

Committee Staff Summary for May 14, 2026 WRC

6. Periodic Regulation Changes**Today's Item**Information Action

Initial vetting for 2027-28 seasons:

- (A) Upland (resident) game bird hunting
- (B) Big game hunting
 - I. Deer
 - II. Elk
 - III. Bighorn sheep
 - IV. Pronghorn antelope
 - V. Black bear

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- **Today's initial vetting** **May 14, 2026; WRC**
- Discussion and potential recommendation **September 10, 2026; WRC**
- Present any recommendations to the Commission **October 14-15, 2026**

Background

When amendments to regulations are regularly sought for a particular subject (e.g., deer hunting), but are not required every year, they are referred to as “periodic” rulemakings. This item is an opportunity to engage in initial discussions with the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC), staff, and Department staff about recommended regulation changes for periodic rulemakings.

(A) Upland (Resident) Game Bird Hunting (2026-27)

Resident upland game bird species include, among others, California quail, pheasant, wild turkey, chukar, and Eurasian collared-dove. Greater sage-grouse is also a resident game bird, though hunting has been disallowed since June of 2023 when it was declared a candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act.

Section 300 provides definitions, hunting zone descriptions, season opening and closing dates, and daily bag and possession limits for resident and migratory upland game birds; the Commission periodically considers recommendations for amendments to these regulations.

(B) Big Game Hunting (2026-27)

The Commission periodically adjusts various regulations related to hunting big game mammals, defined in Section 350 as deer (genus *Odocoileus*), elk (genus *Cervus*), pronghorn antelope (genus *Antilocarpa*), black bear (genus *Ursus*), and Nelson bighorn sheep (subspecies *Ovis canadensis nelsoni* in certain defined areas of the state).

Seasons, quotas, bag and possession limits, hunt zones, Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Program tags, the tag drawing system, disease

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management, etc. are defined for each species in sections 351 through 367.5, sections 554 through 555.1, and sections 708.1 through 708.19.

Initial Vetting

This meeting is an initial opportunity for interested parties to make suggestions to WRC and the Department regarding potential regulation changes for each of the subjects identified under periodic regulation changes. The second opportunity for discussing the ideas generated during this meeting will be the September 10, 2026 WRC meeting, where WRC will potentially develop recommendations for the Commission to consider in the context of potential rulemakings.

Today's Meeting

Today, the Department will present initial ideas for rulemakings on these topics (exhibits 1-3) and WRC will invite others to offer suggestions for potential regulation changes.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation (N/A)

Exhibits

1. [Department presentation for elk](#)
2. [Department presentation for desert bighorn sheep](#)
3. [Department presentation for black bear](#)

Committee Direction/Recommendation (N/A)



ELK HUNTING

Wildlife Resources Committee
May 14, 2026

PRESENTED BY:

Chelle Temple-King, Big Game Conservation and Management Supervisor

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Agenda

Program notes:

- The Department continues to assess elk populations
- Many populations are stable, and some are expanding

Concepts:

- Open to additional hunter opportunity (dependent upon capacity)
- Reorganize regulations to increase user-friendliness



Concept: Increase Elk Hunting Opportunities

- Adjust tag quotas or season dates in any of the existing hunt zones
- Interested in hunt opportunities that may address conflict



Concept: Streamline Section 364 Regulations

- Organize regulations to be grouped by similar topics
 - Subsection for boundaries
 - Subsection for seasons
 - Subsection for quotas
 - Definitions, conditions of take, and tagholder responsibilities
- Rename "hunt areas" to "Elk Management Zones"
- Remove unused subsections
 - Subsection q "reserved"



Questions | Contact

Dr. Arjun Dheer, Statewide Black Bear Coordinator
Big Game Unit, Wildlife Branch
BigGame@wildlife.ca.gov





DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING



Wildlife Resources Committee
May 14, 2026

PRESENTED BY:

Chelle Temple-King, Big Game Conservation and Management Supervisor

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Agenda

- Change Single Zone Fundraising Tag Zones, as needed
- Quota adjustments, as needed



Photo Credit: J. Schulgen

Concept: Modify Fundraising Tags and Tag Quotas



Photo Credit: D. Sims

- Based on population surveys, we may propose to:
- Change the Single Zone Fundraising tag zone
- Adjust tag quotas in any of the existing hunt zones

