

2023 BEAR HUNTING REGULATIONS

Please read the following regulations carefully. They will cover

- ELIGIBILITY, LICENSE TYPES, AND LICENSE FEES
- PERMIT AREA BOUNDARIES
- BEAR BAITING
- PORTABLE STANDS IN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS (WMAs)
- SEASON DATES, SHOOTING HOURS, AND BAG LIMITS
- OTHER RESTRICTIONS
- TAGGING, REGISTRATION & BEAR TOOTH SUBMISSION
- NUISANCE BEARS
- BEAR GUIDES/OUTFITTERS
- CITES EXPORT PERMITS
- OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES (OHVS), INCLUDING ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATVS)

In addition, general hunting regulations, legal firearms, and bows and arrows (crossbows are also legal) allowed for big game hunting are described in the [Hunting and Trapping Regulations](#). The new year's editions will be available in early August.

When registering a bear you will need to provide the *deer permit area* of where the bear was taken found in the [2023 deer hunting map](#), also available in August. You may also use

[Recreation Compass](#) - Click on the settings icon  to overlay the Deer or Bear permit areas.

*Note – Bear Permit Area 451: In 2020 a change was made to bear permit area 45. The southern portion of bear permit area 45 has been subdivided to create a bear permit area (451) to allow additional bear hunting opportunities. Although it is still a “Quota” Area, bear hunters in Area 451 do not need to apply in the lottery. Area 451 licenses are not awarded by lottery drawing, BUT will be available to any eligible hunters starting August 5.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Lottery deadline – May 5, 2023

License purchase deadline for Bear season lottery winners – August 1, 2023

Unsold licenses available for purchase - Any eligible person – Noon, August 4, 2023

Area 451* – August 5, 2023

Start of baiting – August 11, 2023

Bear season – September 1 – October 15, 2023

ELIGIBILITY, LICENSE TYPES, AND LICENSE FEES

Eligible Hunters: Both license types (quota and no-quota) require that all individuals (resident and non-resident) be at least 10 years of age prior to hunting and have not had their big game hunting privileges suspended pursuant to M.S. Section 97A.421. In addition, anyone born after Dec. 31, 1979 who is age 12 or older, must have a Firearm Safety Certificate (or equivalent), or other evidence of successfully completing a hunter safety course to obtain a bear hunting license.

License Types: Two types of hunting licenses are available:

- 1) **Quota Permit Areas:** A total of 4,035 permits were offered through a lottery drawing in 14 permit areas. The deadline for applying for the Quota Area Permits was May 5th. Winning hunters are notified via postcard that is sent out in mid-May, or they can [check their results on the lottery page](#) in mid-May, as well. Winning hunters can purchase their license between June 1 and August 1. Hunters with licenses for Quota permit areas are allowed to hunt for bears only in the permit area listed on their license. (The Quota Areas include Area 451; however, the number of licenses for that area is unlimited, and no lottery is required.) Preference **will not** be added for the current year if applicant was successful in the drawing (first or second choice) but did not purchase a license.
****License Purchase Deadline**** Bear lottery winners must purchase their license by August 1, 2023. Unsold and any surplus licenses will then become available August 4, 2023, at 12:00 (Noon) and may be purchased by any eligible person from a license vendor or online (not by phone). They typically sell out in a matter of minutes.
- 2) **No-Quota Area:** An unlimited number of permits are available for purchase over-the-counter to take bears in the No-Quota Area, which is the part of the state outside of the Quota Permit Areas. *No-Quota Area licenses are only valid in the No-Quota Area!* When purchasing a No-Quota Area bear license you will be asked which “kill block” in the No Quota Area you intend to hunt in. (This corresponds to the deer permit area – [see 2023 deer hunting map](#) or [Recreation Compass](#). Click the settings wheel to overlay the Deer Permit Areas.) You will need to register your bear using that kill block/Deer Permit area. They are more precise than the large bear permit areas.

NOTE: It is legal to purchase one quota license and one no-quota license in the same year. You could harvest a bear using each of those licenses, but only one quota and one no-quota in a given year.

If a person only wants to gain a preference point but does not wish to be included in the lottery drawing for the current year, they can apply but choose “Area 99.” Since there is no Area 99, they will not be chosen, but will gain one point for having applied.

