

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Diane R. Eggeman, Director, Hunting and Game Management  
**Date:** September 2, 2015  
**Subject:** Bear Harvest Objectives

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this item is to request approval of bear harvest objectives for the 2015 bear hunting season for the East Panhandle Bear Management Unit (BMU), North BMU, Central BMU, and South BMU.

**Summary:**

At the June meeting, the Commission approved final rules establishing a bear hunting season for 2015 in four (East Panhandle, North, Central and South) of the seven BMUs. The goal is to stabilize the bear population in these four BMUs by using hunting to achieve 20% total mortality in each population (the scientifically based mortality rate needed to offset reproduction) based on the most recent population estimates obtained from studies in 2002 (East Panhandle and South) and 2014 (North and Central). Harvest will be limited based on BMU-specific objectives established according to these estimates. Harvest objectives will be set by Order of Executive Director, after approval of Commission, based on the biologically sustainable portion of the BMU population available for harvest. The proposed harvest objectives (below) result from taking 20% of the BMU population estimate and subtracting the recent average of annual known mortality. Annual known mortality includes the number of bears hit and killed by cars as well as the number of bears that the FWC captures and kills for conflict behavior. Because of annual variation in these numbers, an average of the last 3 years of both vehicle strikes and conflict-related removals will be used to estimate the non-hunting mortality for 2015. The harvest objective for the South BMU was reduced to take into account that the Big Cypress National Preserve (i.e., Big Cypress Wildlife Management Area) would not be open for hunting in 2015.

BMU (Study Year)	Population Estimate	20% of Population Estimate	Known Mortality (Average)	Harvest Objective
East Panhandle (2002)	600	120	80	40
North (2014)	550	110	10	100
Central (2014)	1,300	260	160	100
South (2002)	700	140	20	80

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approve staff recommendation for the bear harvest objectives for the 2015 bear hunting season and authorize Executive Director to establish same by Executive Order.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Diane R. Eggeman, Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management