

# Wisconsin Black Bear Harvest Report 2014

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## **Abstract**

Wisconsin bear hunters killed 4,526 black bears during the 2014 season. This was 15% higher than the 2013 kill of 3,952 bears. The 2014 kill was comprised of 50% males, 49% females, and 1% unknowns. The three leading counties of kill were Bayfield, Price, and Rusk.

## **Background**

Wisconsin requires non-Chippewa hunters to obtain a bear harvest permit to kill a bear. The state is divided into four Bear Management Zones (BMZ, Fig. 1), and hunters are required to apply for a permit within one of those zones. Kill permits are distributed through a preference point system giving unsuccessful applicants who applied, but did not receive a permit in previous years the first chance to receive a kill permit the following year. Each kill permit allows the taking of one adult bear not accompanied by a cub or cubs in the specified zone. A permit to pursue bear is available to all unsuccessful harvest permit applicants who request it; however this permit does not allow the killing of a bear.

Wisconsin's bear season has opened on the first Wednesday after Labor Day since the 2000 season. The 2014 bear season ran from 9 September through 13 October (35 days). In the northern 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the state (BMZ A, B and D), hunting with the use of dogs was allowed 9 September- 6 October while the use of bait was allowed during 16 September – 13 October. Hunters in the southern 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the state (BMZ C) could hunt the entire 35-day season with the use of bait and all methods not utilizing dogs.

## **Methods**

Wisconsin requires non-Chippewa bear hunters to register all bear at a designated WDNR registration station. An upper first premolar is collected at the time of registration for age analysis. Data on bear harvested by Chippewa tribal members on ceded lands were obtained from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). All kill data is entered into the DNR-centralized computer system by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

## **Results**

A total of 108,271 people applied for a record 10,340 black bear harvest permits in 2014. The number of applicants increased by 1.6% and the number of permits increased 20.8% between 2013 and 2014 (Tables 1 and 10). A total of 10,340 permits were offered to hunters prior to the season. A statewide tetracycline mark-recapture study in 2006 and 2011 resulted in an increased population estimate from previous population estimates for the state. While bear numbers have dropped in parts of the state, the bear population has not declined in response to management actions taken in the Northwest area of the state (Zone D). Quota and permits have remained high in these areas.

During the 2014 season, 10,340 hunters killed 4,526 black bears (43.8% success rate), compared to 3,952 taken in 2013. Males comprised 49.8% (2,255), females 48.8% (2,210) of the harvest (Table 2, Fig. 2). The sex was not reported for 61 (1.3%) of the bears killed.

The Northern Region had the highest bear kill (3,590) followed by West Central (526), and Northeast (410) Regions (Table 2). The most bears were shot in Zone D (1,444) followed by Zones A (1,315), C (1,024), and B (738) (Table 3 and Figure 1). The five leading counties of kill were Bayfield (445), Price (321), Rusk (307), Sawyer (291) and Douglas (279) (Table 4, Fig. 3). Black bear kill by game management unit can be found in Table 5 and Figure 4. This year's harvest was the third highest in the history of the state.

The number of bear taken over bait alone (3,395; Table 6) was greater than the number shot over dogs (995; includes bear shot over dogs and bait). Sixty-nine bear were taken without the use of dogs or bait. Gun hunters took a total of 3,776 bear, while archers killed 695; 16 bear were killed with unreported weapon type (Table 6). Table 7 and Figure 5 summarize the historical Wisconsin black bear kill from 1957 through 2014.

Chippewa hunters killed 39 bear in 2014 (Tables 8 and 9); this was more than the 35 killed in 2013. More information on the Chippewa bear kill can be obtained by contacting the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861.

A total of 832 black bear complaints were filed from January-December 2014. This was slightly more than the number of complaints (800) filed in 2013. As a result, 434 bear were captured and relocated from problem areas. This was less than the 487 that were moved in 2013.

