

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

## GOVERNOR MURPHY SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER TO CLOSE STATE LANDS TO 2018 BEAR HUNT

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed an Executive Order directing the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to close all public lands under the Department's jurisdiction to bear hunting for the 2018 season. This includes all State forests, State parks, State recreation areas, State historic sites, State Wildlife Management Areas and State natural areas.

"Today, I am fulfilling my commitment to stop the bear hunt to the greatest extent of my authority by ordering the Department of Environmental Protection to prevent bear hunting on all public lands under the DEP's jurisdiction during the 2018 season," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "I am also calling on the Legislature to take action on this critical issue. My first concern has always been public safety and before we authorize another hunt, we should review all non-lethal options."

Prior to this action, Governor Murphy directed the Department of Environmental Protection to review the available science and consult with the New Jersey Fish and Game Council to determine if the state should pursue changes to the regulations authorizing the bear hunt. The implementation of this executive order represents the fullest extent of the Governor's legal power to unilaterally limit the bear hunt.

The New Jersey Fish and Game Council authorized bear hunts through 2021 under its regulatory authority.

The Council is independent from the Office of the Governor and the Department of Environmental Protection and is primarily composed of sportsmen and farmers. The Council has the sole authority to authorize a bear hunting season in New Jersey. Pursuant to a New Jersey Supreme Court decision in 2005 and other related court decisions, if the Council recommends a bear hunt and properly adopts regulations implementing a hunt, the Governor does not have the ability to unilaterally cancel it. In order for the hunt to be stopped, either the Legislature must act or the Council must adopt new regulations that do not include provisions for the hunt. The Council has authorized and held a bear hunt for the past eight years.

"Governor Murphy's actions today will stop the bear hunt on state-owned lands. This is the first real step we've had in a long time to limit the unnecessary bear hunt. The Christie Administration was more concerned with how many bears were killed than having a real management plan. We believe that today's action by the Governor is an important step in the right direction and will reduce the number of bear mortalities. We still need a full moratorium on the bear hunt this year and in future years. Just as important, we need a real bear management program that deals with education, garbage, protecting habitats and other facets of bear interactions," **said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club**. "We hope this is the beginning of the process to reform the Division of Fish and Wildlife and pass legislation to educate the public on bears and bring wildlife management into the 21st century. We will continue to work towards a complete ban on bear hunting in New Jersey."

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[Back to Top](#)

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# Governor Phil Murphy

## **[Home \(/governor/\)](#)**

## **Administration**

**[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](#)**

**[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](#)**

**[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](#)**

**[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](#)**

**[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](#)**

**[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](#)**

**[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)**

## **Key Initiatives**

**[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](#)**

**[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](#)**

**[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](#)**

**[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](#)**

**[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](#)**

**[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](#)**

## **News & Events**

**[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562018/approved/news\\_archive.shtml\)](#)**

**[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses/\)](#)**

**[Executive Orders \(/nj.gov/infobank/eo/\)](http://nj.gov/infobank/eo/)**

**[Statements on Legislation](#)**

**[\(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements\\_archive.shtml\)](#)**

**[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports\\_archive.shtml\)](#)**

**[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press/\)](#)**

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