

ANCHORAGE BEAR COMMITTEE MEETING

5 February 2004

8:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Members Present: Colleen Matt (ADF&G), Lilly Goodman (ADF&G), Kim Babcock (ABWE), Rick Sinnott (ADF&G), Jeff Hughes (ADF&G), Jessy Coltrane (ADF&G), John McCleary (MOA), Kellie Pierce (Ft. Rich), Mark Sledge (Ft. Rich), Dave Battle (Ft. Rich), Rich Graham (Ft. Rich), Aaron Poe (USFS), Bruce Seppi (BLM), Karen Deatherage (DFW), Dan Bosch (ADF&G)

Welcome and Opening Business

The meeting summary from the previous meeting was adopted without changes. The agenda for the meeting at hand was adopted without changes.

Amended Charter

Colleen posed the question of how long should we extend our charter and mentioned that perhaps the charter needed to be amended to reflect any changes in the ABC's purpose. Jeff briefly explained the previous charter for new members. It was agreed that we should extend our original charter for an additional three years.

John suggested that the new charter include an objective to monitor the effectiveness of our educational strategies. This would allow us to change our strategies over time accordingly.

Subgroup Reports

Habitat Map and Definitions

- Jessy has finished the habitat map and the bear hot spots map.
- Rick is working on revisions to the guidelines and recommendations for the habitat map. Most revisions are editorial, and the general guidelines have not been altered.
- Rick explained that the purpose of the map and accompanying guidelines are to identify bear habitat in the MOA and to designate degrees of importance for different habitat types. In addition, the guidelines recommend restrictions for development and other activities in the designated habitat areas.
- The focus of the guidelines is to conserve bear habitat and the Anchorage bear populations, while maintaining public safety and reducing human-bear conflicts.
- Colleen added that we hope to incorporate the habitat map and guidelines into the revision of Title 21 for the city.
- Colleen also mentioned that Fish and Game is not in charge of public safety and that the city needs to incorporate developmental designs in bear habitat to help ensure public safety.

Bear Deterrent Web Site

Colleen indicated that the web site is still under construction. It includes information on three basic areas:

- Incinerators
- Bear resistant containers
- Electric fences

All three of these sections will include distributors' addresses and contact information. In addition, safety concerns of individual products will be addressed and then information will include "how to's" on construction of your own bear proof containers, electric fences, and incinerators.

John mentioned that we should contact Thede Tobish about putting a hot link from the MOA website to the F&G bear deterrent web site.

Bear Sighting Sign Consistency Update

There was some confusion over the status of the signage documentation. Bruce Seppi (BLM) had previously thought that the subgroup was not in agreement about signage; however, this seems to be a misunderstanding. BLM is in agreement with the decision of standardized signs.

Jerry was supposed to write a document outlining the different signs and types of situations for which each sign would be used. This has not yet been completed.

Jessy mentioned that she would go to the BLM Science Center in the spring and discuss bear and sign policies with them.

Aaron said that the proofs of the signs are at Assets Printing on Northern Lights and E. 20th Ave.

Member Updates

Aaron Poe (USFS)

Chugach National Forest began a program this past summer to lend bear-resistant containers for backpacking trips. The program was very successful. They received excellent feedback, and there were no thefts of containers. The program is free and available at the Chugach Ranger District Headquarters in Girdwood and the Begich Bog Visitor Center in Portage.

Kim Babcock (ABWE)

The troopers spent some time trying to inform people in Eagle River about the garbage and brown bear issue this fall; however, only two citations were written, out of about 30 documented violations. Kim also wrote five warnings and talked to several more residents about cleaning up their acts. They are planning on writing citations next year and making enforcement a priority. Her bosses would like her to issue warnings concerning the garbage citations. ADF&G feels that people have been adequately warned for several years now.

Jeff Hughes (ADF&G)

Jeff promises to go to the city assembly and the mayor and update them re: the ABC before the bears wake up this spring.

Jessy Coltrane (ADF&G)

Jessy finished the habitat maps. She has also contacted WMI about the red tags, which will be discussed later during the meeting.

John McCleary (MOA, Parks and Rec)

Parks and Rec. has established new guidelines for upgrading or construction of new facilities. These guidelines include bear-resistant garbage cans and possibly educational kiosks.