Four nuisance bear shooting permits and twenty-five agricultural damage bear shooting permits were issued in eleven different counties during the spring, summer, and fall of 2014. One hundred sixteen kill tags were issued to these permit holders, tag numbers ranged from 1 to 15 for each permit holder. At least forty-seven bear were killed under the agriculture damage shooting permits. One bear was killed on the nuisance permits in 2014. In 2013, Thirty-eight agriculture damage bear shooting permits were issued with at least forty-three bear being killed. Six nuisance bear shooting permit were issued in 2013 with no bears killed under those permits.

Most of the corn crop was past the milk stage prior to the bear season opening, but as is usual a predominance of natural foods during the first part of the bear hunting season may have caused bears to visit bait sites with less regularity. Bait stations continued to be visited by bears with at least some degree of activity throughout much of the hunting season. Much of September saw average to slightly below temperatures with above normal precipitation. While the wet conditions may have had a limited effect on access of remote areas, temperatures should have been conducive to hunters pursuing bears. The 2014 bear kill of 4,526 was the third highest ever and very close to the WDNR harvest goal of 4,700 bears. Hunter success in 2014 was 44%, below the long-term average of 55%.

The WDNR Black Bear Advisory Committee, with support from GLIFWC, USFS, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, and the Wisconsin

Conservation Congress established a harvest goal of 4,750 bears for the 2015 season. A total of 10,690 Black Bear harvest permits will be available to hunters to achieve this goal.

**Table 1.** *Harvest goal, number of permits issued, bear kill and percent success, by zone for the 2014 black bear season.*

Zone	Harvest Goal	Permits Issued	Black Bear Kill	Permit Success
A	1,100	2,070	1,315	64%
B	650	990	738	75%
C	1,350	5,050	1,024	20%
D	1,600	2,230	1,444	65%
Unknown			5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,700</b>	<b>10,340</b>	<b>4,526</b>	<b>44%</b>

**Table 2.** *Black bear kill by WDNR region, 2014.*

Region	Males	Females	Unreported	Total
Northeastern	226	175	9	410
Northern	1,758	1,789	43	3,590
West Central	271	246	9	526
Unknown	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4,526</b>

**Table 3.** *Black bear kill by zone, 2014.*

Zone	Males	Females	Unreported	Total
A	691	599	25	1,315
B	332	398	8	738
C	559	451	14	1,024
D	671	759	14	1,444
Unknown	2	3	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4,526</b>

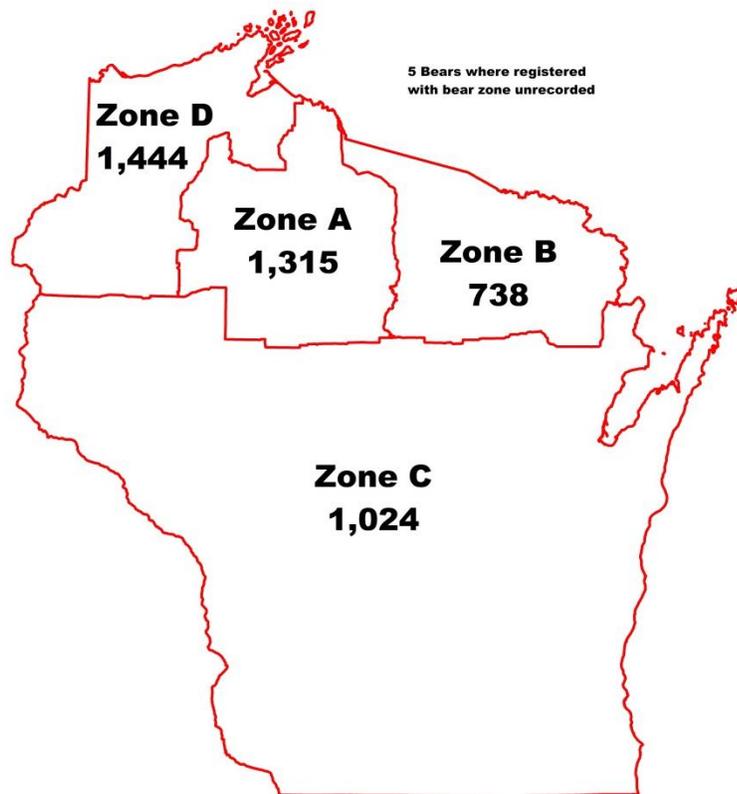


Figure 1. The 2014 black bear kill by zone.

