

From: [Robert Cox](#)
To: [Emerson, Kathy](#); [Stark, Katherine](#)
Subject: FW: Comment re 2020 Bear Hunt quota
Date: Monday, April 27, 2020 9:43:08 AM

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For the April 29th Wildlife meeting public comment thanks

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From: Karen Boeger [mailto:kboeger1011@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2020 9:34 AM
To: Steve@nevadaperio.com
Cc: Robert Cox
Subject: Comment re 2020 Bear Hunt quota

Pre-script:

Dear Chairman Cox and Washoe CAB members:
I am sending the Wildlife Commission comment letter, pasted below to you, as both information and as a comment for your consideration at the CAB meeting this Wednesday eve.
Thank you,
Karen Boeger

April 27, 2020
Re: Bear Hunt proposed quotas

Dear Chairman Johnston and fellow Wildlife Commissioners,

I write you today as a concerned citizen conservationist, rather than as past Policy Chair of NV Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. I have the good fortune to live in a cabin rented from friends at Washoe Pines Ranch, a place where we live much of the year with black bear “visitations”. My observations are obviously not science-based, nor am I a biologist, but they do extend over the almost 50 years of my association with this ranch, long before I lived here.

In our experience, the bears are mainly preoccupied in the Spring a bit higher on the mountain, but by Summer they come down to explore what they can forage. By Fall, when the fruit on the fruit trees has ripened, we see the highest number. The bear protocol here has always been to keep the dumpster locked down, to not deposit any meat/fish/otherwise smelly scraps (which we freeze) until the day of pickup, keep outdoor BBQs cleaned up after use, no plates

or food left outside or in cars. Winter is the only season in which we put out seed for the birds.

Over the decades, I have seen the numbers on this ranch rise from a solo bear, sometimes with cubs, to the current numerous and thus more troublesome bears. Increasingly over those decades bears have been sighted during the day, rather than the solo bear visitation during the night. Depredation on the fruit trees has increased, as has the damage to limbs (even life of the tree), and grown closer to the houses, including right beside them, despite the presence of dogs. The rare call to NDOW for assistance with a problem bear, has turned into several times a season. But since the arrival of beehives to the ranch, we cannot call for assistance, an understandable restriction.

The ranch manager is a bee-keeper with responsibility for a number of hives, not only throughout Washoe Valley, but further north in Washoe County and south to Yerrington. The hives here had been protected by electric fencing until the night several years ago when one bear figured out how to disable the system. Now the hives are kept up on a high flat-bed stake truck. That said, the hives in Washoe Valley have been increasingly marauded by bears starting on this West side and working their way over to the East side a couple years ago. Last year our manager said most of the hives he care-takes all over this side of the state have experienced bear damage to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars.

While fully understanding that hives are an attractant to bears, it is a troubling conundrum that bees, so vitally important to not only our agriculture industry, but also the health of wildlife habitat, are significantly impacted by annually increasing numbers of bears, presumably seeking to expand their territory. Conversely, ranchers in Nevada are issued depredation tags for elk damage to their pastures. In addition, the Elk Plan agreements with the ranchers specify maximum numbers of elk on specific regions of our public lands. NDOW must issue more hunt tags when those numbers are exceeded. In my view, bees are every bit as important as livestock forage, indeed are critical to the abundance of that forage. I propose NDOW consider a science-based compensation program for bee-keepers, tied to regional bear population numbers.

All of these anecdotes are intended to support my observational belief that the bear population in the Tahoe Basin in particular (Washoe Pines Ranch is at the East side base of the Sierras encircling Tahoe) has vastly outgrown it's habitat and are struggling to travel through human populated areas (Washoe Valley) to reach new habitat open to bear repopulation. In the process of that emigration, the bears get into trouble with humans, bees and automobiles. Bear fatalities by euthanasia and motorists exceed that of hunting and have the added indignity of non-utilization of meat and hide. In my view, these statistics indicate that the bear hunt quotas remain too low for the health of the bears and bear habitat.

I applaud the work of our NDOW biologists and decision-makers for the scrupulousness of their data collection leading to science-based decision making in accordance with the North American Model of Conservation (NAMC), successful for well over a century in restoring our wildlife populations and sustaining them for the future. The data clearly indicates the proposed 2020 bear quotas are conservative by any measure. I fully understand the perception that bear hunt quotas need remain conservative, as there remain a vocal part of the public that seemingly do not understand the wisdom and value of the NAMC, nor the fact of that it is hunter dollars that support the bear program for both public education and relocation of "troublesome" bears.

In summary, I fully support the Commission continuing their mandate, as in the past, to adhere to the NAMC and make the responsible science-based decision to approve the 2020 quota. That said, given current data indicating the abundance of bears, I urge you to advise NDOW to increase the quota in years to come in order to provide the vital balance between site-specific bear populations and the carrying capacity of bear habitat. To do otherwise adds to unnecessary deaths of bears by other means than a purposeful harvest to keep both bears and their habitat healthy. A potential beneficial side effect of re-balancing bear numbers with habitat capacity could be diminishment of bee hive depredation, adding to habitat health (and alfalfa crops :-).

Thank you for your consideration of my comments,
Karen Boeger