

MEETING SUMMARY
Anchorage Bear Committee

Thursday August 1, 2002
ADF&G, Aerie Conference Room
8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Meeting participants

Doug Daniels, Anchorage Refuse/Waste Management Incorporated (WMI); Al Meiners, Alaska Department of Natural Resources; John McCleary, Municipality of Anchorage; Aaron Poe, USDA Forest Service, Herman Griese, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Dan Bosch, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Sport Fish), Rick Sinnott, Jessy Coltrane, Colleen Matt, and Cindi Loker, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Wildlife). Janice Shamberg, Anchorage Assembly and Karen Deatherage, Defenders of Wildlife also attended.

Meeting purpose

To update members on action items 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. Herman Griese, formerly with ADF&G, introduced himself. He is the new wildlife biologist for Elmendorf, and he will be an ABC member. The written summary of the June 13 meeting was approved with no changes.

Updates on action items

Jessy handed out copies of the updated “hot spots” map, and Colleen noted that the brochure with map will be finalized for printing soon. Responders to bear calls, ADF&G staff, etc will use the brochure.

Doug Daniels noted that WMI has filed a request with the regulatory authority, so they can offer roll cart tippers (which are also bear resistant) as an option to customers in Anchorage, Fairbanks and the Mat-Su Borough. Rick is going to check to see if the tippers can be tested with the bears at the zoo. Colleen stressed that we need to develop a list of the types of bear resistant or bear proof containers that exist, so that WMI and others can determine if they will meet OSHA standards. Karen Deatherage said she might have such a list. Colleen will coordinate the lists and get them to Doug for WMI analysis.

Karen explained Defenders of Wildlife’s Urban Bear Awareness Program. She said that they would be hanging posters and door hangers in neighborhoods and businesses with potential for bear problems. Rick and Colleen reviewed the poster and brochure before the meeting. It was suggested that Defenders include a phone number or web addresses for people who have specific questions. Colleen will give Karen an ADF&G phone number and web address. The ABC agreed to endorse Defenders’ bear awareness program. Colleen will come up with an ABC logo and get it to Karen. Colleen will also check with Wayne to get permission to use the ADF&G logo on their posters and door hangers and will try to design a logo for the Anchorage Bear Committee as well.

Rick said that the training course for responders to bear calls has been developed and will be given to APD officers and dispatchers next week and in the future as appropriate.

Dan Bosch reported that sport fish staff have had a few bear encounters, including a charging brown bear. His staff has watched the bear safety video.

Cindi noted that John Schoen is very interested in attending the next ABC meeting. She will coordinate with him.

John said that Jim Posey invited assembly members to attend the ABC meetings, so that members can see what the group is all about prior to scheduling a presentation at an assembly meeting. He said that the administration would need to be briefed as well.

Ideas for implementation of priority issues/problems

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

Identify (and protect) critical bear habitat and reserves (concentration areas)

See Attachment A for specific results of that discussion.

Al said that they are in the early stages of planning a pathway through the Eagle River greenbelt and are looking for some direction on this project. Al noted that a trail is being built on the Rabbit Creek greenbelt as well.

The group noted some of the major habitat-related concerns:

- Fishery enhancement may attract more bears to human populated areas
- Bike trails along salmon streams may put users at risk of brown bear attacks
- future development of some Fort Rich land in bear concentration areas
- Bragaw extension through high-use brown bear habitat may lead to more road kills
- Increasing numbers of households in mid to lower hillside
- High density moose population attracts bears into the city

Colleen suggested three questions to guide the bear habitat discussion: 1) What constitutes bear habitat in the city and what makes it critical? 2) Are there any places we want to exclude bears? 3) What are some objectives for maintaining and creating bear habitat (considering seasonal use patterns, home ranges, bear viewing, and corridors)? Colleen reminded the group that the original stakeholder group agreed that they wanted bears in Anchorage.

What constitutes bear habitat in the city and what makes it critical?

An area that provides a natural food source or leads to a natural food source, movement corridor, or sufficient cover, and allows bears to act natural. Minimizes bears: 1) getting into garbage; 2) hanging around residential areas; 3) being surprised at close range.

Are there any places where we want to actively exclude bears?