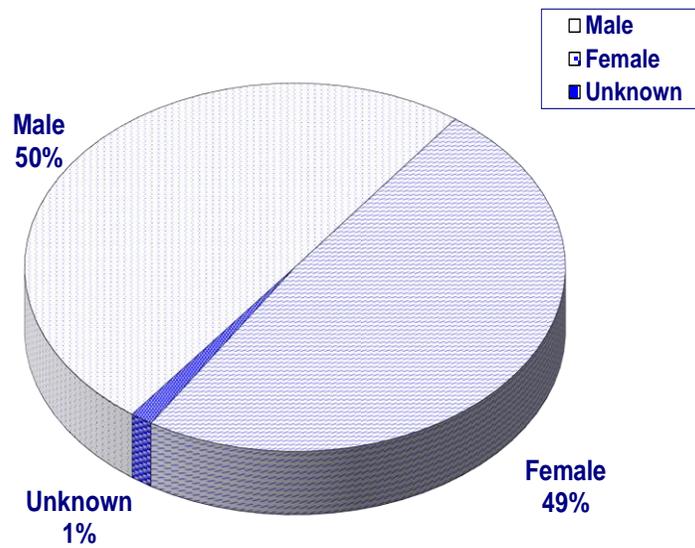
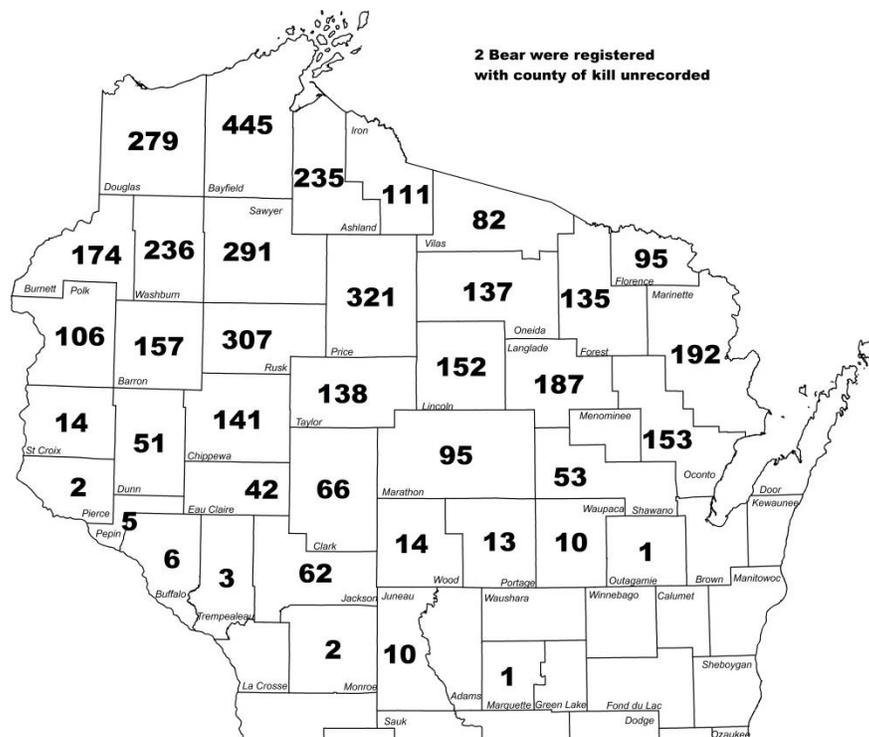


