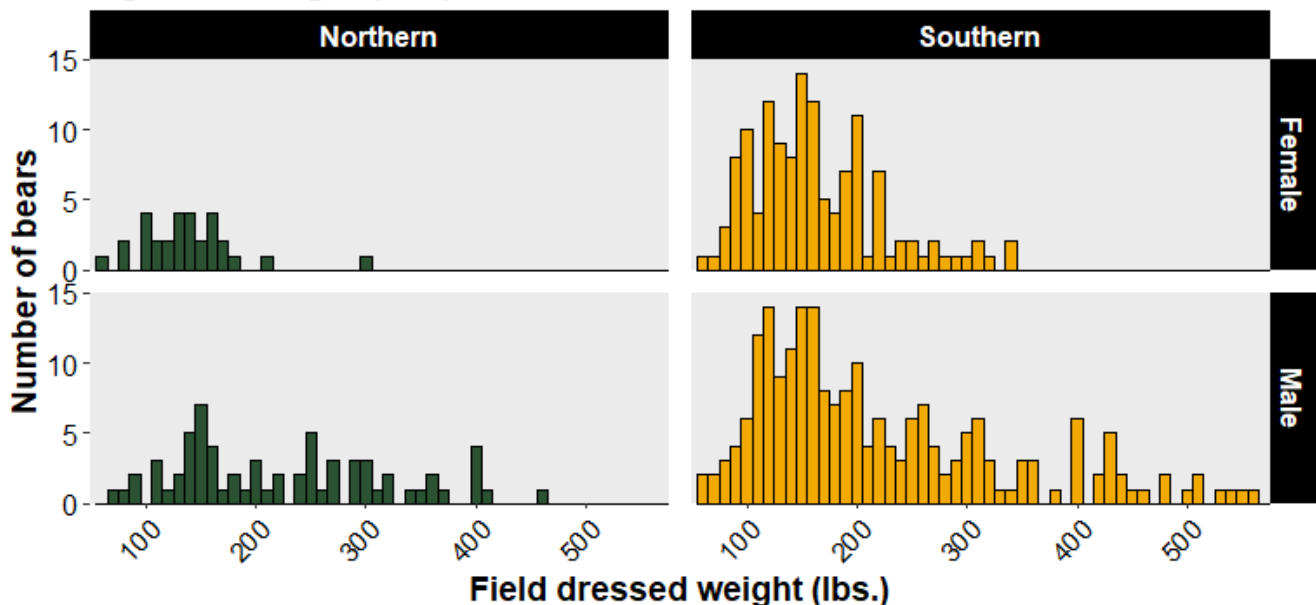
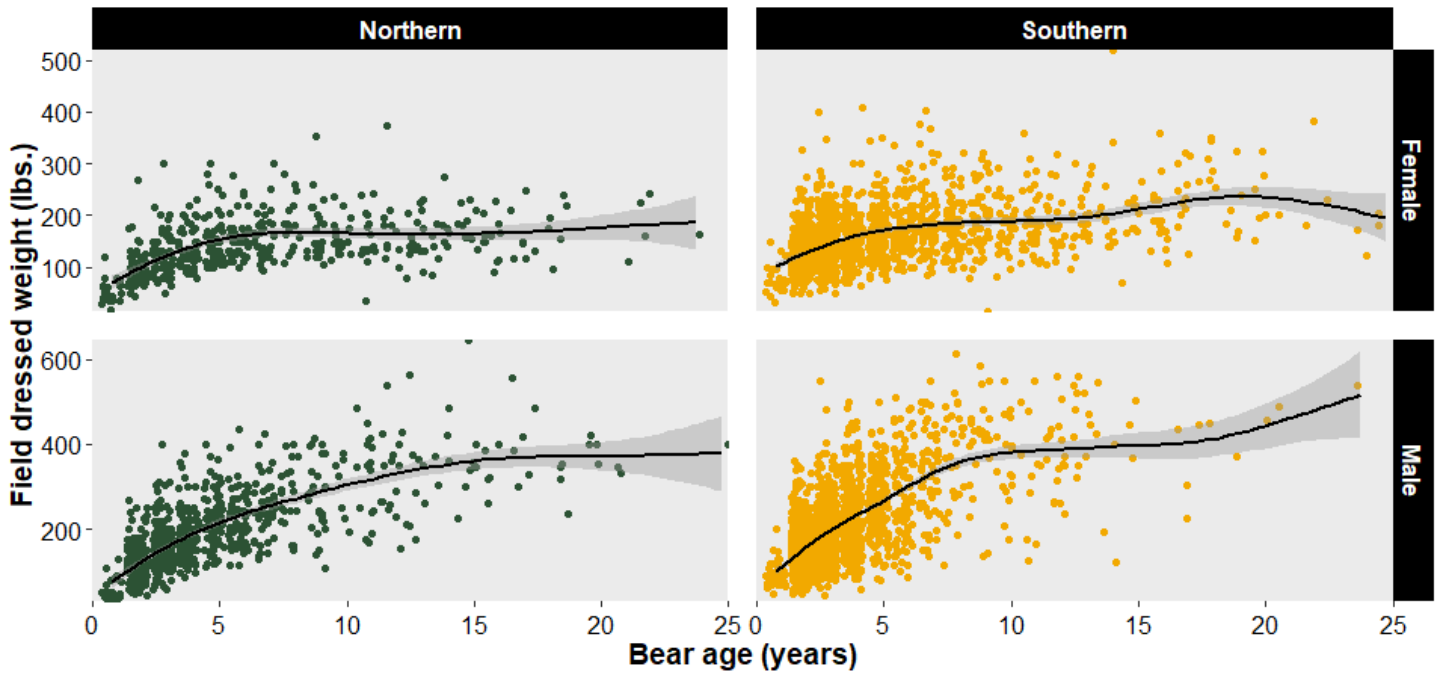