Questions | Contact

Dr. Arjun Dheer, Statewide Black Bear Coordinator
Big Game Unit, Wildlife Branch
BigGame@wildlife.ca.gov





BLACK BEAR HUNTING



Wildlife Resources Committee
May 14, 2026

PRESENTED BY:

Arjun Dheer, Statewide Black Bear Coordinator
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Agenda

- Next logical step in implementing Black Bear Conservation and Management Plan for California
- Concepts are responsive to public comments received at Adoption hearing and align with closely monitored and adaptive management
- No change to statewide harvest threshold
- Candidates for Regulatory Change
 - Implement BCRs with thresholds
 - Revise cub weight limit
 - Review season dates
 - Simplify validation process
- Black bear hunter survey results

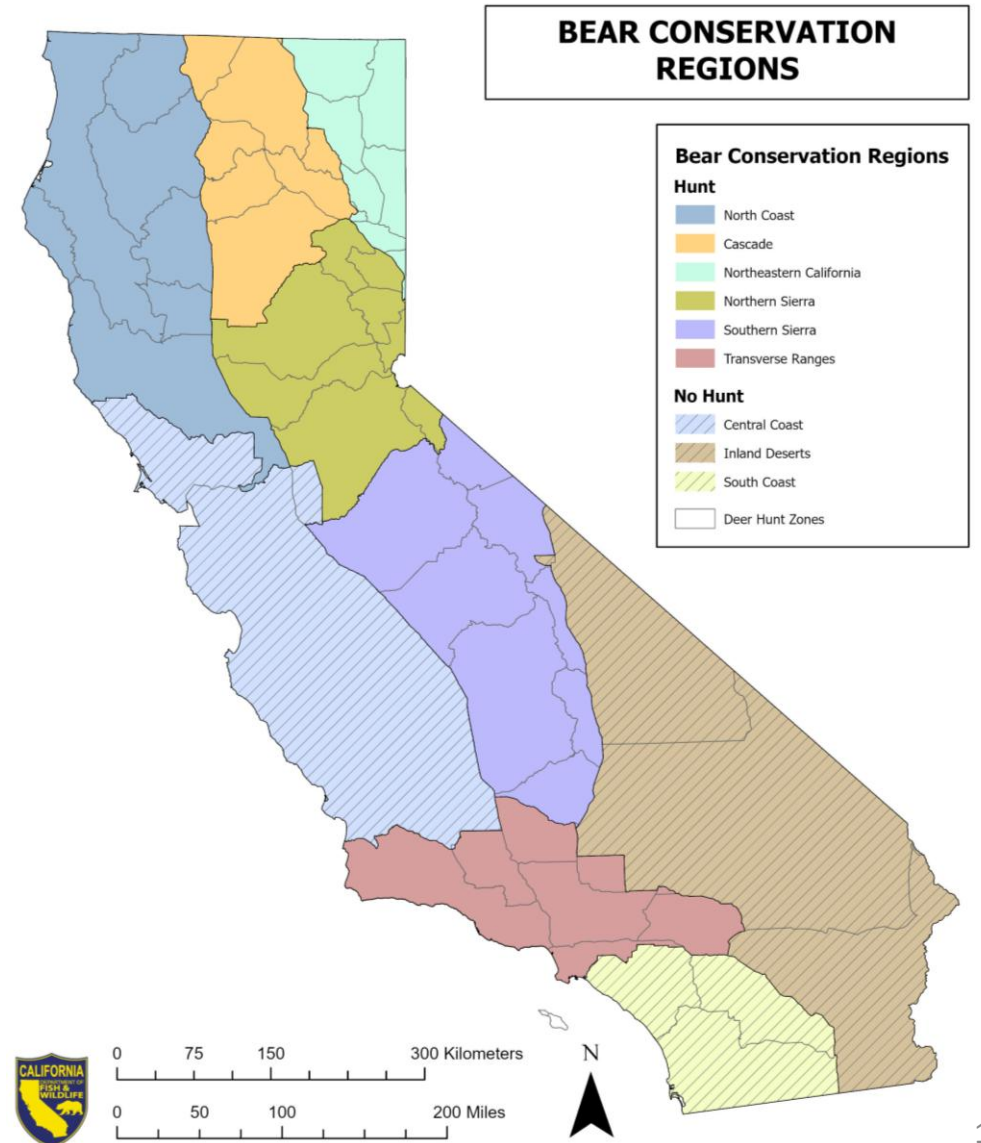


Concept: BCR Implementation

- Address ability to manage bear regionally by implementing Bear Conservation Regions (BCRs) and harvest thresholds
- Hunt stops in a given BCR when BCR threshold or statewide threshold is reached