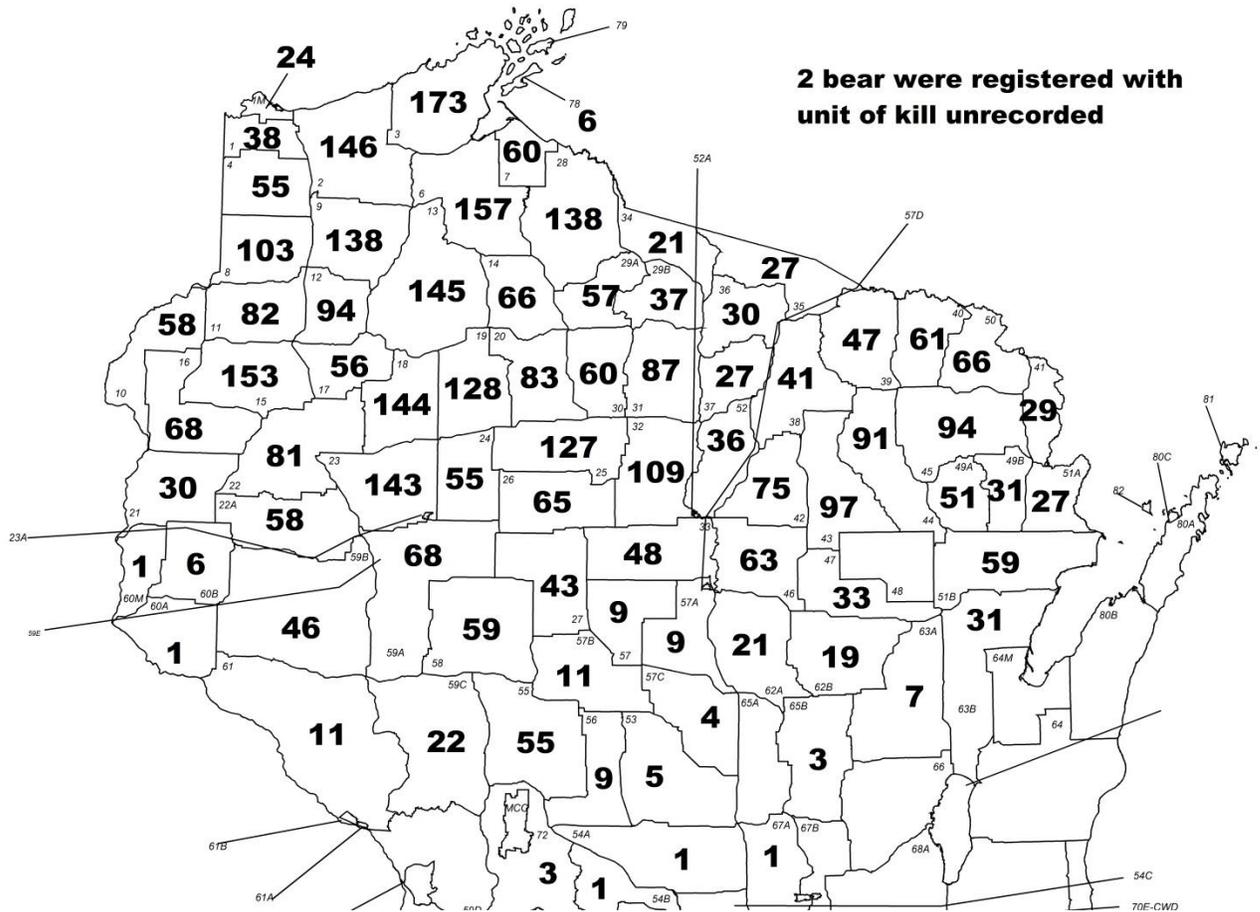
Figure 2. The 2014 black bear harvest by sex.