Figure 9. Weights (lbs.) of harvested bears by age (2014 - 2024)



Crystal Thomas with a bear harvested during the archery season in WMU 7S. Photo courtesy of the hunter.

Black Bear Management Cooperator Program

DEC relies on data submitted by hunters as well as cooperating taxidermists and meat processors (black bear management cooperators) to inform black bear management in New York State. Successful bear hunters are required by law to [report](#) their bear harvest within 2 days. Additionally, DEC requests that successful bear hunters voluntarily provide the scaled weight of and a premolar tooth from their bear to determine the bear's age. Black bear management cooperators provide this same data voluntarily for any bears that come into their shops. DEC uses this information to assess the impact of harvest on the bear population through analysis of trends in the average age of harvested bears. Although year-to-year average ages of bears has varied in Northern Zone and Central-Western portion of the Southern Zone, stable 10-year trends in average ages for both male and female bears indicate stable bear populations in those areas. Conversely, the declining trend in average age of female bears in the Southeastern portion of the Southern Zone indicates a declining bear population in that area. This is to be expected since an early bear season has been established in several Southeastern WMUs to reduce high bear population densities (Figure 10; Map 1). In 2025, DEC received premolar teeth from 691 harvested bears. Thirty-eight black bear management cooperators checked and provided biological data for 282 bears in 2025 (Figure 11). Hunters who report their bear and submit a tooth receive the age information for their bear and a commemorative patch in August or September of the following year (Figure 12). Please visit DEC's [Black Bear Management Cooperator Program](#) webpage for more information.

