

PRELIMINARY STATEWIDE BEAR HARVEST RESULTS

2017 statewide season harvest 1,796 – an about 30 percent decrease compared to the 2,579 bears taken during the four days of the statewide season in 2016.

Extensive rain on the season's opening day, Nov. 18, led to the harvest decline.

Archery and other early-bear season harvest data is not included in this report. Comprehensive bear harvest totals that include bears taken during the early and extended seasons will be released in the coming months.

During the statewide season, bears were harvested in 54 counties.

The top 10 bears processed at check stations were either estimated or confirmed to have live weights of 576 pounds or more.

The state's heaviest bear in the statewide season – a male estimated at 700 pounds – was taken in Oil Creek Township, Venango County, by Chad A. Wagner, of Titusville, Pa. He took it with a rifle at about 8 a.m. on Nov. 18, the season's opening day.

The overall 2016 bear harvest was 3,529, the fifth-largest in state history. In 2015, hunters took a total of 3,748 bears – the third-largest harvest all time. The largest harvest – 4,350 bears – happened in 2011, when preliminary statewide season totals numbered 3,154.

The preliminary statewide season bear harvest by Wildlife Management Unit was as follows: **WMU 1A**, 14 (27 in 2016); **WMU 1B**, 58 (99); **WMU 2A**, 1 (1); **WMU 2C**, 91 (192); **WMU 2D**, 102 (79); **WMU 2E**, 27 (54); **WMU 2F**, 191 (276); **WMU 2G**, 388 (515); **WMU 2H**, 75 (92); **WMU 3A**, 111 (144); **WMU 3B**, 182 (165); **WMU 3C**, 85 (56); **WMU 3D**, 185 (167); **WMU 4A**, 75 (108); **WMU 4B**, 38 (69); **WMU 4C**, 48 (64); **WMU 4D**, 89 (158); **WMU 4E**, 33 (40); and **WMU 5A**, 3 (1).

The top bear hunting county in the statewide season was Lycoming County with 130 bears Statewide season harvests by county and region are:

Northwest (286): Warren, 84 (106); Jefferson, 48 (60); Venango, 43 (75); Clarion, 34 (42); Forest, 31 (64); Crawford, 22 (34); Butler, 12 (8); Erie, 6 (11); and Mercer, 6 (7).

Southwest (126): Somerset, 42 (76); Armstrong, 31 (19); Fayette, 27 (49); Westmoreland, 10 (29); Indiana, 8 (26); and Cambria, 8 (16).

Northcentral (754): Lycoming, 130 (156); Tioga, 127 (143); Potter, 118 (126); Clinton, 115 (179); Elk, 64 (66); McKean, 62 (88); Clearfield, 51 (87); Cameron, 42 (66); Centre, 34 (71); and Union, 11 (13).

Southcentral (162): Huntingdon, 46 (51); Bedford, 33 (59); Fulton, 21 (28); Mifflin, 13 (20); Perry, 12 (28); Juniata, 11 (27); Franklin, 9 (11); Blair, 8 (21); Cumberland, 4 (3); Adams, 3 (0) and Snyder, 2 (8).

Northeast (438): Pike, 94 (50); Sullivan, 63 (37); Wayne, 60 (40); Luzerne, 36 (62); Monroe, 36 (46); Wyoming, 30 (22); Bradford, 28 (39); Lackawanna, 27 (25); Carbon, 25 (22); Susquehanna, 20 (24); Columbia, 10 (20); Northumberland, 3 (1); and Montour, 1 (1).

Southeast (30): Dauphin, 15 (21); Schuylkill, 7 (16); Berks 4 (1); Lebanon, 2 (7); and Northampton, 2 (1).

WORKING GROUP MEETING SCHEDULED

The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners has scheduled a public, working group meeting for Monday, Dec. 18 at the Game Commission's headquarters in Harrisburg.

The meeting is slated to begin at 8:30 a.m.

The Board of Game Commissioners' next quarterly meeting is scheduled to be held Jan. 28 through 30 at the Harrisburg headquarters. The board will hear public comments, limited to five minutes per speaker, at the Jan. 28 and 29 meetings.

RECENTLY APPROVED ELECTRONIC DEVICES NOW LAWFUL FOR HUNTING

Four electronic devices recently approved for use while hunting now may be used afield.

Within established seasons, hunters now may use electronic decoys in hunting waterfowl; electronic dove decoys solely for hunting doves; electronically heated scent or lure dispensers; and electronic devices that distribute ozone gas for scent-control purposes.

The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners in September gave final approval to a measure to allow the devices, but with all regulatory changes, the changes do not become law until they are published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

The changes will be published in the Nov. 18 Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Electronic devices generally are prohibited for hunting use in Pennsylvania, but the Game Commission over the years has received requests to review several specific electronic devices, and has approved some of them for hunting use. As part of the review process, the Game Commission evaluates to what degree a given device might negatively impact the principles of resource conservation, equal opportunity, fair chase and public safety.

In reviewing the devices that recently were approved for hunting use, the Game Commission identified no negative impacts that would result from their use.

Other electronic devices that are permitted for use while hunting or trapping in Pennsylvania are:

- Firearms that use an electronic impulse to initiate discharge of their ammunition
- Electronic sound-amplification devices incorporated into hearing protection devices and completely contained in or on a hunter's ear
- Electronic devices used for locating dogs while training and hunting
- Electronic illuminating devices affixed to the aft end of a bolt or arrow and used solely for locating or tracking a bolt or arrow after it is launched
- Electronic crow decoys used solely for hunting crows

- **Electronic rangefinders, including handheld devices and those contained within a scope or archery sight, so long that it does not emit a beam**

The Nov. 18 Pennsylvania Bulletin also contains regulatory changes that make it lawful to use semiautomatic rifles and air guns for hunting small game and furbearers within the state's Special Regulations Areas.

Air guns need to be between .177 and .22 caliber when used within Special Regulations Areas to hunt small game, woodchucks or furbearers.

Semiautomatic rifles need to be .22 caliber rimfire or less to hunt small game, woodchucks or furbearers within Special Regulations Areas.

These requirements vary slightly from those applying elsewhere in the state, where air guns used for small game must be between .177 and .22 caliber; and .22 caliber or larger when hunting woodchucks and furbearers.

Outside of Special Regulations Areas, semiautomatic rifles must be .22 caliber rimfire or less when used for small game, and there is no caliber restriction for woodchucks or furbearers. Only single-projectile ammunition may be used.

Special Regulations Areas include all of Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties, and Ridley Creek and Tyler state parks during special controlled hunts.

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