The spring activity guide will reprint Defenders' bears and garbage poster.

Rick Sinnott (ADF&G)

Rick reported that five black bears were shot DLP this past summer, and additional 3-4 black bears were hit by cars. Two brown bears were killed DLP, and 4 were killed by vehicles.

Kellie Pierce (Ft. Richardson)

Kellie reported that they have increased their conservation officer staff. Bear resistant containers were installed on the Moose Run Golf Course, and there were almost no incidents with bears as a result. In addition, wolf problems decreased.

The one failure on Ft. Rich was the Otter Lake Campground. The campground has dumpsters, which had been fitted with bear-resistant lids and a locking bar. Someone at the facility removed the bar, rendering the dumpsters not bear-resistant. Due to military bureaucracy, it took a month to get the OK to replace the rod. In the meantime, bears were happily dumpster-diving and reeking havoc at the campground.

Jerry Lewanski (ASP)

Jerry was happy to report no bear problems in the park. The park is reprinting their visitor pamphlet, and is asking for help making sure the safety messages are consistent with ADF&G's newly revised safety messages. Jeff promises to go to the city assembly and the mayor

Jerry also mentioned that the city regularly grants variances to subdivision developments on setback requirements. This is something that we should address in the guidelines for the habitat maps. Rick indicated that he would include in the guidelines that no variances should be allowed in Habitat 1. John suggested that ADF&G should be notified of the public hearings that deal with variances in habitats 1 and 2.

Mark Sledge (U.S. Army, Ft. Richardson)

Mark has left Elmendorf and is now a conservation officer for Ft. Rich. They are going to purchase a new bear-deterrent toy called a pepper ball system. It is basically a paint ball gun that shoots balls filled with powdered pepper. They cost about \$300, and Mark promised that Rick and Jessy could play with them too.

Karen Deatherage (DFW)

Defenders helped out ADF&G immensely by distributing fliers in the Eagle River subdivisions where we were having serious brown bear problems. They also spoke with numerous residents and distributed fliers at the local schools.

Karen mentioned that they had given fliers to Centennial Park, and that they would be targeting that campground in the spring again.

The door-hanger was printed in the Turnagain Times; however, the Eagle River Star would not print the door-hanger.

Karen questioned whether the ABC should be concerned about the number of road-killed bears this past summer. The past summer was relatively high in road kills compared to prior years. Defenders in Florida have worked extensively on an education campaign to reduce road kills.

Lilly Goodman (ADF&G)

Lilly visited 42 different classrooms last year to teach natural history of bears and bear safety. She has had excellent feedback about the program and already has teachers lining up for presentations for the coming school year.

Lilly also produced a moose and bear safety card. Karen recommended that ADF&G make the card accessible on the web, so that other people can use it as an educational too.

Eagle River Trail Planning

Jerry Lewanski

UPDATE: The plan is to construct a paved trail along Eagle River from the Glenn Highway to the Eagle River Nature Center. Currently there are 4-5 alternatives for the trail plan and route. All alternatives avoid the South Fork area due to ROW and easement issues and overwhelming public resistance to the trail. Right now they are developing the preferred alternative.

Right now there is only enough money in the project to build a segment of the trail. Ideally the trail could be incorporated into the design of the Eagle River Rd. renovations; however, this has not occurred to date. Ironically, DOT is in the process of developing a project to re-surface Eagle River Rd. Their current preferred alternative only includes 4 ft. shoulders, which would not accommodate a bike trail.

The most likely segment that will be constructed during the initial phase of the project with the current funding is the area between Brigg's Bridge and the North Fork. The preferred alternative for the trail will most likely be right on the edge of the green belt and will be a multi-use, high-speed, paved bike trail.

The funding for the project has been moved to the 2008 cycle.

Rick Sinnott

Fish and Game is not opposed to a trail project, but they do have some serious reservations concerning the location and type of trail planned. One of the major concerns is public safety. There have been 9 serious attacks along the proposed route, including 3 maulings near the Nature Center and one brown bear shot at the campground. There have been additional cases of people being charged along current access points to the greenbelt. If this area were opened up further for additional travel, especially high-speed travel, the number of incidents (potentially deadly) will no doubt increase dramatically.