Table 1: Harvest thresholds by BCR

BCR	N	Mean harvest	Threshold	Threshold %
North Coast	22,591	449	500 - 800	2.2% - 3.5%
Cascade	13,691	181	400 - 500	2.9% - 3.7%
Northern Sierra	11,453	266	370 - 450	3.2% - 3.9%
Southern Sierra	7,341	266	370 - 400	5.0% - 5.5%
Transverse Ranges	1,605	54	90 - 120	5.6% - 7.5%
Northeastern California (NEW)	2,263	N/A	50 - 90	2.2% - 4.4%



Concept: Cub Weight Limit

- Increase cub weight limit from 50 lbs. to 80 lbs. to more accurately represent species' biology
 - Cubs may exceed 50 lbs.



Photo credit: CDFW

Concept: Review Season Dates

- Current
 - 1-week lag between deer and black bear general season opener in multiple X-Zones in northern California
 - Varied gap between black bear archery closing and black bear general opener
- Proposed actions
 - Start black bear general opener on same day as deer general opener in all zones
 - Shift archery closing to the day before general opener in all zones



Concept: Simplify Validation Process

- Department seeks to (1) simplify validation process for hunters, (2) reduce confusion, (3) improve compliance, and (4) bolster population monitoring
- Current: tag validation and tooth extraction are two processes with different deadlines, no mention of online reporting, no mention of mandatory tooth extraction, no non-reporting fee
- Proposed actions:
 - Consolidate tooth extraction (10 calendar days) and tag validation (1 business day) processes into single process with 10 calendar day deadline
 - Mention online reporting option, same as deer
 - Specify that premolar tooth extraction is mandatory
 - Implement sunrise date for non-reporting fee starting July 1, 2028

Hunting Tag Reporting

Report Your Harvest Online 

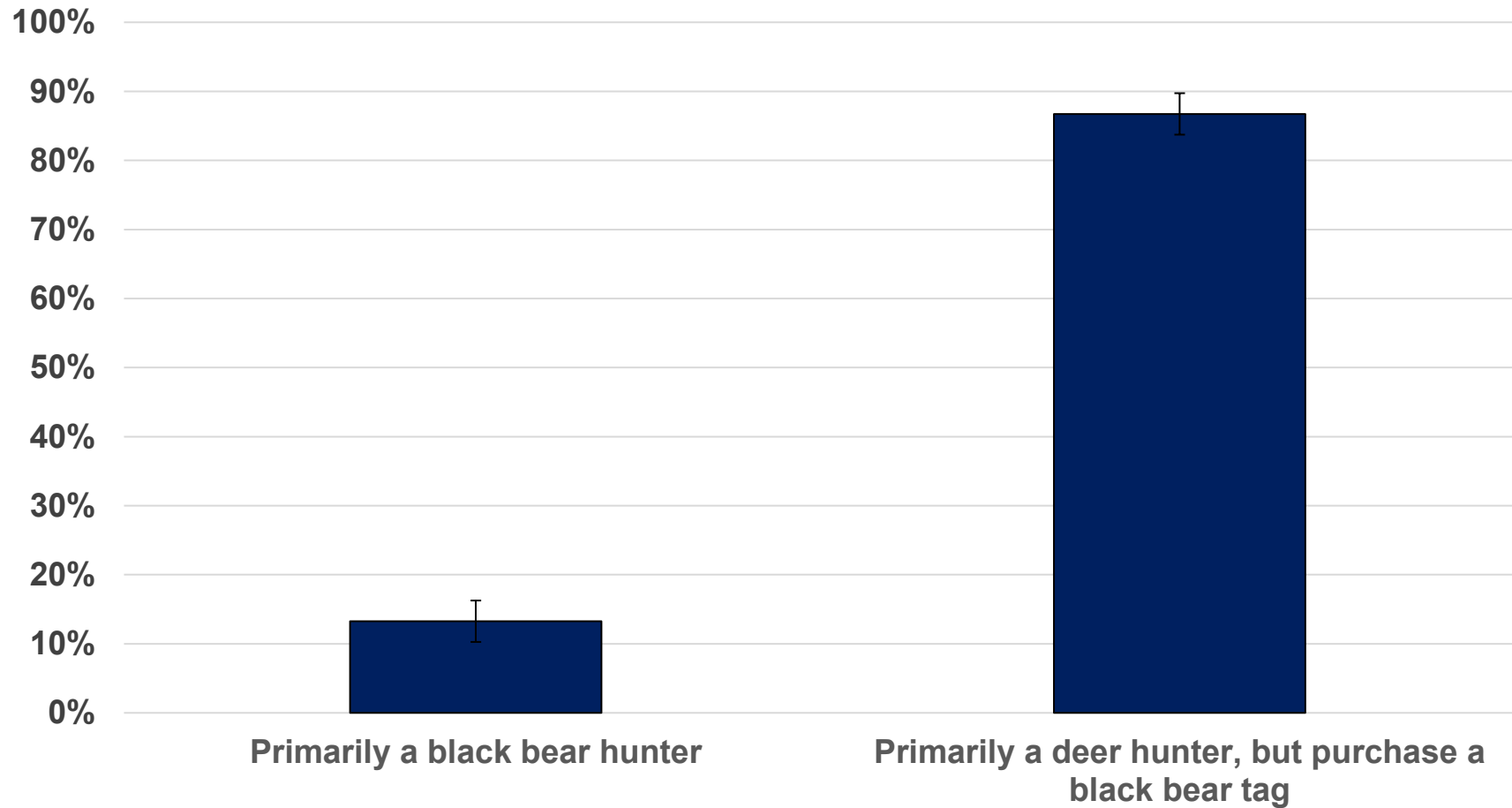
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Hunting/Tag-Reporting>

