



May 8, 2024

Senator Bob Hensgens  
Chair, Senate Natural Resources Committee  
900 North 3rd Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

**RE: HB 684-Hunting: provides relative to bear hunting**

On behalf of Safari Club International ("SCI") and the Safari Club International Foundation ("SCIF"), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 684. House Bill 684 would make changes necessary to conduct a modern bear season in Louisiana. SCI and SCIF strongly support opening a conservative and scientifically supported hunting season for black bears in Bear Area 4 (the Tensas River Basin) as well as the provisions contained in the bill.

Louisiana's black bear population is a conservation success story. The Louisiana black bear was listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act ("ESA") after bear numbers declined significantly due primarily to habitat degradation. Thanks to extraordinary efforts to protect habitat and increase connectivity between subpopulations, the bear population has recovered and been removed from the ESA list. SCI and SCIF congratulate the State of Louisiana, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Commission ("Commission") and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries ("LDWF") for decades of investment in recovering the Louisiana black bear and achieving the delisting of the subspecies. Of course, having achieved this success, the healthy bear population now requires appropriate management.

SCI and SCIF support the Commission and LDWF's efforts to reduce human-bear conflicts and maintain the bear population within its core area by opening a regulated hunting season. This is not only consistent with the State's black bear management plan, but also consistent with bear management in every other state with a sizable or concentrated black bear population.

SCI, SCIF, and SCI's Chapters have steadfastly supported Louisiana black bear recovery and conservation. By way of example, SCI was the only organization to defend the 2016 removal of black bears from the ESA list and successfully obtained a dismissal of the lawsuit twice. Further, Maria Davidson, SCIF's Large Carnivore Program Manager, has over 25 years of experience managing the black bear recovery program and is the former Large Carnivore Program Manager for the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. And finally, SCI's Acadiana Chapter has contributed thousands of dollars to critical black bear recovery programs and incentivizing rewards for bringing bear poachers to justice. Specifically, the Chapter has funded hair snare projects, donated two new tracking collars, and earmarked funds for the successful prosecution of the criminals who poached three different black bears recently.



Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HB 684 and we appreciate the Committee's consideration in supporting the bill. SCI is dedicated to protecting the freedom to hunt and is always First For Hunters.

Sincerely,

W. Laird Hamberlin

Chief Executive Officer

Safari Club International and Safari Club International Foundation