

ANCHORAGE BEAR COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 2, 2003

Members Present: Bruce Seppi, Colleen Matt, John McCleary, Dan Bosch, Craig Gales, Aaron Poe, Jeff Hughes, Sgt. Allen, Jessy Coltrane, Rick Sinnott, Karen Deatherage, Jerry Lewanski

Public Present: Bill Sherwonit

Meeting participants were introduced, and the meeting summary from the previous meeting was adopted. No changes to the agenda were made.

Updates

Bear Activity Reports by Agency

Jerry Lewanski, Chugach State Park,

- Jerry reported that the yearling brown bear seen around the Eagle River Nature Center earlier in the summer was now fishing in the beaver pond. The bear has not approached people, but some of the park employees are concerned because of number of school groups visiting the pond area.
- There have been no incidents in the park this year; however there are probably 6-8 brown bears in Eagle River Valley.
- Colleen mentioned that it appeared that perhaps the bears were becoming more habituated to people, but not food-conditioned. Jerry mentioned that there is still a problem with garbage in the housing areas downstream, so they cannot be certain.
- Eagle River Nature Center is still closing the River Trail during the salmon run; however there is some resistance by the center to keep the trail closed.
- Jerry has seen quite a few bears in his yard this summer and along the east side of Campbell Creek in the Glen Alps area.
- There have been very few bear/human incidents in Eklutna this summer, and the rangers only wrote a few tickets to campers who were improperly storing food.

Sgt. Dennis Allen, APD,

- APD received many calls about bears this summer, and had many bear sightings.
- A woman from near the Eagle River Nature Center area called to say that a brown bear sow and her two cubs were attacking her family and that shots had been fired. APD helicopters were deployed. When they arrived, they found the woman with a black bear and two cubs in the vicinity that quickly ran away. Nothing happened.
- APD did not dispatch any bears this summer, and they did not write any citations for garbage or other attractants.

Aaron Poe, USFS,

- There was a mauling on the Russian River, but no incidents in his area.
- The Forest Service produced a “Kayaking In Bear Country” brochure, and started a bear resistant food container check out system at the Begich Bog Visitor Center. The program was

well received, and they are thinking about expanding it next summer. The Kayak ranger program in Whittier is also checking out the containers.

- A Forest Service employee was pursued by two young bears along California Creek near Girdwood, which he repeatedly fought off with a stick. No one was injured and no additional problems were reported in the immediate area.

Craig Gales, WMI,

- Starting in July, about 70 red tags were placed on garbage cans that had been raided by bears. WMI did not receive any complaints regarding the red tags.
- WMI started a Kenai Pilot program in the Dogwood Subdivision near Soldotna. The community was provided with bear-resistant dumpsters free of charge through a federal grant and Audubon.
- WMI ordered 70 bear resistant tipper carts this summer, but only 20 were distributed in Anchorage. They will be ordering possibly 100 more for next year. They will also order 50-75 lids that can be retrofitted to fit their existing cans. ABC members agreed to start marketing the cans now for next season. Many people were concerned that 100 tipper carts was too few, and that WMI could easily distribute more. ADF&G had many requests for the tipper carts, but WMI was already out of them.

Dan Bosch, ADF&G, Sport Fish,

- There were no reports of bear incidents on streams in the Anchorage area this summer; however, there were 8-9 different brown bears on the north fork of Campbell Creek, which boasts a large sockeye run. There was also a single large brown bear on the south fork of Campbell Creek.

John McCleary, Muni Parks and Rec,

- There was a normal amount of bear activity reported in Bicentennial Park, but Kincaid Park had relatively few black bear sightings this summer.
- The Parks and Rec. Department kept up with removing garbage cans as ADF&G reported bears getting into the trash.

Bruce Seppi, BLM,

- There was a brown bear on Campbell Tract that frequented the creek this summer and quite a few black bears were reported on BLM land.
- BLM installed bear-proof dumpsters at the offices and the science center.

Rick Sinnott, ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation,

- There seemed to be quite a few black bear cubs in town this summer; however there were not many brown bears with cubs that ADF&G heard about.
- This was the lowest year for DLP's for black bears (4) in the last decade.
- One black bear yearling was trapped on Ft. Richardson and relocated to Ingram Creek. It was subsequently shot by Jeff Selinger at Cooper Landing campground about a week later.
- Two black bears were killed by vehicles in the municipality; one brown bear was shot as a DLP. She had at least one, but possibly as many as three, cubs; 4 brown bears were killed by vehicles (3 adults and 1 COY).

- Mark Sledge wrote one ticket to a camper on Elmendorf AFB. The camper was warned multiple times about keeping his cooler outside, but neglected to comply. That was the only garbage violation ticket written in the municipality this summer so far.
- Rick and Jessy did not write any citations this summer; however, they could have written hundreds. Rick was afraid to begin writing citations, because then ADF&G would be forced into becoming “garbage cops.”
- Jessy reported that several schools retrofitted their dumpsters with metal lids after bears got into the dumpsters repeatedly.

Karen Deatherage, Defenders of Wildlife,

- Defenders distributed 6000 door hangers this summer.
- They had a booth at the Bear Paw Festival in Eagle River where they passed out more door hangers and talked to people about bears and garbage. They also had a tipper cart at the festival, and many people were interested in obtaining one.
- They maintained a bears and garbage display at the zoo.
- They joined with the Alaska Bird Club to distribute notices about removing bird feeders during the summer to avoid conflicts with bears.
- City Parks and Rec. printed the door hangers in their summer activity flier.