Black Bear Hunter Survey

- Survey developed in collaboration between Department's Game and Wildlife Health Lab Programs
- Survey designed in 2024-2025 and released in June 2025
- Total of 16 multiple choice and open questions to understand black bear hunter perspectives, preferences, and satisfaction
- Department contacted 10,000 randomly-selected California residents who purchased a black bear tag within the past 3 years via email
- Over 1,500 people responded
- Department asked to provide update at December 2025 Commission meeting
- Presenting select results today; full results can be shared in separate report

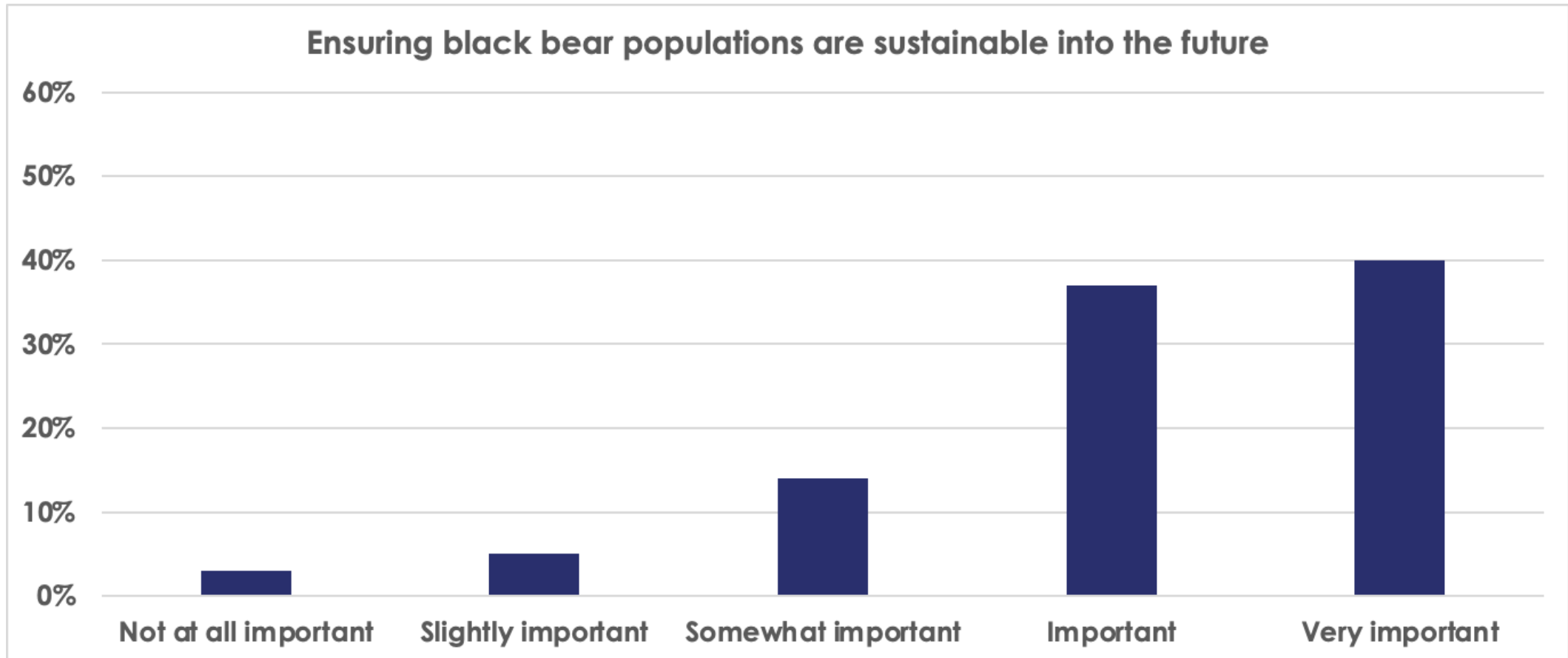
Black Bear Hunter Survey Results

Which best describes you when it comes to hunting big game?