**Figure 3.** The 2014 black bear kill by county.

**Table 4.** The 2014 black bear kill by county and sex.

County	Males	Females	Un-		County	Males	Females	Un-	
			reported	Total				reported	Total
Ashland	124	105	6	235	Oconto	84	62	7	153
Barron	76	80	1	157	Oneida	69	68	0	137
Bayfield	242	200	3	445	Outagamie	1	0	0	1
Buffalo	3	3	0	6	Pepin	4	1	0	5
Burnett	87	86	1	174	Pierce	2	0	0	2
Chippewa	64	75	2	141	Polk	43	63	0	106
Clark	32	31	3	66	Portage	6	7	0	13
Douglas	138	137	4	279	Price	164	152	5	321
Dunn	27	22	2	51	Rusk	154	147	6	307
Eau Claire	13	29	0	42	St. Croix	9	5	0	14
Florence	38	57	0	95	Sawyer	137	148	6	291
Forest	55	80	0	135	Shawano	34	18	1	53
Iron	68	42	1	111	Taylor	72	64	2	138
Jackson	37	24	1	62	Trempealeau	1	2	0	3
Juneau	5	5	0	10	Vilas	37	44	1	82
Langlade	99	87	1	187	Washburn	79	152	5	236
Lincoln	75	76	1	152	Waupaca	7	3	0	10
Marathon	58	36	1	95	Wood	8	6	0	14
Marinette	99	92	1	192	Unknown	1	1	0	2
Marquette	1	0	0	1					
Monroe	2	0	0	2	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4,526</b>



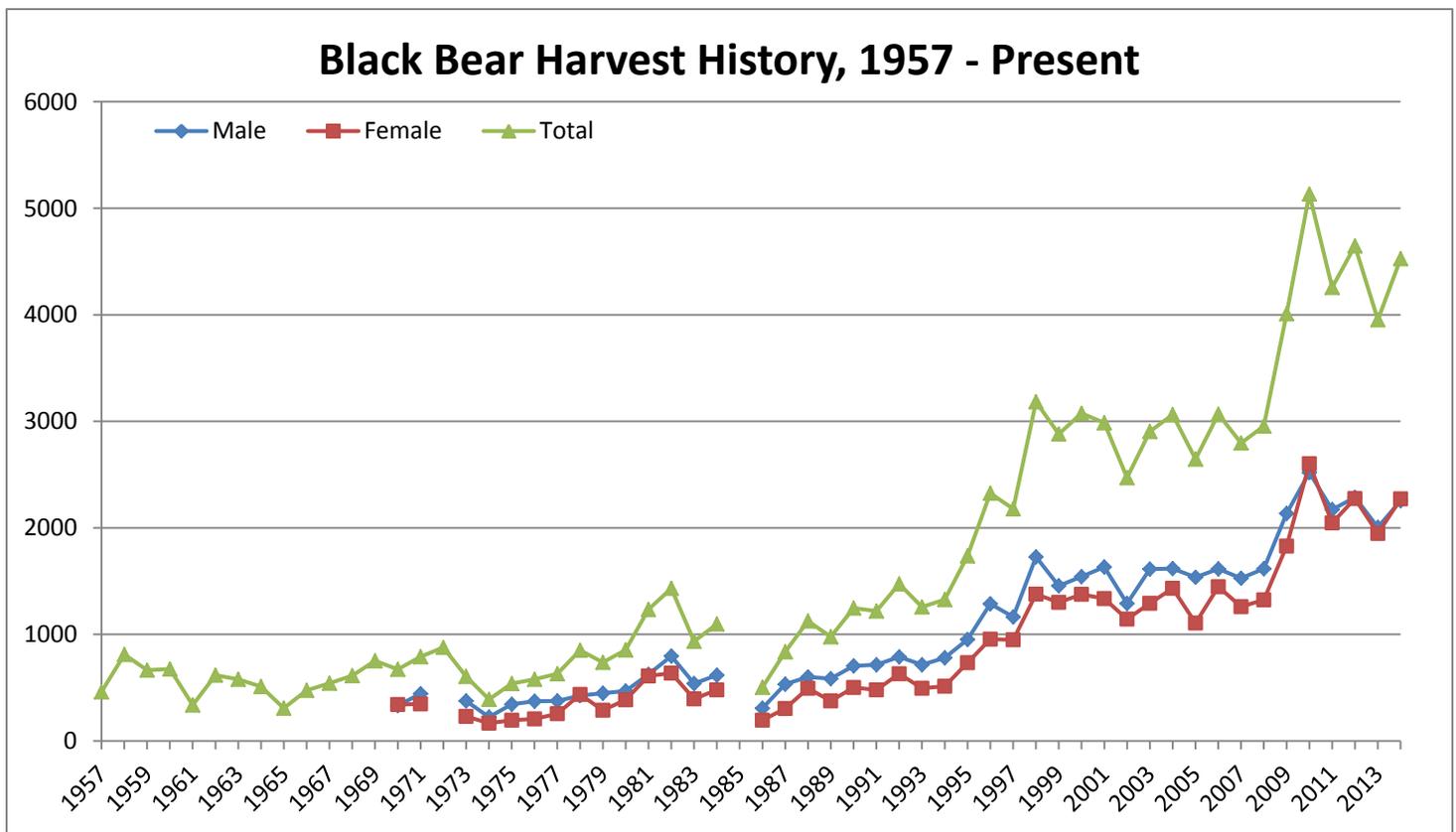
**Figure 4.** *The 2014 black bear kill by game management unit.*

