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Exempt Action: Proposed Regulation Agency Background Document

Agency name	DWR
Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) Chapter citation(s)	4VAC15-50
VAC Chapter title(s)	Game: Bear
Action title	May 2026 – Ch. 50
Date this document prepared	5/29/2026

This information is required for executive branch review pursuant to Executive Order 19 (2022) (EO 19), any instructions or procedures issued by the Office of Regulatory Management (ORM) or the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) pursuant to EO 19. In addition, this information is required by the Virginia Registrar of Regulations pursuant to the Virginia Register Act (§ 2.2-4100 et seq. of the Code of Virginia). Regulations must conform to the Regulations for Filing and Publishing Agency Regulations (1 VAC 7-10), and the *Form and Style Requirements for the Virginia Register of Regulations and Virginia Administrative Code*.

Brief Summary

Provide a brief summary (preferably no more than 2 or 3 paragraphs) of this regulatory change (i.e., new regulation, amendments to an existing regulation, or repeal of an existing regulation). Alert the reader to all substantive matters. If applicable, generally describe the existing regulation.

Section 120:

The proposal is to amend the opening day of the bear hound training season established in subsection E from the first Monday in December to the Monday nearest December 2.

Mandate and Impetus

Identify the mandate for this regulatory change, and any other impetus that specifically prompted its initiation (e.g., new or modified mandate, internal staff review, petition for rulemaking, periodic review, or board decision). For purposes of executive branch review, "mandate" has the same meaning as defined in the ORM procedures, "a directive from the General Assembly, the federal government, or a court that requires that a regulation be promulgated, amended, or repealed in whole or part."

Section 120:

This proposed amendment corrects staff oversight and aligns the regulatory language with the Board of Wildlife Resources intention during the 2025-2026 regulation review and amendment process. During that regulation review and amendment process, the bear firearms season was reduced by 25 days within 24 northwestern counties to address bear population declines resulting from the impacts of mange, high female harvest levels, and other factors. On 18 of the 25 days removed from the bear firearms season, hounds could be used to hunt bear in 23 of these counties. To continue providing as much recreational opportunity as possible during the reduced firearms season in these 23 counties and without impacting bear populations, the Board adopted regulation amendments intended to enable hunters to continue to chase bears with hounds, without harvesting them, on the 18 days that had been removed from the bear firearms season. Although the language of the regulation amendment adopted by the Board would provide 18 days of bear hound training opportunity during some years (e.g., this past season), it would provide less than the intended number of days during other years (e.g., the upcoming 2026-2027 hunting season).