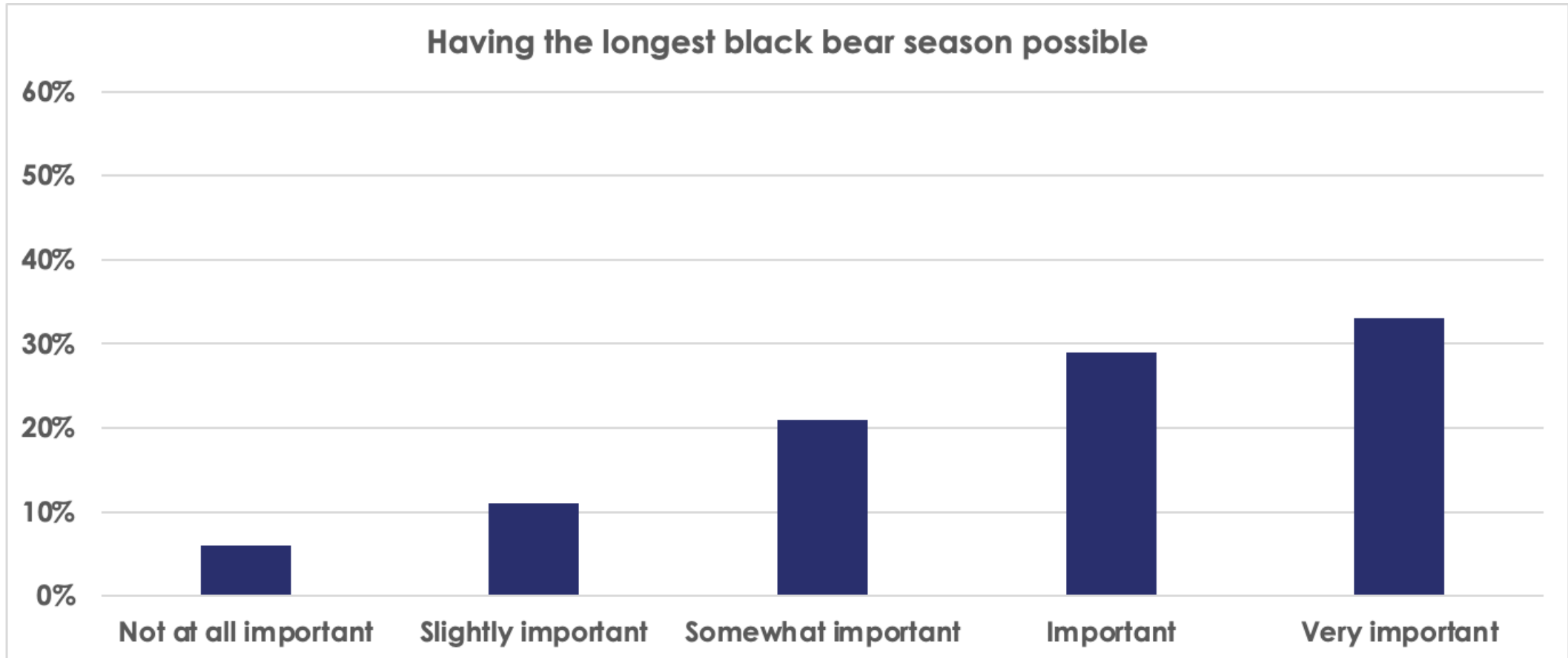
Black Bear Hunter Survey Results

How much priority/importance should be given to the following when setting black bear hunting regulations?



