

**Anchorage Bear Committee
Meeting Summary
May 13, 2003
Aerie Conference Room, ADF&G**

Present: Colleen Matt, Jeff Hughes, Rick Sinnott, Jessy Coltrane, Karen Deatherage, Aaron Poe, Kellie Peirce, John McCleary, Mark Sledge, Craig Gales, Jerry Lewanski, Dan Bosch, Doug O'Harra

Welcome and Opening Business

The summary for the April 22 meeting was adopted without changes.

Updates

Signage subcommittee:

The subcommittee met, except for BLM. They agreed to use the temporary trailhead signs currently used by ADNRS State Parks. Jerry also brought a standard permanent bear-warning sign that they post at trailheads. He was looking for feedback on the signs, so they can improve them. He noted that Parks needed to use photosensitive ink and make the type larger. To improve consistency among agencies, Jerry will make the sign available, or agencies can purchase them through a company called Assets.

Jerry also discussed the use of a special bear-warning sign, for temporary use in some situations. This is a large-format paper sign in Day-Glo orange or lime green. The group agreed that orange Day-Glo should be used for dangerous situations (e.g., carcass on a trail) and green Day-Glo should be used in less dangerous, but unique situations, such as repeat sightings of a brown bear sow with cubs, when a bear has bluff-charged someone, or repeat sightings of a black bear in a camping or picnic area. There is room on the bottom of both signs for staff to denote specifics such as date and exact location. The group wanted to phase out the use of "today's sighting" signs.

The only agency that didn't attend the subcommittee meeting was BLM, and it has been observed that the Campbell Creek Science Center routinely posts all bear sightings. Colleen will set up a meeting between BLM and the other agencies to discuss this protocol.

Jerry also provided a copy of the information that they give to camp hosts.

Bear habitat maps and prescriptions subcommittee

Rick and Jessy presented the Anchorage Bowl habitat maps for black and brown bears. Bear habitat was labeled as important, essential, and critical. It was noted that there are historical bear habitat areas that are not denoted on the map because development and human development have altered its utility to bears. Initially the ABC decided that areas that are bear habitat but are not managed as such should be identified in text but not on the map.

Brown bears

Important: Chugach Park, except areas above 4000ft., areas close to the wildlife refuge, and areas on the military bases that have not been developed.

Essential: the anadromous fish streams where bears are known to feed and rest, movement corridors, and habitat linkages

Critical: salmon spawning streams. There are few critical areas in Anchorage because of human development and use.

Black bears

Important: Chugach Park and the refuge bluff area to the mud flats. Forested areas and military land without development. The hillside, etc. including private land.

Essential: movement corridors along the front range; denning areas

Critical Rick said that there is no critical black bear habitat because there is less of a human safety concern with black bears, and black bears are more likely to habituate to people.

The ABC discussed the labels given to various bear habitat and decided that “levels” should be used instead of more descriptive labels. There may be as many as 5 “levels”—those formerly labeled “important,” “essential,” and “critical” as well as “former” and “potential.” John McCleary noted that the area around Chester Creek will likely be restored, so should receive a designation. Kellie Peirce, Dan Bosch, and Rick will determine which level(s) it should be.

Rick and Jessy will revise the habitat map accordingly.

Prescriptions

Rick reviewed the draft management guidelines for conserving brown and black bears in the Municipality of Anchorage. He said that the goals for managing bears are to:

- Maintain existing brown and black bear populations in Chugach State Park and the Anchorage metropolitan area;
- Avoid attracting bears to human food sources or garbage; and
- Manage risk to people living, working, and recreating in bear country.

The group discussed Rick’s draft guidelines, and agreed that guidelines should be clear as to how they apply for each of the three bear habitat levels. Guidelines should be developed for each of the following uses:

1. Fences
2. Garbage storage and pick-up
3. Trail building
4. Cover
5. Potential for denning
6. Road building
7. Anadromous streams
8. Livestock
9. Bird seed
10. Recreational use (e.g., hiking, biking, picnicking)
11. Campgrounds

John McCleary noted that the target audience for the guidelines should include all of the land management agencies. Rick will check with Thede Tobish to determine when he needs the draft guidelines for planning purposes. The final guidelines will be ready by fall.

Bear deterrent website subcommittee

Colleen said that the bear deterrent website will be done next fall because the person who is going to design it is unavailable until then.

Other action item updates

- **311 number:** The 311 system administrator is waiting for a grant from the Justice Department. It will be at least two years before the number is available for use.

- **Bear safety and bear ecology message for kids:** Colleen will work on over the summer.
- **Aversive training:** Mike Goodwin has contacted Jessy regarding training for campground hosts.
- **Door hangers:** Volunteers are working in neighborhoods to place hangers and distribute at public places. Defenders of Wildlife now has a Kiosk with bear information at the Sears Mall.
- **Tipper cart test at the zoo:** Zayk, the black bear at the zoo, was not able to get into the container in an hour, proving the container is bear resistant. WMI has had 10-12 calls from interested customers since the test. They are expecting shipment of 50-60 modified tipper carts in June.
- **Community councils:** Jessy, Dan, Jeff, and Rick have met with 14 and will meet with six more. The primary messages—(1) most Anchorage resident want some bears in the city and are willing to tolerate them and (2) residents must help by keeping bears out of garbage, pet food, and bird seed—have been well accepted.
- **Funding for bear resistant containers:** Jeff and John are still working on this item.
- **WMI “bear in garbage” tags:** should be available shortly
- **Radio PSAs:** WMI paid \$750 for production of five 30-second PSAs that have been and will continue to be played on the air during the month of May. ADF&G paid \$3,000 to the Alaska Broadcaster’s Association to distribute and track the PSA us to all Anchorage radio stations for one month. Voices include Col. Norman Vaughn, Jay Hammond, Rick Rydell, Camille Conte, and 2 kids.
- **Trail planning:** The Parks board was scheduled to approve this summer’s volunteer work on the Rabbit Creek trail. Rick mentioned that Rabbit Creek valley is a bear movement corridor, and that bears use Rabbit Creek Park to get away from people. He also has concerns about public safety because the trail is proposed to lie along the creek where spawning salmon attract brown bears. He sent a letter to the City explaining this, and the decision was postponed. Although the Rabbit Creek Community Council had voted last year in support of this trail, it was clear that most members of the community had not been notified of the vote. The Park board asked that the community council notify all members of the surrounding neighborhoods and conduct another vote. There will be an emergency community council meeting in late May to vote on whether to support continued extension of the trail.
- **Bear brochures:** Were supposed to be passed out on to dump patrons but the community service youth didn’t do it.
- **Valley of the Moon picnic:** Karen Deatheridge will coordinate distribution of brochures.
- **Develop e-mail loop regarding enforcement events** (citations), challenges, and successes: Rick will build this site
- **Publicize regulations citations:** Rick mentioned that Sergeant Dennis Allen asked him to talk to APD about the new regulation regarding intentional and negligent feeding of bears and writing citations. Rick talked to four fall-outs. Sergeant Allen thought APD officers should write such citations.

Measures of success

The group agreed that measures of success of the ABC effort include:

- Decrease the number of call to ADG&G from 400 to 300.
- Decrease the number of calls to APD and EAB
- Decrease DLP kills to five or fewer
- Survey the public (maybe next year)

Next meeting

Thursday, September 4 from 8:30-11:30 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.