The main areas for public safety concern are:

- The South Fork
- Meadow Creek
- The mile or two before the Visitor Center, including Clearwater Slough

There are also habitat concerns. Eagle River is one of the few anadromous fish streams that support a large portion of the Chugach State Park brown bear population. Some bears may adjust to the presence of humans, and these bears will probably be the ones that cause concern for public safety. Some bears will be displaced by increased human activity. This displacement will essentially eliminate an important protein source.

Fish and Game recommends only a primitive trail, not a paved trail. A paved trail will attract high-speed activities, such as biking and roller blading. The proximity of a high-speed trail will attract unsupervised children from nearby neighborhoods and schools.

Rick indicated that State Parks and DOT were disconnected in this effort and the best place for a paved trail would be along the roadway. ADF&G requests an extension of dates to do additional surveys specifically looking at spawning channels and wetland areas. The current date

for choosing a preferred alternative eliminates the possibility to collect data this summer on bear activity and salmon spawning areas.

John suggested that the state risk manager be involved in this process, due to the serious public safety concerns about this trail.

Preparing for Spring and the Return of the Bears!

WMI Service and Red Tag Deployment

The ABC had really put a lot of emphasis into the red tag system. WMI had agreed to do it. Craig Gales (WMI) ensured running and us that the program was up. We later found out that while a box of red tags had been produced, the program had never been initiated. ADF&G has renewed communication with WMI and Craig's replacement, Ashley Barney. They have agreed to make this program a priority.

Rick and Colleen went to WMI and met with the regional manager, Dean Curgus. He was very apologetic and wanted to help us out this spring. Hopefully, this year we will get some data collected!

WMI and the Tipper Carts

WMI promised that there would be many more tipper carts ordered this year and that they will place orders as needed throughout the summer. There shouldn't be the same problem we encountered last year with lack of availability from the distributor.

The tipper carts and accompanying information will be on display at the Sportsman show this spring.

Jeff explained the pilot program on the Kenai in the Dogwood subdivision. WMI provided free bear-resistant tippercart service for a neighborhood that was notorious for bear problems for two years. Bear problems were reduced dramatically in the neighborhood and everyone was ecstatic about the success of the tippercart program in reducing bear-human conflicts.

WMI had offered to do some kind of similar program in the Eagle River subdivisions where we had serious problems with brown bears this past fall. Rick and Jessy were opposed to this, as they felt that these particular *brown* bears would have no problem destroying the tippercarts. This would be serious negative publicity for the program. However, they agreed that if the bears show back up in the spring, as predicted and are destroyed, then it would be an excellent time for WMI to come in with the tippercarts to prevent further black bear food-conditioning. They also suggested that if WMI wanted to do this in another area in town, we could easily find an area for them and arrange it.

Eagle River and the Return of the Brown Bears

There will be a lot of focus on educating Eagle River residents this spring concerning bears and garbage.

- Karen said that Defenders was considering putting a garbage message on grocery bags or putting them in the newspaper.
- Lilly suggested having a person in the bear suit distribute information at the local grocery stores and Walmart.

- Rick is scheduled to talk at the community council meetings in the spring in the area where we were having bear problems.
- Doug O'Hara will most likely contact us in the spring concerning bear activity. That should help the media support get rolling.

Education

Bear Safety Message Update

The bear safety message was standardized and is being revised. It should be completed in a couple of months, in time for the spring awakening.

Training Needs

- Rick will get with CSP and Muni Parks and Rec to train summer employees on bear safety and deterrent.
- WMI probably needs to be briefed on the red tag system. This will hopefully get the collectors to actually use the red tag system.
- Rick is not planning on redoing training at APD unless they request it. It was very time consuming last year, as he had to be there for every shift change until all the officers had gone through the training.

Other Business

Law Enforcement E-mail Loop

- We will continue with reporting any citations or tickets written regarding bears and garbage.
- APD needs to be reminded of the citation and the e-mail loop.

Kid's Day at the Eagan Center

- This is coming up this spring and would be a good opportunity to hand out bear info.

Next Meeting

Date and time for the next meeting will be scheduled in the fall. The meeting will be sometime in October. Colleen will get back to everyone with a date and time.

11:00 ADJOURNED