A bear license requires a physical tag to put on the animal. If a person purchases their bear license online or by phone, it will have to be mailed to them, so be sure to allow up to 10

business days before you want to hunt. If you are using a mobile device, you will need to switch to “desktop mode” for the bear license purchase option to appear.

License Fees (including issuing fee of \$1):


Resident age 18 and over -- \$45

Youth - ages 10 -12 must obtain a license but will pay no fee.

Youth – ages 13-17 -- \$6.00

Nonresident age 18 and over -- \$231.00.

PERMIT AREA BOUNDARIES

Make sure you review the boundaries before you go bear hunting to ensure you’re in the right area. See the [2023 Bear Hunting Map](#), and for more detail use [Recreation Compass](#) (Click on the settings icon  on the far right, and overlay the Bear Hunt OR Deer Hunt Areas).

BEAR BAITING

Establishing Bait Stations: A person may not establish, service, maintain or place a sign for any bait station prior to August 11. A person may not establish a bait station within 100 yards of any site where bait has been placed before August 11.

A person may not hunt bears within 100 yards of a bait station, unless it is registered and marked with a sign in accordance with the following regulations:

- **Bait Station Signs:** A person who establishes a bait station anywhere (public or private land) must display a sign at the site. The sign must be made of plastic, wood, or metal and be at least 6-by-10 inches in size. On public land, it can be no more than 18 inches by 24 inches in size.

The sign must contain either the licensee’s name and address, the licensee’s driver’s license number, or the licensee’s MDNR number for whom the bait is being placed ~~for~~. If being placed by someone other than the licensee, the sign must also include the full name and address or the Minnesota DNR number or Minnesota driver’s license number of the person who is placing the bait.

The letters and numbers must be legibly printed and either painted or impressed on the sign material.

Bait station signs must be prominently displayed between 6 and 10 feet above the natural ground level, and within 20 feet of the bait.

Signs must be removed within 48 hours after the close of the bear season.

Placing other signs or warnings to mark generic locations of bait stations or advise people of bait stations on public land is prohibited.

** Bait Placement Licensing Requirements:* A person may not place bait for bears unless the person has a 2023 bear license or is operating under the direction of a person with a 2023 bear license. If you are placing bait for someone else, you must have their MDNR number in your possession.

- Bait Station Registration:

All baits must be registered, regardless of if they are on public or private land.

Each HUNTER is allowed only three bait stations. (Even if a person has both a quota and no-quota license, he/she can only have three baits.) A person may not establish a bait station without registering it with the DNR. This also applies when establishing a bait for someone else.

There are two methods for registering a bait:

- a. *Online Registration:* A convenient way to register bait stations is with the desktop [bear bait registration webpage](#). This registration system has been upgraded to allow mobile functionality and allows registration of baits while still in the field at the bait site. This system only allows registration of 3 baits per licensed hunter and will be available in early August. If multiple people are hunting together, establish multiple accounts to register more than 3 baits. Each account requires a DNR Customer Number (MDNR#), with a valid bear license for the 2023 season.

The DNR strongly encourages the use of the online registration page, since it is not dependent on mail delivery, and your list of baits is easy to modify. To use this method, create an account and follow the instructions on the web site for entering and modifying bait stations. Bear hunters using online registration must register bait stations with 24 hours of establishment.

- b. *Paper Registration:* The name, address, MDNR number, and telephone number of the person who established the bait station and the county, township, range, and section (or GPS coordinates) for which the bait station is established must be mailed, no later than 24 hours after establishing the bait station. The name and Minnesota DNR number of the person the bait is being established for must also be included.

[Bait station registration forms](#) should be mailed to the appropriate address as per the instructions on the forms.

Multiple forms may be used for persons hunting together, but only **3 baits may be registered per hunter**. If multiple people are hunting together, and more than 3 baits are being placed, a separate bait registration form must be

submitted for every 3 baits. Include the required information for each hunter that may be hunting the site.

