

Dear Ms. LaCroix,

I am writing in strong opposition to the proposed spring bear hunt here in Maine (LD 337). It is my understanding that the details of the proposal have not yet been released, but I assume the claim of overpopulation will be made, or of bears posing an inconvenience to humans. Because that's what it is - black bears pose no threats to humans when allowed to live freely in their habitat. In all fairness, if we look at the situation objectively, I think any rational person would agree that humans are the ones who are overpopulated, and are by far the most destructive species on the planet. When bears become a "nuisance" or are deemed overpopulated, what is really happening is that humans are consuming more and more of their habitat, and wildlife spaces are being grossly encroached upon, so to someone who is not looking at the situation objectively, it appears the bears are encroaching on "our territory."

The health of our planet, and of our home state, is directly dependent on a healthy biosphere and rich biodiversity. Wild plants and animals, including bears, provide a plethora of benefits to our environment, which we all depend on. Everything has its place and purpose in this intricately connected web of life.

Not only is it unnecessary to open up another hunting season on these majestic animals, it is inherently cruel. The methods used - baiting, hounding, trapping - are so inhumane, they have no place in a civilized society, where the vast majority of people abhor these cruel methods and want greater protections for the wildlife, and wild spaces, we cherish. No other state in the nation allows all three of these cruel methods, and Maine should follow suit.

Killing bears in the spring, just as they've come out of their dens, is especially deplorable. There's a great chance of mothers being shot or trapped while out searching for food for their cubs, and when the mother is killed, the babies are destined for starvation, or become prey. Plus, there's increasing evidence that baiting actually increases bear numbers, so this is an ineffective tactic for keep bear populations low.

We already have a bear hunting season. We do not need another. These animals deserve to live, free from harm, for the better part of the year. Condoning the slaughter of animals Mainers love - animals who play an integral role in a healthy ecosystem - is unconscionable.

With the growing human population, irresponsible use and abuse of natural resources, and unwarranted mass slaughter of wildlife at the federal level (to appease cattle and sheep ranchers), wildlife is constantly under attack in this country. Decimating wildlife populations is so shortsighted, as these animals are necessary for the overall well-being of our planet, and ultimately of our own species. Let's not make the same mistakes our federal government is making. Let's protect what's left of the beauty and wildlife of the great state of Maine.

Thanks so much for your consideration.

Rebecca Tripp

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