

**BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR
BEAR DAU B-6
GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS
71, 711, 72, 73, 74, & 741**

Prepared for:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
West Region

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DESCRIPTION OF MANAGEMENT AREA AND HABITAT

This DAU is in the extreme southwest corner of Colorado, includes all of Montezuma County, most of Dolores County, and portions of La Plata, San Juan, and San Miguel Counties. This DAU has the 5th highest average bear harvest in the state (7% of total), the 14th highest cumulative damage payments (3% of total), and the 12th highest number of complaints (2% of total).

Bears are an opportunistic omnivore, meaning they will eat a variety of plant and animal matter depending on availability and season of year. Bears are classified as a big game animal, and their population is primarily managed through natural self-regulation and sport harvest. Bears do have impacts on other wildlife species populations, but control of another wildlife species population has not been documented scientifically, rather, bears are one of many factors that may slow the recovery of small populations or accelerate the decline of small populations. Specific targeted control of bear populations may be warranted in special situations, and can be initiated under the Mammalian Predator Management Policy of the Colorado Wildlife Commission (September 1999).

TOTAL BEAR HARVEST OBJECTIVE: From 1988 to 1998, this DAU averaged 35 bears harvested per year, with a range of 20-49. During the same period, the proportion of females in the harvest has averaged 35%, and ranged from 20 to 46%. Sport harvest accounted for 91% of the total harvest, while non-sport harvest has ranged from 0-7 per year.

OBJECTIVE TOTAL HARVEST: For this DAU should be a maximum of 50 as a 3-year average, with a sport harvest objective maximum of 45 as a 3-year average. When these maximum harvests are exceeded for a 3-year period, action should be taken to limit the harvest, or the population reevaluated to maintain a sport harvest within 9-12% of the total population.

TOTAL BEAR DAMAGE OBJECTIVE: From FY 87-88 to FY 97-98, this DAU averaged \$3,559 per year in

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game damage claims paid, with a range of \$135-12,497. The type of claim has varied; sheep claims have averaged \$1,363 (\$85-3,925), cattle claims have averaged \$510 (\$0-2,390), beehives \$653 (\$0-1,910), and all others \$1,014 (\$0-6,176).

This DAU should be managed to keep damage claims below \$4,000 on a 3-year average. When that number is exceeded, appropriate action should be taken, such as hiring an investigator/adjustor to verify the claims, or consider a "1 strike rule" when a pattern suggests that a single bear or family group is involved.

NUISANCE BEAR COMPLAINTS: Nuisance complaints have been tracked for 4 years. The number of complaints, type of complaint, and distribution of complaints (locally, regionally, and statewide, seasonally) are highly variable, and these data are not collected consistently from all districts. This DAU has averaged 12 complaints per year (7, 15, 4, 20).

Complaints should be kept below 20 on a 3-year average, until additional effort is taken to reduce the complaints (primarily intensified education and information effort).