* **Bait Station Limit:** ***No more than three bait stations may be placed at one time for each licensed bear hunter.*** (Even if hunter has both a quota and no-quota license, he/she can still only have three active baits.) If a hunter wishes to establish a different bait station, one of the hunter's three existing bait stations must be removed. To remove an existing bear bait station, remove the bear bait sign at the abandoned bait, and complete one of the following items –

- a. Log into the [online bear bait registration website](#) and remove/ abandon the bait station. Or
- b. Complete a [paper bait registration form](#) to note the abandoned bait station by entering the applicable location information and placing a check mark by “abandoned,” then register any newly created bait stations. Each licensed bear hunting outfitter may establish up to three bait stations in addition to bait stations placed for licensed hunters.

***Bait Definition:** “Bait” is any material placed for the purpose of attracting or attempting to attract bears. A bear “bait station” is any location where bait is placed for the purpose of hunting. Materials that are at all times attended by the hunter are not considered a bait station.

The following materials may not be used as baits for bear.

- A carcass from a mammal containing more than 25 percent of the intact carcass.
- Meat from mammals that contains bones.
- Bone of mammals
- Solid waste containing bottles, cans, plastic, paper, or metal.
- Materials that are not readily biodegradable.
- Any part of a swine except cured pork.

Note: 55-gallon drums, pails, plastic garbage bags, or other containers may not be left unattended at bait stations except for drums on private land and legal drums on public land as indicated below:

Use of Drum on Public Land: A *resident* may use a drum on public land but must pay a \$5 surcharge per drum. Resident hunters can purchase a bear drum privilege anywhere hunting licenses are sold, online, or by telephone. Bait stations are still limited to a total of three per licensed bear hunter or outfitter. A "drum" means a 30 gallon or larger drum.

Requirements for placing drums on public land:

- The drum must be secured to a tree so that it cannot be moved from the site by a bear and may not include a mechanical device for dispensing feed.
- The drum must be registered as required for bear bait registration, including the GPS information on the location of the drum.
- In addition to the required bait site signage, the drum itself must be marked with
 - 1) the licensee's name and address;
 - 2) the licensee's driver's license number; or
 - 3) the MDNR number issued to the licensee for a licensed bear hunter or a licensed bear outfitter.
- There may be restrictions on placing a bear bait drum on public lands open for hunting (such as county or federal lands). To be sure it is legal to use a drum, check with the local land management authority.
- A drum may not be placed prior to the legal date for placing bait and must be removed within seven days of the end of the bear season

[Use of drums on private land](#). A private landowner or person authorized by the private landowner may use a drum to bait bear on the person's private land. The drum must be registered like any other bait station. The drum must be secured to a tree so that it cannot be moved from the site by a bear and may not include a mechanical device for dispensing feed. A "drum" means a 30 gallon or larger drum. The drum must be marked with one of the following:

- 1) the licensee's name and address; or
- 2) the licensee's driver's license number; or
- 3) the "MDNR#" issued to the licensee for a licensed bear hunter or a licensed bear outfitter.

• [Other Baiting Provisions](#):

- *A person may not establish a bait station within 150 yards of an established campsite.
- *A person may not establish a bait station in Bear Permit Area 22 (Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the portion of the BWCAW outside of Bear Permit Area 22).
- *A person may not establish a bait station or take a bear within one-half mile of a garbage dump (or transfer station).

PORTABLE STANDS IN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS (WMAs)

Prior to the opening day (9/16/2023) of the archery deer season, portable stands may be left overnight in a wildlife management area by a person with a valid bear license who is hunting within 100 yards of a bear bait site that is legally tagged and registered. The licensee's name and address or driver's license number must be affixed to the stand in such a manner that it can be read from the ground.

SEASON DATES, SHOOTING HOURS, AND BAG LIMITS

Season Dates: The bear hunting season is September 1 - October 15, in all Bear Management Units and in the No Quota Area.

Shooting Hours: Legal shooting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Bag Limit: Bag limit is one bear in quota zones *and* one bear in no-quota zones during any calendar year whether by firearm or archery. Bears taken may be either sex or any age except bear cubs. Cub bears are defined as bears less than one year old.

