

Governor Jon Corzine  
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Dear Governor Corzine,

Thank you for addressing New Jersey's controversial bear hunt during your gubernatorial campaign. With the upcoming hunt about three months away, I urge you to pursue non-violent strategies to control your state's black bear population.

I understand this year's hunt includes an enlarged kill zone and the addition of bowhunting as a means to slaughter bears. Lethal "solutions" do not reflect the views of most New Jersey residents or potential tourists like myself. I respectfully ask you to do everything possible to preserve wildlife.

Please withdraw black bears from the game code (to reinstate their status as a non-game species) and eliminate "bear exclusion zones." The development of a black bear study commission, as outlined in assembly bill A525, provides a strong foundation for future coexistence between bears and humans. I advocate passage of A525 in the state legislature and hope you will sign it into law.

Yearly encounters between people and the 750,000 black bears who inhabit the U.S. almost never result in grave injury or death. Isolated black bear killings in recent years have occurred in states with expansive annual hunts. Clearly, lethal tactics provide no defense against rare instances of human endangerment. Nationally, consumptive wildlife practices such as hunting and trapping have steadily declined since the 1970s. Conversely, the more lucrative trend in non-consumptive wildlife watching, hiking, bird watching, etc. has risen considerably during the same time frame.

Almost all bear conflicts are human-provoked. But gunning down bears will not alleviate proximity to bears. In fact, hunters ordinarily track non-nuisance animals situated away from human areas. Public education, aversive conditioning, and bear-proof trash and food containment have demonstrated far more long-term value than killing. The bear population growth rate can be reduced if bears don't have access to garbage, bird feeders, or other artificial food sources.

Since New Jersey overturned its decades-long moratorium on hunting black bears, sickening images have circulated the globe. In 2003 commuters stuck along Route 23 in West Milford saw a dazed cub stumble out of the forest, collapse on the road and die. "He was just a little guy and looked so lonely, lying there with snow on his paws," Kari Casper told the Star Ledger. Two more eyewitnesses spotted a hunter hauling a 110-pound female bear, shot through the heart. "Blood was still draining from her mouth and froze as it hit the cold air," one said.

Please don't let this happen again. I call upon you to resolve human-bear conflicts through education and enforcement of New Jersey's "no feeding bears" law. I encourage you to meet with New Jersey Animal Rights Alliance now, to examine non-violent opportunities for managing black bears.

I look forward to your response to my letter.

Sincerely,