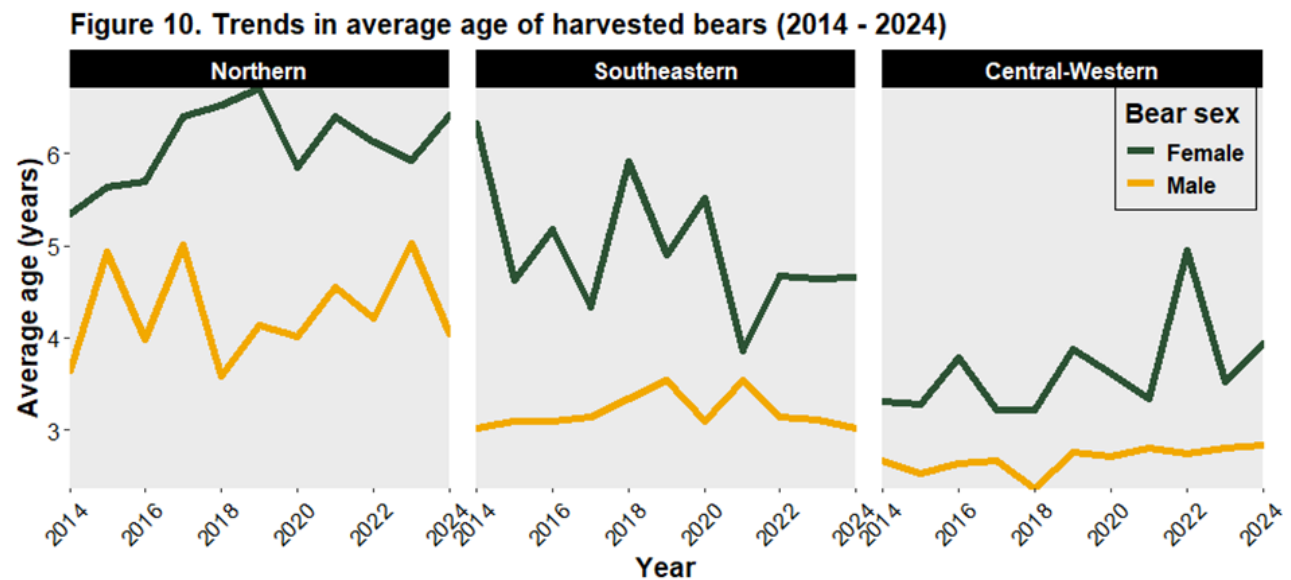
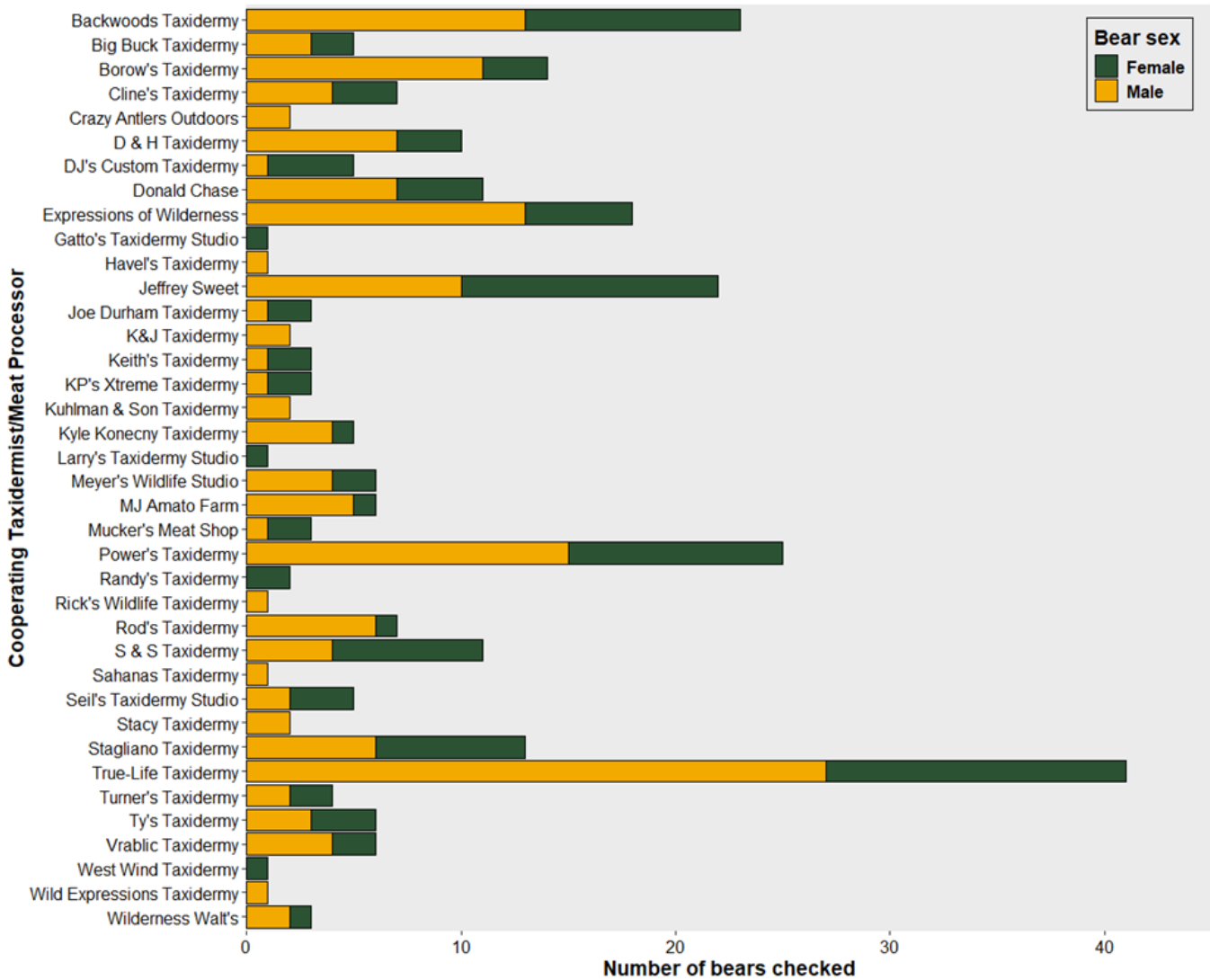


