

MEETING SUMMARY
Anchorage Bear Committee
Thursday May 9, 2002
Russian Jack Springs Chalet

Meeting participants

Al Meiners and Jerry Lewanski, Alaska Department of Natural Resources; Kellie Peirce, Fort Richardson; Mark Sledge, Elmendorf Air Force Base; John McCleary and Thede Tobish, Municipality of Anchorage; Aaron Poe, USDA Forest Service; Jeff Hughes, Rick Sinnott, Colleen Matt, and Cindi Loker, Alaska Department of Fish and Game; Bruce Seppi, Bureau of Land Management; and Captain Audie Holloway, Anchorage Police Department. Doug O’Harra, Anchorage Daily News, and Bill Sherwonit also attended.

Meeting purpose

To finalize the ABC charter and to continue discussing ideas for implementation of recommendations.

Welcome and introductions

Colleen welcomed everyone and discussed the meeting purpose and agenda. The group introduced themselves. The written summary of the April 11 meeting was approved with no changes.

Jeff and Rick said that Audubon had agreed to ask their members to remove bird feeders from April through September. Rick will ask them to extend that to October. Jeff mentioned that he will be going to Audubon’s board meeting to discuss implementation of the Living with Wildlife in Anchorage plan. In addition, Audubon and Rick will be working with a summer intern and youth volunteers to teach residents about bears (e.g., how to properly store garbage). They are considering conducting a survey of residents as well.

Rick mentioned that, following the last ABC meeting, an article about bears in Anchorage was written by Doug O’Harra. In addition, a section about removal of bird feeders was added to ADF&G’s and USFWS Region 7 web sites. He also noted that the Alaska Bear Forum was successful, with an estimated 300 attendees.

ABC charter

The ABC adopted the charter with no modifications.

Stakeholder recommendations

Cindi summarized the stakeholder recommendations (Attachment A) pertaining specifically to bears. These recommendations will be revisited throughout the ABC process.

Ideas for implementation of priority issues/problems

The group continued discussion of priority issues. The following issues were discussed at this meeting:

- ADF&G should offer a training session to APD and troopers (and other responders) regarding bear behavior and response options.

Captain Holloway noted that officers are given briefings daily. If Rick could prepare a 30 minute session, nearly every officer could be trained in a one week period (six hours total). Dispatchers could be included as well. Training should include information on bear behavior and response options. It is important to know what the public expects in terms of successful resolution of bear problems.

- Garbage is unsecured (e.g., poor dumpster management and design) in residential areas and parks.
See Attachment B for the results of that discussion.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Attachment A

Stakeholder Recommendations That Mention Bears Specifically

- Urban wildlife position/program [page 86 in the Living With Wildlife in Anchorage plan]
- Wildlife encounter safety program [pg. 87]
- Bear attractant ordinance/education program [pg. 89]
- Bear conflict response training [pg. 91]
- Wildlife feeding education program [pg. 92]
- Pet control education program [pg. 93]
- Trailhead bear warning program [pg. 95]

Additional general recommendations were made about issues such as wildlife habitat and corridors. It will be up to the ABC to determine if and how they want to address these issues.

In addition to the above, the stakeholders requested that the bear step-down planning group should explore whether increased conflicts are population or behavior driven.

Attachment B

Evaluation of and Action Items for Issues (to be continued)

Issue: ADF&G should offer a training session to APD, troopers, and their dispatchers (and other responders) regarding bear behavior and response options.

Causes of the problem

- Bear complaint may not be a high priority because of the volume and critical nature of emergency calls
- Dispatchers need to educate callers
- Responses of troopers, APD, military, BLM, state parks, and Fish and Game not well-coordinated
- Public expects/needs successful resolution
- High personnel turnover in some agencies
- High resident turnover
- A response policy is needed for Fort Richardson
- Need for training some responders in aversive conditioning
- Jurisdictional questions exist

Target audience (ranked in order of priority)

1. APD (officers and dispatchers)
 2. Troopers (officers and dispatchers)
 3. City parks and recreation staff
 4. Park volunteers and hosts
 5. ADF&G, DNR, BLM, APLIC information staff
 6. Sport Fish Division staff
 7. School staff
 8. Airport police
- USFS personnel (not ranked; already trained?)
 - General public (remove from list of responders and deal with under Public Information/Education?)
 - Military (already well-trained)
 - Park rangers (already well-trained)

Message

“Understanding bear behavior will help you respond professionally and appropriately on bear calls.” 1) What is a dangerous bear? 2) Who and when to refer calls. 3) How to avoid creating a worse public safety hazard.

Tools

- A half-hour training for all target audiences
- Aversive conditioning training for Alaska State Parks staff
- Videotape training session for future use
- Channel 47 broadcast of bear safety video or training session
- Shared database of bear nuisance calls and responses

Evaluation

- Training feedback

- End of season review
- Public feedback at incidents
- Letters/forum at ADN
- Incident debriefing

Actions

<i>Action item</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Individual responsible</i>
Half-hour training	First week in June	Rick—will consult with State Parks and ADF&G education staff. Audie—will handle logistics Colleen—will invite AST John—will invite Parks and Recreation staff Bruce—will send BLM trainer
State Parks aversive training	Next Fall	Colleen
Sport fish staff training (bear safety video)	As soon as appropriate	Rick
School staff training (principals and security)	As soon as possible	Colleen—will contact district about attending in-service training.