**Table 5.** *The 2014 black bear harvest by game management unit and sex.*

Unit	Males	Females	Unks	Total	Unit	Males	Females	Unks	Total
1	11	27	0	38	40	23	38	0	61
2	80	63	3	146	41	19	10	0	29
3	84	87	2	173	42	31	43	1	75
4	32	22	1	55	43	53	44	0	97
6	91	65	1	157	44	50	38	3	91
7	30	30	0	60	45	43	50	1	94
8	53	49	1	103	46	37	25	1	63
9	62	75	1	138	47	16	17	0	33
10	30	28	0	58	49A	24	26	1	51
11	38	43	1	82	49B	7	23	1	31
12	29	63	2	94	50	30	36	0	66
13	85	57	3	145	51A	17	10	0	27
14	30	32	4	66	51B	37	20	2	59
15	64	86	3	153	52	13	23	0	36
16	24	44	0	68	53	2	3	0	5
17	18	38	0	56	54A	0	1	0	1
18	73	70	1	144	54B	1	0	0	1
19	58	66	4	128	55	34	19	2	55
1M	15	9	0	24	56	6	3	0	9
20	44	39	0	83	57	4	5	0	9
21	17	13	0	30	57A	4	5	0	9
22	37	44	0	81	57B	5	6	0	11
22A	28	27	3	58	57C	3	1	0	4
23	77	65	1	143	58	21	37	1	59
24	33	22	0	55	59A	25	43	0	68
25	63	60	4	127	59B	25	19	2	46
26	33	30	2	65	59C	11	11	0	22
27	22	20	1	43	60A	1	0	0	1
28	83	53	2	138	60B	4	2	0	6
29A	25	32	0	57	60M	1	0	0	1
29B	20	17	0	37	61	5	6	0	11
30	34	25	1	60	62A	12	9	0	21
31	41	46	0	87	62B	15	4	0	19
32	57	49	3	109	63A	5	2	0	7
33	33	15	0	48	63B	17	13	1	31
34	10	11	0	21	65B	1	2	0	3
35	11	15	1	27	67A	1	0	0	1
36	15	15	0	30	72	1	2	0	3
37	16	11	0	27	78	2	4	0	6
38	23	18	0	41	Unk	1	1	0	2
39	19	28	0	47	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4,526</b>

**Table 6.** The 2014 black bear kill by hunting method and weapon type (does not include Chippewa harvest of 39 bear).

Method	Weapon			Total
	Bow	Gun	Unreported	
Dogs	16	536	1	553
Bait	658	2,727	10	3,395
Dogs and Bait	12	427	3	442
None	8	60	1	69
Unknown	1	26	1	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>3,776</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4,487</b>