Figure 11. Bears checked by management cooperators in 2025



Todd Kautz with a bear harvested during the regular season in WMU 5H. Photo courtesy of the hunter.

Figure 12. Black Bear Management Cooperator Patches 2006 - 2025



Be BearWise

In some WMUs, especially those under the management objective of “incompatible for bears”, hunting may be insufficient to prevent establishment of bear populations and reduce human-bear conflict. In these situations, education and outreach on how to live responsibly with bears will be necessary. The BearWise educational campaign was developed by bear biologists and is supported by state wildlife agencies to promote the delivery of standardized messaging to the public on how to live responsibly with black bears. DEC is a cooperating state wildlife agency of the BearWise campaign and has a variety of education and outreach materials available to groups interested in promoting the BearWise campaign in their communities. Please visit DEC’s [Be BearWise®](http://www.dec.ny.gov/bearwise) webpage for more information.





BearWise Outdoor Safety

Black bears are seldom aggressive and rarely injure people. Follow these BearWise tips to avoid encounters.

Hiking

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Try not to hike alone.
- Keep kids within sight and close by.
- Make noise periodically so bears can avoid you.
- Stay alert; music and phones are distracting.
- Keep dogs leashed at all times or leave them at home. *Letting dogs chase or bark at bears is asking for trouble. Don't force a bear to defend itself.*
- Double bag your food and pack out all food and trash. *Leaving scraps, wrappers or "harmless" items like apple cores teaches bears to associate trails and campsites with food.*

Camping

- Do not store food, trash, clothes worn when cooking, or toiletries in your tent. *Store these items in approved bear resistant containers OR out of sight in a locked vehicle OR suspended at least 10 feet above the ground and 10 feet from any part of the tree. Local storage regulations vary. Know before you go.*
- Keep a clean camp.
- Don't burn food scraps or trash in your fire ring or grill.
- Cook downwind and as far from your tent as possible.
- Set up backcountry camps away from dense cover and natural food sources.

