

## **Backgrounder**

### **Proposed August Black Bear Hunt in the Lower Mainland**

*(BC Nature – Background Information for Letters of Support)*



#### **Issue Summary**

The Province of British Columbia is proposing a new August black bear hunting season in Wildlife Management Region 2 (Lower Mainland). The proposal would allow black bear hunting on private land only, with landowner permission, during a period when bears are actively foraging and when agricultural crops are most vulnerable.

The stated goal of the proposal is to reduce crop damage experienced by farmers in the Fraser Valley and surrounding areas. The proposal has generated significant public interest and debate due to concerns related to public safety, wildlife welfare, ecological impacts, and the effectiveness of hunting as a tool for managing human–wildlife conflict in densely populated regions.

#### **Species at Risk Context**

- **Status:** Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) – Not listed under the Species at Risk Act (SARA) and considered widespread in British Columbia.
- **Species:** Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)
- **Habitat:** Forests, wetlands, riparian areas, agricultural edges, and increasingly urban–rural interface zones, including parks, greenbelts, and farmland.
- **Primary Threats:**
  - Habitat fragmentation
  - Road mortality

- Human–wildlife conflict related to attractants (crops, garbage, livestock feed)
- Lethal control and hunting pressure

### **Significance of Area:**

The Lower Mainland is one of the **most densely populated regions in British Columbia**, yet it still supports black bear populations due to its mix of forested areas, river corridors, agricultural lands, and urban green spaces

### **Geographic Context**

- **Location:** Wildlife Management Region 2 (Lower Mainland), including the Fraser Valley and areas surrounding Metro Vancouver.
- **Ecosystem:** Coastal Douglas-fir and Coastal Western Hemlock zones, river floodplains, agricultural lowlands, and urban green corridors.
- **Habitat:** A mosaic of farmland, forests, wetlands, rivers, and suburban development, creating frequent overlap between people and wildlife.
- **Protection Gap:** While parts of the region are protected through parks and conservation lands, many bear movements occur across private agricultural lands and unprotected corridors, where conflicts are more likely to arise.

### **Cultural Context (First Peoples Impact)**

Black bears hold cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance for many First Nations in British Columbia. Indigenous knowledge systems emphasize respect for wildlife and the interconnectedness of ecosystems.

Any changes to wildlife management practices may have implications for Indigenous food systems, cultural values, and stewardship responsibilities, particularly in territories where First Nations continue to practice traditional land use and harvesting.

### **Ecological Context**

Late summer and early fall mark a critical biological period for black bears known as hyperphagia, during which bears feed intensively to build fat reserves needed to survive winter hibernation.

## **During this time:**

- Bears naturally seek high-calorie food sources, including berries and agricultural crops.
- Removing adult bears may increase the risk of orphaned cubs, as cubs may still be dependent even if regulations prohibit harvesting females with young.
- Vacated territories may be quickly reoccupied by other bears, potentially limiting long-term conflict reduction.

## **Conservation Significance**

The proposal highlights broader challenges related to human wildlife coexistence in rapidly urbanizing landscapes. It raises questions about:

- The long-term effectiveness of lethal control versus preventative, non-lethal measures
- Public safety in regions with high recreational and residential use
- The availability and use of up-to-date population data to guide harvest decisions

The Lower Mainland serves as a critical case study for how wildlife management decisions are made in mixed-use landscapes where conservation, agriculture, recreation, and urban living intersect.

## **Scientific Context:**

- Black bear population estimates in British Columbia are often described as broad and imprecise, particularly at regional scales.
- Scientific literature indicates that lethal removal of wildlife does not always result in sustained reductions in human–wildlife conflict if attractants remain available.
- Non-lethal measures — such as electric fencing, crop protection strategies, attractant management, and early intervention — are widely recognized as effective tools when consistently applied.
- Harvesting during hyperphagia may have disproportionate ecological impacts compared to spring or later fall seasons.

## **References**

### **News Article on the Proposal**

- Delta Optimist coverage of the proposed August black bear hunt: *B.C. proposes August black bear hunt to protect Lower Mainland crops* | Business in Vancouver / Delta

Optimist: <https://www.biv.com/news/resources-agriculture/bc-proposes-august-black-bear-hunt-to-protect-lower-mainland-crops-11745425>

### **BC Government Regulatory Proposal**

- Government of British Columbia proposed changes including August 1–31 hunt on private land only (Region 2): *Implement black bear private land only hunt* | BC Gov public engagement page: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/fishing-hunting/ahte/hunting-trapping/black-bear-private-hunt>

### **Public Engagement Process**

- BC Gov press release inviting comments on hunting/trapping regulation proposals for 2026–28:  
*B.C. seeking public input on proposed hunting regulation updates* | BC Gov News: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2026WLR0002-000023>

### **Wildlife Management Context / Advocacy Perspectives**

- Action alert and overview of proposed expansion from wildlife group (The Fur-Bearers): *Proposal to expand black bear hunting in BC* — The Fur-Bearers: <https://thefurbearers.com/blog/action-alert-proposal-to-expand-black-bear-hunting-in-bc/>

### **Additional Regulatory Sources**

- BC's general hunting regulations synopsis (for existing seasons & rules): *Hunting & Trapping Regulations Synopsis* — Province of British Columbia (general annual regulations summary): <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/fishing-hunting/hunting/regulations-synopsis>