Issue: Garbage is unsecured (e.g., poor dumpster management and design) in residential areas and parks.

Causes of the problem

- No budget to provide bear-resistant trash cans in state and city parks
- Public expects garbage service at parks and campgrounds
- Garbage pickup service infrequent in bear areas
- Expensive bear-proof containers
- Some parks are party sites
- Hillside and other residential areas leave garbage out because of inconvenience and expense of bear-resistant containers
- Some people are apathetic to problem of food-conditioned bears or intentionally allow bears access to garbage or bird feeders
- Garbage pick-up schedule is sometimes too early in the morning or on Saturday (when many residents are not home) on Hillside and other bear areas
- Ineffective recycling program (more recycling may decrease volume of residential garbage)
- Lack of understanding about responsible garbage handling
- No place to put fish wastes
- Ignorance among some members of the public about what constitutes “bear proof”
- Garbage stored in vulnerable areas (e.g., sheds)

Target audience (ranked in order of priority)

1. Neighborhoods, trailer parks and apartment complexes (managers) with a high number of bear calls.
2. Waste management services
3. Community councils

4. State, federal, and municipal park users
5. Kids
6. Public policy makers (Re.: budgets, etc.)
7. Camp hosts
8. Outdoor recreation groups
9. Recycling company (handles fish wastes)

Message

Neighborhoods, kids, camp hosts, outdoor recreation groups:

- Handle garbage responsibly
- See Juneau newsletter (handout)

Waste management

- Need to negotiate needs
- Perhaps pick-up garbage later and not on Saturday in bear areas
- Need their help

Community councils

- See neighborhoods
- Need their help

Park users and policy makers

- Support budget for bear-proof garbage containers and pick-up
- Garbage doesn't belong in parks
- Don't assume garbage will be picked up

Policy makers

- Having bears in Anchorage is positive, but garbage needs to be managed to avoid problems
- Target some pilot neighborhoods in order to prove garbage control is effective
- Use survey information to show that some people will not change behavior no matter the consequences
- Need their help. Involve policy makers. Agree that there is a problem, educate residents, if that doesn't work, come back to policy makers to resolve (e.g., land use planning, ordinance).

Camp hosts

- Become educators of the public

Tools (ranked by likelihood of success, cost, importance to public, importance to bears, urgency, and ability to address quickly)

- 1) Work with WMI (ask them to be an ad hoc member of ABC)
- 2) Map of garbage/bear hot spots and neighborhoods
- 3) Develop a list of behaviors that describes responsible garbage handling on public and private lands.
- 4) Audubon (intern) investigate funding sources for education and containers
- 5) TV ads (mass media)
- 6) PSAs on the radio
- 7) Presentations to community councils
- 8) Door-to-door kids (use door hangers)
- 9) Bill inserts (WMI, Chugach, Enstar)
- 10) Bond issue to purchase bear-proof containers

11) Garbage ranger (volunteer)

(The following list has other ideas that were not the highest priority...)

- “Friends of bears” support group
- Corporate public service trainings for employees
- Electronic bill boards
- Website message
- Presentations to targeted school
- Bond issue for neighborhood, bear-proof garbage containers
- Reward homeowners for good garbage handling
- Bumper stickers for garbage containers
- Money for bear-proof containers
- Electric fence demonstration
- Adopt a hot spot to provide bear proofing
- Subdivision covenants, agreements regarding garbage disposal
- Waste management monetary incentive
- Prison industries produce bear-proof containers
- Eagle scout projects
- King Career Center produce containers
- Waste management employees report bear problems
- Neighbors share bear-proof containers
- Road side signs (cute and clever)
- Web map of hot spots and waste management reports

Evaluations (measures of success)

- Less than 300 calls per year about nuisance or aggressive black bears
- No injuries to humans by black bears in any year
- Less than five black bears killed in defense of life/property or by wildlife authorities on average each year

Actions

<i>Action item</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Individual responsible</i>
Map of bear hot spots	5/15 6/15	Rick—will create and get posted electronically Colleen—will create a brochure
List of behaviors	6/1	Colleen
Waste Management Incorporated	ASAP	Jeff—will contact Jim Posey and ask him to contact WMI and invite to be an ad hoc member and come to next meeting.
Audubon to investigate funding	5/14	Cindi—will call John Schoen
TV ads	By the next meeting	John—will investigate costs
Radio PSAs (contact stations and record)	ASAP	Colleen and Jeff—will coordinate with Juneau and Karen Lew.

Community councils	Next Spring and Fall	Rick, Jessy, Kellie, and Aaron (Girdwood)
Bill inserts (cost, discuss with WMI)	By next meeting	Al –will check file Kellie and Jeff
Bond issue (ask Jim to approach department heads. Get issue on CIP)	Before June 1	John and Thede
Garbage ranger	By next meeting	Kellie