



## **Spring Black Bear Hunt Policy**

### **Background**

Black Bear, along with moose is a prime big game animal in Ontario. The spring bear hunt had an estimated economic benefit of \$40 million per year to the Province of Ontario. The activity occurs during the shoulder season when very few other resource based tourism activities are available, and extends the tourism season by 4 to 8 weeks. Tourists who travel to Quebec or Manitoba for a spring bear hunt are likely to return to those provinces for fishing trips or other tourism activities in the same year, thus depriving Ontario of additional economic opportunities.

A spring black bear hunt is a sustainable and ethical activity that assists in black bear management and brings significant economic and social benefits to Ontario. These benefits include:

- Employment
- Economic return
- Diversified recreational opportunities
- Reduction of potential hazards from an increasing population of bears.

An appropriately regulated spring black bear hunt meets the criteria that the people of Ontario expect to be applied to any hunting activity.

- The population must be sustained
- The method of harvest must be humane
- Public Safety should be ensured

### **Policy**

A properly regulated spring black bear hunt over bait is an ethical recreational activity, which clearly meets the accepted criteria that should be used in evaluating any hunting activity. In order to utilize a valuable renewable resource for the social and economic benefit of the people of Ontario, and to assist in sound resource management, the spring black bear hunt should be immediately reinstated:

### **The Population is Sustainable**

- The black bear population is stable or growing
- No sustainability concerns were raised during the spring hunt

- A spring hunt skews the harvest towards immature male black bear



- A spring hunt removes animals before the peak food season, helping to insure the health of the remaining population
- Spring hunt over baits allows hunters to avoid harvesting sows with cubs, since these animals avoid sites frequented by other bears, and baiting allows for easy identification of nursing bears.
- Reducing the population of male bears in the spring reduces mortality of sows and cubs due to cannibalism by male bears.
- The meat and hide of bears are of the highest quality in the spring

### **The Method of Harvest Insured as Humane**

- The spring hunt was cancelled to avoid “Orphaning cubs”, but statistics show that cub orphaning has increased dramatically since the cancellation due to cannibalization by other bears. There has been indiscriminate killing of both mothers and cubs in populated areas in an effort to control “nuisance bears”.
- Hunting over bait provides for clear target identification, and shot placement to insure a clean, humane kill
- Foliage is generally less dense in the spring, improving identification and shot placement
- Sows with cubs are much more readily identified in the spring due to the obvious physical developments for nursing, and the fact that the young cubs remain close to their mother.

### **Protection of Public Safety**

- A proper management strategy for bear will ensure a sustainable bear population and reduce encounters with humans in populated areas
- There are very few other recreational users in the woods at the time of a spring bear hunt
- Visibility is relatively good in spring
- Hunting over baits provides clear sight lines and a known shooting direction
- Hunting over baits greatly reduces the chance of wounding bear
- Bait sites condition bears to seek food in the bush, rather than in populated areas
- The comparative study conducted by the Province of Manitoba demonstrated a clear link between spring bear hunts and reduced nuisance bear activity.

*Adopted by the NOTO Board of Directors April 12, 2006.*