**Figure 5.** Black bear kill, 1957-2014.

**Table 7. Black bear kill by sex, 1957-2014.**

Year	Male	Female	Unk	Total	Year	Male	Female	Unk	Total
1957	---	---		460	1987	533	304		837
1958	---	---		811	1988	601	494	30	1,125
1959	---	---		665	1989	584	375	19	978
1960	---	---		675	1990	705	501	41	1,247
1961	---	---		337	1991	715	480	24	1,219
1962	----	---		617	1992	789	631	54	1,474
1963	---	---		579	1993	715	494	49	1,258
1964	---	---		511	1994	781	513	34	1,328
1965	---	---		308	1995	953	735	49	1,737
1966	---	---		475	1996	1,288	955	82	2,325
1967	---	---		541	1997	1,165	950	63	2,178
1968	---	---		613	1998	1,727	1,378	79	3,184
1969	---	---		752	1999	1,456	1,301	124	2,881
1970	331	341		672	2000	1,543	1,376	156	3,075
1971	444	347		791	2001	1,632	1,336	18	2,986
1972	---	---		878	2002	1,290	1,143	38	2,471
1973	376	230		606	2003	1,613	1,288	4	2,905
1974	224	166		390	2004	1,618	1,433	12	3,063
1975	344	195		539	2005	1,537	1,107	1	2,645
1976	373	206		579	2006	1,615	1,448	5	3,068
1977	375	256		631	2007	1,528	1,261	8	2,797
1978	426	436	10	872	2008	1,616	1,324	15	2,955
1979	449	288		737	2009	2,135	1,828	46	4,009
1980	469	386		855	2010	2,519	2,602	12	5,133
1981	624	610		1,234	2011	2,171	2,047	39	4,257
1982	797	636		1,433	2012	2,287	2,275	84	4,646
1983	539	395		934	2013	2,005	1,888	59	3,952
1984	617	480		1,097	2014	2,255	2,210	61	4,526
1985	No	Season							
1986	308	195		503					

**Table 8.** *The 2014 Tribal black bear kill by deer management unit and sex<sup>1</sup>.*

<u>Deer Unit</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Totals</u>
01	0	1	1
02	1	0	1
03	4	10	14
04	2	1	3
05	1	0	1
06	2	2	4
10	1	0	1
11	2	0	2
15	1	0	1
26	0	1	1
29A	0	1	1
31	1	0	1
37	1	0	1
38	3	0	3
44	0	2	2
Unknown	1	1	2
<u>Totals</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>39</u>

<sup>1</sup> These data are included in the statewide totals.

**Table 10.** *The number of black bear harvest permits issued and the number of applicants, 1974-2015.*

Year	Residents	Non-residents	No. Permits Issued	No. of Applicants
1974	3,459		3,459	3,459
1975	4,116		4,116	4,116
1976	4,899		4,899	4,899
1977	5,025		5,025	5,025
1978	6,283		6,283	6,283
1979	5,612	179	5,791	5,791
1980	6,352	171	6,523	6,523
1981	7,247	241	7,488	7,488
1982	8,142	224	8,366	8,366
1983	7,077	218	7,295	7,295
1984	6,439	320	6,759	6,759
1985		Season	Closed	
1986			840	8,289
1987			1,730	10,203
1988			1,663	10,208
1989			2,020	13,734
1990			2,825	15,988
1991			2,560	17,668
1992			2,620	19,415
1993			2,110	22,555
1994			2,175	25,799
1995			2,710	30,086
1996			4,570	35,356
1997			4,700	41,969
1998			5,860	44,928
1999			6,014	50,938
2000			6,598	50,601
2001			5,681	53,508
2002			4,985	54,879
2003			4,710	56,944
2004			4,741	61,726
2005			4,549	66,777
2006			4,277	68,821
2007			4,405	80,213
2008			4,660	86,138
2009			7,310	95,384
2010			8,910	97,467
2011			9,005	103,854
2012			9,015	104,391
2013			8,560	106,573
2014			10,340	108,271
2015			10,690	109,088