TAGGING, REGISTRATION & BEAR TOOTH SUBMISSION


Site-Tagging: A person who takes a bear must tag it using the site tag that comes with the person's bear hunting license. The site tag must be fastened around the bear's sternum (breastbone), through an ear, or around a leg bone or tendon, in such a way that the tag cannot be removed. See the deer tagging section of the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook for tagging instructions. Have a knife, a piece of string or wire, and a marker to record your confirmation number with you. This tag must remain in the hunter's possession and must be attached before putting the bear in a vehicle or hanging it in camp.

Validation: You are required to validate the site tag by punching out or marking with a pen the date of the kill, the sex of the bear, and whether taken by firearm or archery. The site-tag needs to be validated at the site of kill prior to moving the animal in any way from its kill location.

Registration and Tooth Submission : A person who takes a bear must present it for registration at a bear registration station within 48 hours after taking and obtain a Big Game Possession Tag. **Note: not all big game registration stations are bear registrations. It is important to check this [complete list of all bear registration stations](#).** The possession tag must be affixed to the bear in the same manner as the site tag before the animal may be transported from the registration station. Bears may also be registered by phone (888-706-6367) or [online](#) (Look for "Harvest Registration" in the left-hand column of the main bear page), but then you must also go to a registration station and pick up a tooth envelope. Registration must be done no later than 48 hours after the close of the season.

Registration and Tooth Submission Procedures

Every bear must be registered. In all cases, the bear must be registered within 48 hours of taking and before the bear is processed either privately or commercially. **You will need to know**

the three-digit deer permit area for where the bear was taken. See the *Deer Permit Area map*, or use *Recreation Compass*. Click on the settings icon  to overlay the Deer or Bear permit areas. There are three registration options:

1. *Walk-in bear registration stations*. This process is unchanged from previous years. Bear registration stations are listed on the DNR web site. The person whose tag is on the bear must personally present the bear at an official bear registration station and receive a big game possession tag. The tag must be attached to the sternum, leg, or ear where the site tag was attached. Also, at this time you **MUST** pick up a tooth envelope and submit as per DNR instruction.

2. *Telephone*. The automated system will accept either key punch or voice (e.g., press or say 1). You will be asked to record a confirmation number so you must have a pen to complete the registration process. To register your bear using the automatic phone system, following the steps below. These steps are also printed on your bear license.

A. Dial 1-888-706-6367 to get into the system

B. Enter the Harvest Registration Number that appears on the license. It's a 9-digit number that links back to the person and license type. This is the large and bold number printed on your bear license and is **NOT** your MDNR number. A harvest registration number can only be used once. The system will not accept multiple registrations using the same number.

C. Enter the 3-digit deer permit area where the bear was killed. The system will only accept valid deer permit areas. If you are not familiar with these areas, you may find a map of the deer permit areas on the MN DNR web site at mndnr.gov.

D. Enter the date the bear was killed.

E. Enter the type of bear – adult male or adult female.

o Adult male – Legal (not a cub) male bear

o Adult female – Legal (not a cub) female bear

F. The system will then give you a confirmation number that must be written on the license in the appropriate area.

3. *Internet*. Go to mndnr.gov/hunting to register your bear. The questions will be identical to phone registration. You will be given a confirmation number, which must be written on the license and site tag.

Specific information for telephone and internet bear registration

- If you use Telephone or Internet registration, you **MUST** complete the registration by obtaining a tooth envelope at a bear registration station, no later than 48 hours after the close of the season.

Tooth Submission:

Tooth submission is mandatory. Failure to do so is a violation of Minnesota Game and Fish Law (MS 97B.411). DNR researchers use the information from bear teeth to monitor bear populations. Every person who kills a bear must submit a tooth sample to the DNR (see instructions on bear tooth envelope). Postage-paid envelopes for mailing the bear teeth to DNR are provided at bear registration stations. Each person who kills a bear is responsible for mailing the envelope to the DNR. All individuals who submit a tooth sample, prior to November 1, will be sent information on the age of their bear and a bear cooperation patch in May of the following year.

Follow the instructions on the tooth envelope for submitting bear teeth. [Instructions for tooth samples](#) and a complete list of bear registration stations are listed on the [DNR bear hunting web page](#).