Subgroup Reports

Bear Deterrent Web Page:

The web page has been transformed into a bear deterrent page. The contract to complete the page contact will be let in November.

Habitat Map and Definitions:

Rick and Jessy produced a series of black and brown bear habitat maps and corresponding management prescriptions. The map was supposed to go to the City Planners to be incorporated into Title 21 revisions. The revision process for Title 21 is behind schedule, so we still have time to submit the habitat management prescriptions to the city.

Colleen suggested that we look at the management prescriptions from an agency standpoint, because the document should be something that all participating agencies could sign-off on. She suggested that the ABC members look at Rick’s document and scrutinize it for issues that would be controversial with different agencies. Rick suggested that another draft should be made and sent to the higher-ups within the cooperating agencies for review.

Jeff began the discussion concerning a city “bear plan.” He stated that he was not sure if the ABC’s efforts should be focused on developing a bear management plan. The ABC is addressing tasks outlined in the Living with Wildlife Plan, which included habitat management prescriptions for bears.

Rick asked the ABC to produce a final document that includes the habitat guidelines. This would be more of a final report, and not a bear management plan. Aaron Poe suggested that the management prescriptions should be divided into “standards” vs. “guidelines.” Standards would be “musts”, whereas guidelines would be “shoulds” regarding development within specified habitat zones.

The Habitat Subgroup will meet on October 28 to discuss the plan. Comments on the habitat document need to be finished by October 15. The Habitat Subgroup includes: Rick, Jessy, Jerry, Aaron, Kellie, Herman, Dan and Thede.

Tickler Sheet Action Items Update

311 Number: on hold

State Parks Training: training did not occur.

Bear Safety Message: ADF&G met to standardize bear safety messages. It is in the process of review.

Interpretive Signs: Sign sub-group met and decided to use State Parks signs. No additional work on this.

Door Hangers: Defenders of Wildlife distributed 6000 door hangers this summer.

Tipper Cart Testing: New tipper carts were tested at the zoo on the black bears.

Community Council Newsletter Article: Was not completed this summer.

WMI Red Bear Tags: Done. About 70 were put on garbage cans raided by bears.

Brief Mayor and City: Deferred until March/April.

Radio PSA's: Five PSA's were aired this summer and actually ran for longer than we paid for. Still working on info to be passed to the City Planning Department.

School District Flow Chart: The bus driver recommendations were incorporated into the flow chart. Rick needs to review the chart and then Lily will make it look snazzy.

Blue Jeans Kick-Off Luncheon: No one participated in the luncheon.

Brochure Handout at Dump Day: The community service person did not show up for the distribution; however APD handed out some of the brochures.

Valley of the Moon Picnic: Defenders of Wildlife had a booth at the clean-up picnic. They handed out door hangers and talked to people about garbage.

E-mail Loop: Loop was used when Mark cited the camper for leaving out food on EAFB.

Magistrates: Audi is going to talk to the magistrates concerning sentencing suggestions for people that contest garbage fines.

Publicize Garbage/Food Regulation and Citations: Doug O'Hara will probably do an end of the year summary story on bear activity in Anchorage.

PRIORITY ISSUES/PROBLEMS

Measures of Success

The measures of success regarding the ABC's efforts to educate the public on bear issues in Anchorage were defined as follows:

1. The **number of bear calls received by ADF&G** would reduce from 400 to 300.
 - This summer, we have already received around 400 documented calls, and bear activity is increasing slightly since the berry season is ending.
2. The **number of calls received by Elmendorf AFB** conservation officers would decline.
 - No one from EAFB was at the meeting to comment on the number of calls they received this summer.
3. The **number of DLP's** would decrease.
 - This summer has been the lowest number of DLP's. Only four black bears were shot in defense of life and property this summer. These were most likely food conditioned bears. Vehicles hit two additional black bears.

4. *Survey of public knowledge* would be conducted to assess people's understanding of bears and the issues surrounding bears in Anchorage.
 - This survey has been postponed until 2004.
5. The *number of red garbage tags deployed* would measure success of educating people about bears and garbage.
 - This is the first year for the garbage tag system; therefore, we will need several years of tag data to assess the success of our efforts.

Writing a Report

The planning document was decided to be more of a "report" instead of a "plan." The report should include information on what the ABC has done, as well as the habitat prescriptions. Jerry wondered if we should meet with the assembly first to see what they would like in the report. John stated that he did not know for sure if we should meet with the assembly prior to finalizing a report. Rick will be responsible for writing the final report to be handed to the assembly. The overall goal will be to meet with the assembly in March to present the report.

Karen mentioned that a good time to meet with the assembly would be around the time of the Bear Festival in the spring.

Rick stressed the importance of meeting with the new Land Planning Director before her schedule became too booked.

Where do we go from here?

We need to begin to wrap things up with the ABC since we've reached the end of our charter. Rick said that we needed to continue with a few meetings a year to keep up with the progress of the ABC and to maintain the strategies for improving the bear situation in town that we have developed. Jerry stated that he would hate to see the ABC disband, but that maybe the group should change its name. Aaron suggested we need to compare notes every year.

John suggested that we meet in the spring to get ready for bear season and then in the fall to check our performance for the summer and share our resources and ideas. Colleen suggested that we meet in February to discuss the report. The final report should be completed by March. Then we should continue to meet twice a year. The general consensus was to follow Colleen's suggestion.

Next Meeting

The next ABC meeting will be on Thursday, February 5, 2004.