BearWise.org  [more tips >](#)

Fishing & Hunting

- You are more likely to encounter bears when moving quietly and traveling early and late day when bears are most active.
- Follow tips for hiking and camping safely.
- Carcasses, gut piles and bait may attract bears.
- If a bear beats you to your catch or kill, don't try to reclaim it; leave the area when it is safe to do so.

Carry Bear Spray & Know How To Use It

Keep bear spray accessible at all times. *Bear spray is proven to be the easiest and most effective way to deter a bear that threatens you. Bear spray doesn't work like bug repellent, so never spray your tent, campsite or belongings.*

If You Encounter a Black Bear

If you see a bear before it notices you, don't approach. Stand still, enjoy the moment, then quietly move away.

If a bear sees you, back away slowly. Never run; running may trigger a chase response.

If a bear approaches, hold your ground, wave your arms and yell "Hey Bear" until it leaves. Always stay with your group. **If the bear keeps approaching,** use bear spray.

If a black bear makes contact with you, do NOT play dead; fight back aggressively.

Black bears come in many colors, from brown, cinnamon, tan or blonde to black. Black bear is a species that lives in most states and across Canada.

 *Helping People Live Responsibly with Black Bears*

BearWise.org

BearWise® CREATED BY BEAR BIOLOGISTS, SUPPORTED BY STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES © 2018