Bears are actively excluded at places like the airport, some areas on Elmendorf, business district, garbage dumps, and schools. The ABC agreed to make no recommendations about excluding bears. The ABC wanted to focus on recommendations about the issues we've identified.

Next meeting

Will be on September 5 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. in the Aerie Conference Room.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Attachment A

Issue: Identify (and protect) critical bear habitat and reserves (concentration areas)

Causes of the problem

- ❑ Demand for sport fishing opportunities increasing
- ❑ Development pressure increasing
- ❑ Demand for more recreational opportunities (e.g., trails) in bear habitat
- ❑ Fishery enhancement may attract more bears to human populated areas
- ❑ Bike trails along salmon streams may put users at risk of brown bear attacks
- ❑ Future development of some Fort Rich land in bear concentration areas
- ❑ Bragaw extension through high-use brown bear habitat may lead to more road kills
- ❑ Increasing numbers of households in mid to lower hillside
- ❑ High density moose population attracts bears into the city

Target audience (ranked in order of priority)

1. Homeowners (especially along streams)
2. Recreational users
3. Developers and planners
4. Sport fish managers
5. School district, wildlife enthusiasts, and zoo visitors

Message

- ❑ What constitutes bear habitat in the city and what makes it critical? “An area that provides a natural food source or leads to a natural food source, movement corridor, or sufficient cover, and allows bears to act natural. Minimizes bears: 1) getting into garbage; 2) hanging around residential areas; 3) being surprised at close range.”
- ❑ Salmon will attract bears. Avoid areas where bears are feeding on fish
- ❑ Plan development to reserve natural areas where bears can feed on fish and rest with minimal human interference.
- ❑ Users of city streams and greenbelts should educate themselves and expect to see bears when salmon are spawning
- ❑ When enhancing salmon runs, consider the possible increase in human-bear conflicts

Tools (asterisks indicate high priority items)

- ❑ Signs on trails (use state park designed informational signs at access points and warning signs along specific trails with feeding bears)*
- ❑ Newspaper articles in August*
- ❑ Trail design and management (work with trail designers)*
- ❑ ABC participate in MOA Parks Plan (work with Thede and John)*
- ❑ Address the Homebuilders Association
- ❑ Create a brochure for planners and developers that recommends ways to avoid problems with bears
- ❑ Use newspapers like Anchorage Daily News, the Star, the Chronicle, and the Turnagain Times to educate residents and trail users
- ❑ Use WMI advertising space
- ❑ Provide incentives for developers
- ❑ Conservation easements
- ❑ Land trades (Heritage Land Bank)

- ❑ Zoning changes to modify human density
- ❑ Meet with community councils and write articles for their newsletters

Evaluation

Actions

Action item	Due date	Individual responsible
Press release to educate people about bears and salmon and help them avoid negative encounters, especially during the upcoming coho run.	mid-August prior to coho run	Dan and Rick—will write and send press release to appropriate papers (see tools).
Improve signage on trails, especially on the hillside. Short-term: MOA has some advisory signs that can be put at trail heads Long-term: create interpretive signs or use those already designed by state parks	Short-term—ASAP Long-term—by next summer	Colleen—will talk to Dietrich about getting existing signs. Colleen—will work on ideas for funding and placement of signs
Consider bears in trail planning (Eagle River and Rabbit Creek)	ASAP	Rick has contacted the Bill Evans, DNR, and MOA and will be involved in both planning efforts.
Develop or find a list of bear-friendly garbage containers to be reviewed by WMI and others to assess OSHA compliance	ASAP	Karen Deatherage will look for an existing list. Colleen and Rick will review and finalize the list and send to WMI and others to review..
Get permission to use ADF&G logo on Defender's posters and door hangers	ASAP	Colleen (completed on 8/6)
Colleen will give Karen an ADF&G phone number and web address.	ASAP	Colleen (completed on 8/6)
Colleen will come up with an ABC logo and get it to Karen.	ASAP	Colleen (completed on 8/6)
Consider bears in MOA parks plan	ASAP	Colleen will contact Thede
Write article for community council newsletter	ASAP	Janice Shamberg will write a brief article.
Check to see if the new WMI tippers can be tested with the bear at the zoo.	September 1	Rick