If you are unable to obtain a bear tooth envelope from a bear registration station, you can call the MN DNR Info Center (651-296-6157 or 888-MINNDNR) or MN DNR Wildlife Research 218-328-8872; they will send you an envelope. Or you can follow these instructions:

Clean the tooth thoroughly and place in a zip-lock bag, wrap tooth in tissue paper or aluminum foil. Mail in a padded envelope with all relevant information (include a copy of your bear registration info) to: DNR Wildlife Research, Minnesota DNR, 1201 E. Highway 2, Grand Rapids, MN 55744. This type of envelope will require additional postage over a standard letter.

PROBLEM BEARS

Problem bears may be taken by licensed hunters before or after the season in the area where the license is valid if authorized by a DNR Area Wildlife Manager or Conservation Officer. Problem bears taken by authorized licensed hunters outside the season must be registered as normal to the deer permit area you were hunting. Hunters must contact the authorizing Area Wildlife Manager or Conservation Officer within 48 hours after taking. Contact an Area Wildlife Office in the area you hunt, to be placed on an availability list if interested in hunting problem bears.

BEAR GUIDES/OUTFITTERS

A person may not place bait or guide bear hunters for compensation without first obtaining a Bear Outfitters License (\$82.50, resident only) or Master Bear Outfitters License (\$165.00, resident only). The DNR offers a bear outfitter certification clinic once a year. This is usually in June or July. To be added to a list for notification when the class is scheduled for next year, please email info.dnr@state.mn.us, and your request will be forwarded to the bear team.

Please include your phone number so that the instructor can have another way to reach you if needed.

OTHER RESTRICTIONS

Party Hunting: No party hunting for bears is allowed. This means no hunter may kill a bear for another hunter, and hunters may only tag a bear they, themselves, have killed.

White Bears: May not take a white bear.

Cub Bears: Cub bears may not be taken.

Dens: May not take or disturb any bear in a den.

Use of Dogs: A person may use a dog to locate and retrieve a wounded deer or bear as follows:

- The person attempting to locate the animal must have in possession a valid license to take the deer or bear.
- Dog handlers who do not have a valid hunting license must be accompanied by a licensed hunter with the license in possession.
- The licensed hunter and dog handler must be on foot and must wear blaze orange/pink
- Any light used must be an artificial light carried in the hand or attached to the person.
- The dog must be on a leash no longer than 30 feet. The hunter or dog handler must physically control the leash at all times.
- The dog owner's name and telephone number must be on the dog while it is used to locate a wounded deer or bear.
- Other uses of dogs to take bear are prohibited.

Archery-Firearms Restriction: It is legal to take bears by archery while in possession of a firearm.

Sub-dividing Bears Prior to Registration: Bears may be skinned, quartered, or further divided prior to transportation and registration, but all edible meat and all other parts of the bear retained by the hunter must be presented for registration at the same time.

Sale of Meat, Organs, and Parts: May not sell meat or organs (including gall bladders) of a bear. May sell teeth, skulls, bones, hides, or claws of a lawfully taken bear. May not sell bear paws, unless attached to the hide.

CITES EXPORT PERMITS International trade in black bear hides (pelts), claws, skulls, or teeth, is regulated by federal law and international treaty.

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES (OHVS), INCLUDING ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATVS)

A person may not shoot at a wild animal from an OHV.

A person may not intentionally operate an off-highway vehicle:

- in most wildlife management areas, a state park, or a scientific and natural area, except as specifically authorized by law or rule;
- in unfrozen public waters (lakes, rivers, streams and certain wetlands), or in
- calcareous fens as identified by the commissioner;
- on a trail on public land that is designated or signed for non-motorized use only;
- on restricted areas within public lands that are posted or where gates or other clearly visible structures are placed to prevent unauthorized motorized vehicle access

[State Forest Hunting/Trapping Exceptions](#) (These exemptions do not apply to bear baiting in August and September)

Traveling off roads and trails (cross-country travel) in a LIMITED state forest or off roads, trails and access routes in a MANAGED state forest is prohibited except persons with a valid hunting, trapping, or commercial trapping license in possession may use Class I ATVs to travel cross country to:

- Retrieve big game (September through December).
- Hunt for big game and construct stands (October through December).
- Trap during the open season for protected furbearers.
- Trap for minnows under certain conditions.