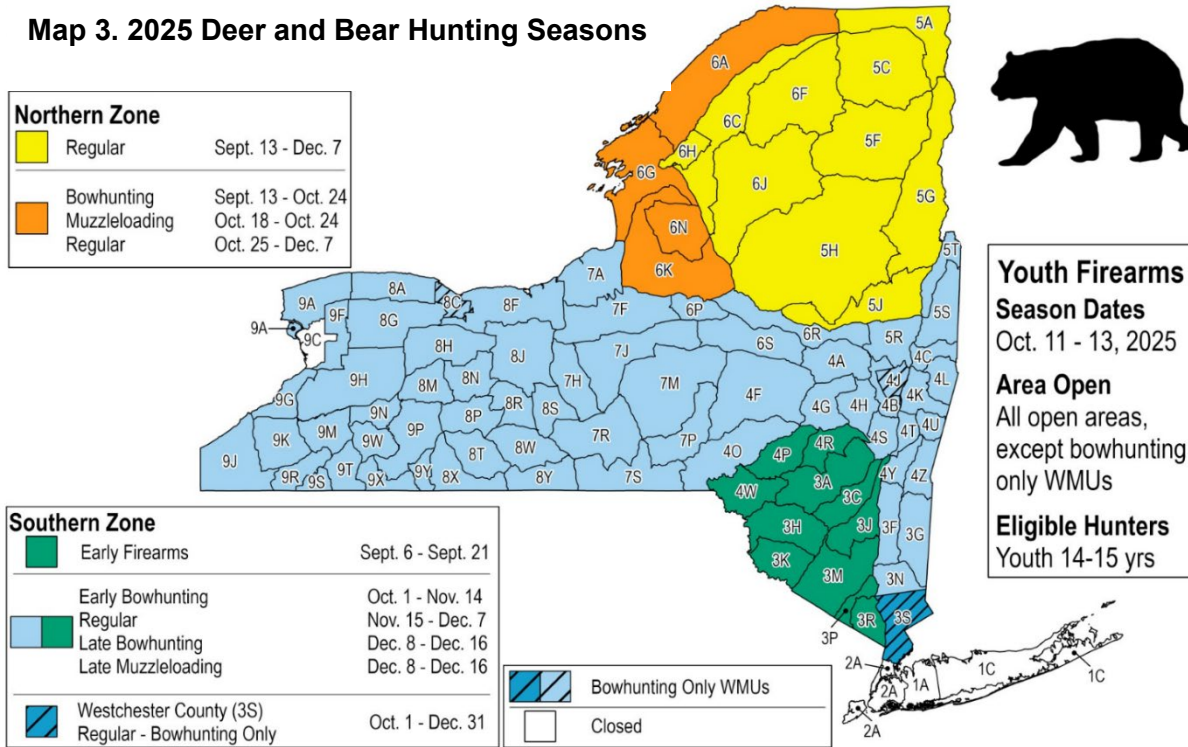
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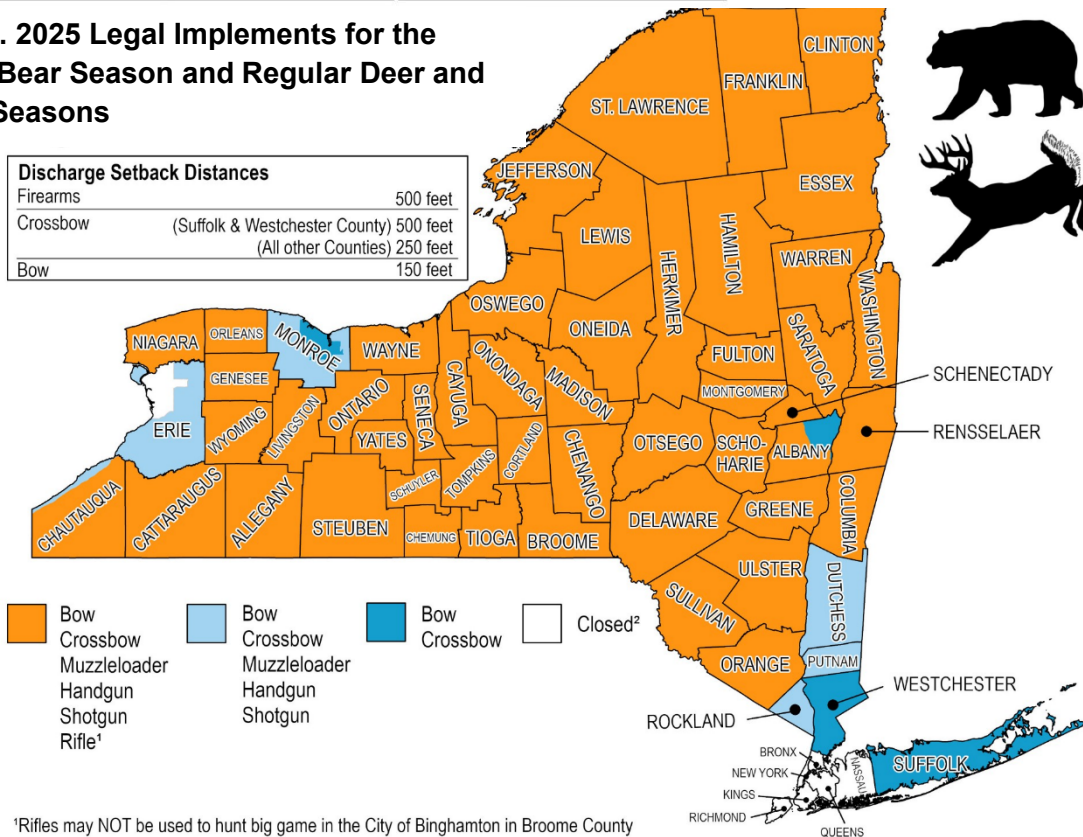
2025 Black Bear Hunting Seasons & Legal Implements

Please see DEC's [2025-26 Hunting & Trapping Regulations Guide](#) and [Deer and Bear Hunting](#) webpage for more information on the 2025 black bear hunting seasons, legal implements, and regulations (Maps 3 & 4).

Map 3. 2025 Deer and Bear Hunting Seasons



Map 4. 2025 Legal Implements for the Early Bear Season and Regular Deer and Bear Seasons



¹Rifles may NOT be used to hunt big game in the City of Binghamton in Broome County or the cities of Lockport, Niagara Falls, and North Tonawanda in Niagara County

²Some closed areas are too small to show on the map. Please see full descriptions of closed areas below.