



State of New Jersey

Department of Environmental Protection

Richard J. Codey
Acting Governor

Bradley M. Campbell
Commissioner

November 14, 2005

Ernest P. Hahn
Chairman
New Jersey Fish and Game Council
P.O. Box 400
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400

Dear Chairman Hahn:

This letter memorializes my approval of the comprehensive black bear management policy dated November 14, 2005 (the 2005 Policy).

In reviewing this policy, my paramount concerns have been public safety and sound wildlife management. As the black bear population has expanded, incidents involving risks to public safety and property, which subsided after the 2003 hunt, have increased significantly. Moreover, excess population in areas of suitable black bear habitat has led to increasing black bear migration to areas of the state where little suitable habitat exists and where risks to populous communities are consequently greater.

As revised, this policy responds to a number of concerns that I have raised and that were presented in public comments and at the public hearing on the draft policy. First, the 2005 Policy adopts a much more moderate population reduction goal than the initial draft, recognizing that New Jersey can sustain far higher populations of black bears than had been assumed when the Council adopted the targets presented in the 1997 Black Bear Management Plan. These targets would have required far greater population reductions than can be achieved, and far greater population reductions than are needed for public safety. Second, the 2005 Policy includes objective criteria for suspending a black bear hunt otherwise authorized by the Game Code, a safeguard that will ensure that New Jersey maintains a robust and successful population of black bears even if the population proves to be smaller than current estimates. Third, the 2005 policy more clearly commits the Council to maintaining and expanding the use of nonlethal control measures.

I am satisfied that the 2005 Policy, revised after extensive public comments and a public hearing, meets the mandate and requirements established by the Supreme Court in its most recent opinion on black bear management. In light of this approval, I would expect the black bear hunt authorized by the 2005 New Jersey Game Code to proceed as adopted.

I am grateful for your leadership, and that of Council Member Wolgast, in crafting a policy that responds to my concerns and to most of those raised in the public process.

Sincerely,

Bradley M. Campbell
Commissioner