

KEITH MARK, FOUNDER OF HUNTER NATION  
TESTIMONY – WASHINGTON FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION

My name is Keith Mark, and I am the founder of Hunter Nation, a national organization that is dedicated to protecting the hunting lifestyle and heritage. I am here in support of continuing the State of Washington's longstanding Spring hunting opportunity for black bears. The current proposal is based on sound science and is consistent with the stated mission of the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. That Department states, "WDFW is tasked with responsibly preserving and protecting wildlife in the State while maximizing hunting opportunities for all residents."

Statistics show that Washington's black bear population is healthy and estimated to be 25,000 – 30,000. If the current proposal is passed, it is estimated that 145 bears will be harvested in the Spring, which is approximately one-half of 1%

of the overall population. The proposal provides that the Spring permits are to be geographically distributed to better manage the State's wildlife by addressing other critical conservation issues, such as:

- Protecting ungulate species, such as elk, deer and moose to ensure healthy recruitment
- It allows targeted harvests in certain areas to limit the number of human and bear encounters
- As well as to limit commercial timber damage

Opponents argue that Spring bear hunting is cruel. Those same opponents argue that all hunting is cruel, so that is not a scientific, nor conservationally-sound argument to ban the Spring hunt. Opponents also argue it will lead to orphaned cubs, but that argument fails as well. It would be illegal to harvest a sow with cubs in the Spring. Science proves male bears are the biggest threat to bear cubs, and the Spring hunt will harvest

additional male bears. So, it will actually benefit the black bear cubs' survival rates.

Lastly, I want to point out the substantially positive impact hunting has on the Washington State economy. Statistics show the overall impact hunting has on Washington's economy is \$643 million annually. In short, when bears are hunted, they are in the asset column because they provide food for the hunter and a significant boost to the State's economy. When not hunted, bears are in the liability column because hunters are denied a hunting opportunity; the deer, elk and moose populations suffer; there are increased and unnecessary bear and human conflicts; and the Washington economy loses millions of dollars.

I'll close with a quote from the WDFW website, "Hunting remains a vital way of life for many residents in Washington and contributes to the State-wide conservation efforts." Please pass this sound proposal. Thank you.