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News Release

New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife Admits Black Bear Hunt is a “Sport” Hunt CAUGHT ON AUDIO

Savenibears.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/Audio/CarrHerrighty20120926.mp3

At Public Meeting, NJDFW Employees Contradict One Another and Admit Bear Hunt is for Recreation

EWING, NJ. During the September 26, 2012 meeting of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council, a member of the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Council asked a basic question: What is the Division of Fish and Wildlife's target black bear population?

NJDFW avoided a direct response. Instead, Patrick Carr, the Division's supervising biologist and a bear hunter reported to have “bagged” a Pennsylvania black bear with his bow on September 29, 2012, said the goal is whatever the population was in the year 2000, but he didn't have that number handy. Estimates from varied expert sources placed the bear population in 2000 all over the map, and the 2003 bear hunt proved that the bear population was half of what the Division had previously thought, so the answer was essentially meaningless

On the audio, Doris Lin, Esq., director of legal affairs for the Animal Protection League of New Jersey, commented that the bear complaints are not scientific because hunters tell each other to call in complaints, Carr replied: “We don't base the hunting season on complaints. We recognize that this population is a game animal that can support a regulated harvest.”

Noting the irony, Lin said; “After years of producing charts showing bear complaints, and using the complaints as a public justification for a trophy bear hunt, NJDFW's top bear biologist now admits that the hunt has nothing to do with complaints.” Lin recorded the meeting after Carr had given a presentation on black bears and took questions from the audience. The recording begins with Assistant Director of the NJDFW Larry Herrighty saying that the goal of the black bear hunt is not a particular population number because the hunt is based on human tolerance of bears, which can change. Herrighty stated, “We're not pinning ourselves to a hard population number at this point.”

“From Virginia to Alaska to New Jersey, polling shows that the public prefers non-lethal approaches, especially securing trash. DFW ignores that,” said Lin. At the 6 minute mark in the audio recording, Lin asked Carr why, if the concern is “cultural carrying capacity,” NJDFW hasn't done any surveys of people who live in the study area and that basing the hunt on complaints is unscientific because hunters tell each other to call in complaints. Carr replied, “We don't base the hunting season on complaints. We recognize that this population is a game animal that can support a regulated harvest.”

Lin noted that there are blocks of 'complaints' from publicly avowed bear hunt supporters.

Carr's statements contradicted Herrighty's comments at the meeting, and Carr's admission comes less than three weeks after NJTV aired an interview with Herrighty in which Herrighty called the black bear hunt a “regulated sport hunt” and stated, “The hunt will go on for as long as we have a healthy and abundant population.”

“Or as long as Chris Christie, who promised a hunting club the bear hunt, is Governor,” said Lin, noting that Governor Jon Corzine's administration had tried to move the hunters' agency toward non-lethal policy recommended by leading experts in North America. Even if complaints were legitimately high, hunting is not the solution. According to leading conservation experts, securing trash and human-derived foods, including bait for deer and bear, is the most effective way to reduce complaints. NJDFW admits that the bears are not biologically overpopulated, but had previously claimed the hunt was necessary because bear complaints were rising.

A 2010 report by Rutgers professor Ed Tavss showed that the NJDFW was inconsistent in its bear complaint data gathering and that after correcting for errors, the number of bear complaints in NJ was declining, even though there hadn't been a hunt in four years.

Lin states, “It's now clear that the Division of Fish and Wildlife is determined to have annual trophy hunts no matter how few complaints there are. They can't keep their story straight, because the black bear hunt is a recreational trophy hunt but they can't tell the public the truth. They claim the hunt is based on complaints, but a look at their complaint data shows that it's a scientific house of cards. Faced with their scientific failings, they have to admit that the bear hunt is just a trophy hunt.”