

~~EXPLOITERS~~
**FRIENDS
of ANIMALS**

Feb. 8, 2019

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Legislative Committee
Cross Building, Room 206
State House Complex
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: Opposition LD 337

I am writing today to voice Friends of Animal's strong opposition to LD 337, which would allow a spring bear hunt in Maine. Friends of Animals is an international nonprofit that advocates for the rights of nonhuman animals, free-living and domestic

Maine already allows nearly three months of killing of black bears during its fall hunting season and is the only state in the nation to allow baiting, hounding as well as trapping of bears to kill them during hunts. Adding a spring season is ethically indefensible as it is a time when bears emerge from their dens with their cubs. If a mother is killed in a hunt, the cubs will die of starvation, predation and exposure. Often mothers can not be identified as such during a hunt because they leave their cubs to search for food.

Scientific studies show there is actually a weak correlation between the population of bears and bear attacks. Bear-human conflict is more closely correlated with human behavior, according to The Journal of Wildlife Management. There is increasing evidence that baiting bears during hunts actually boosts their numbers and survival rates. Bears also become more habituated to food attractants.

Instead of the shoot-first approach of extending the bear hunting season, Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife should be stepping up its educational outreach, reminding residents to avoid feeding the bears and to stop leaving out attractants such as bird feeders and unclean grills and to use bear resistant garbage cans. Hikers should carry bear spray and use bear bells while on trails so that unsuspecting bears with cubs are not startled.

Shooting bears does not teach the ones who aren't slaughtered not to be opportunistic feeders.

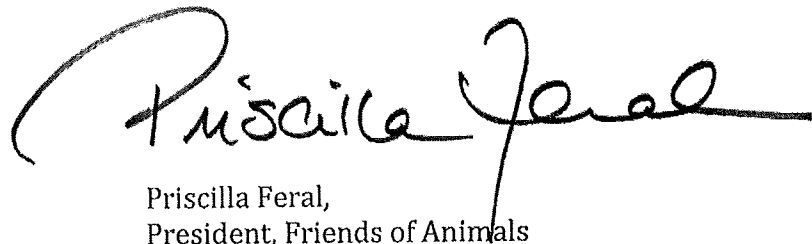
An Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies study called "Human Black Bear Conflicts" specifically and repeatedly notes that ***"The ultimate solution for most human bear conflict is eliminating the availability of anthropogenic food sources to bears."***

And let's remember that hunting is not without risk. There have been at least 15 hunting fatalities since the 1990s and well over 200 injuries in Maine.

The number of Maine residents with paid hunting licenses has dropped by 13 percent in the past five years, from 189,120 in 2013 to 163,191, according to figures from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Meanwhile, non-hunter wildlife watchers have steadily increased, bringing in more than \$1.4 million in revenue. An additional bear hunt alienates residents and tourists who come to Maine to view wildlife without having to fear injuries from hunters who slaughter them.

An additional spring bear hunt amounts to nothing more than giving a diminishing number of hunters the chance to garner trophies.

Sincerely,



Priscilla Feral,
President, Friends of Animals

Friends of Animals, an international animal protection organization founded in N.Y. in 1957 and headquartered in Darien, CT, advocates for the rights of free-living and domestic animals. FoA is proud to be a woman-founded and -led organization for more than 60 years.