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Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Proposed Changes to New Jersey Fish and Game Code to End Bear Hunt in 2021

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TRENTON – Today, Governor Phil Murphy announced that the New Jersey Fish and Game Council has proposed changes to the state’s Game Code that would end bear hunting in New Jersey after 2020. The Fish and Game Council, which has authority over the hunt, has proposed an amendment to the New Jersey Game Code that suspends the hunt and removes the current Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy from the Game Code.

These changes enable the Council and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to engage in a thorough review of the current scientific data to develop a new policy that promotes public safety and welfare while protecting New Jersey’s wildlife, with a focus on non-lethal bear-management techniques.

“With today’s announcement, we will end the bear hunt under my Administration and develop a new black bear policy that keeps public safety at the forefront of our concerns while protecting wildlife in the State,” **said Governor Murphy**. “I am grateful to the Fish and Game Council for their commitment to working with the Department of Environmental Protection to address this issue and chart a better way forward.”

“The DEP’s Division of Fish & Wildlife (DFW), in coordination with the independent Fish & Game Council, is committed to protecting public safety and wildlife,” **said DEP Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe**. “As DFW and the Council embark upon the data and policy analysis necessary to develop a new Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy, we will rely on the best available science, engage often with the public, and work to achieve the best balance. We look forward to continuing our productive dialogue with the Council on this and other important natural resource management priorities.”

“New Jersey’s Bear Hunt has had the reputation of being one of the cruelest bear hunts in the country,” **said Senator Vin Gopal**. “I am very thankful to Governor Murphy for making 2020’s Bear Hunt the last one ever in the state of New Jersey. This inhumane practice has gone on far too long, and it is time to eliminate it in its entirety on public and private lands.”

The rules proposed in today’s New Jersey Register are subject to a 60-day comment period. Pending the public comment process, the current Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy will be removed from the Game Code, which means that no bear hunt may proceed unless and until a new Policy is adopted. The Murphy Administration will prioritize non-lethal bear management strategies in any future Policy. Bear hunting will not proceed after the 2020 season under the Murphy Administration.

In August 2018, Governor Murphy signed an Executive Order directing the DEP to close all public lands under the Department’s jurisdiction to bear hunting for the 2018 season. That order prohibited bear hunting in all State forests, State parks, State recreation areas, State historic sites, State Wildlife Management Areas and State natural areas.

Governor Phil Murphy

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