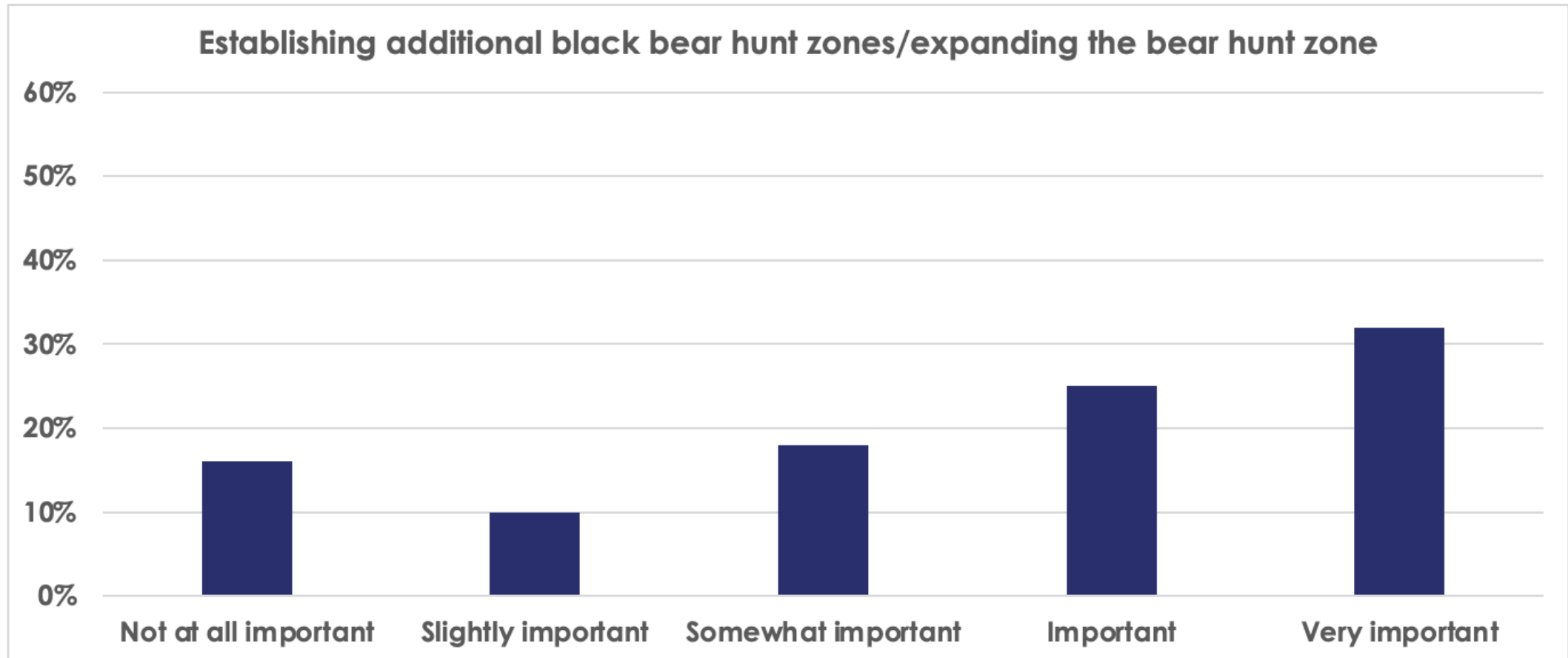
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Black Bear Hunter Survey Results

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