

Anchorage Bear Committee
March 4, 2003 Meeting Minutes

Attendants: Colleen Matt, Jeff Hughes, Rick Sinnott, Jessy Coltrane, Karen Deatherage, Aaron Poe, Lilly Goodman, Kellie Pierce, John McCleary, Mark Sledge, Craig Gales, Jerry Lewanski, Herman Griese

Welcome and Opening Business

- The summary to the previous meeting was adopted without changes.
- There were no changes requested for the meeting at hand.

UPDATES

Habitat Map: There has been no progress since the last meeting.

Web Page Colleen and others met about the development of a website, and decided that our first priority should be to construct a “bear deterrents” site. Their group prepared a proposal for the web site that outlined three basic categories to be covered. The categories are: (1) bear fences, (2) bear-proof containers, and (3) incinerators. The proposal is to hire someone to pull together the content of the sites, which will then be reviewed by others. Colleen estimates that it will take a month of someone’s time to design the site, and that the site would hopefully be completed by June 1.

ADF&G’s policy allows for the listing of vendors on the web page; however, the page cannot contain direct links to a commercial site.

311 Phone Number There has been no progress on the 311 number. The city has been preoccupied with updating the 911 system.

Aversive Training Jerry and Rick will coordinate aversive training for State Parks summer employees. John and Jerry will include Parks and Rec employees.

Standardize and Update Bear Safety Message We still need to come up with a standardized bear safety message. John Hechtel suggested the following revisions:

- Take out any reference to black or brown bears and focus on the actual behavior of the bear when dealing with an encounter.
- Make sure people know that they should fight back during a predatory attack but not in a defensive attack.

Jerry mentioned that we need to develop a standardized policy on bear signage. Some agencies post signs for bear sightings, while others do not. The land-owning agencies are going to check and see if they have an existing policy and report back at the next meeting. Lilly or Colleen will send out PSA to ABC for prior approval, if needed.

Karen Deatherage reported that Defenders of Wildlife are going ahead with their Living with Carnivores (LWC) program in Alaska. Participating agencies are planning to use the LWC program to standardize the bear safety message. They are currently putting together a slide script that will be reviewed by biologists throughout the state. Colleen stated that the ABC could give LWC our revised safety message, to ensure consistency.

Waste Management Tipper Carts Craig Gales reported that Waste Management would have 50 bear-resistant tipper carts available in the third week of April. Currently, they have 12-15 of the bear-proof cages that fit three cans. They are planning a zoo test of the new tipper cart in mid-April. The new cart has a modified latch, but the wheels are the same as before. However, Waste Management will fix or replace any wheels damaged by bears.

Bear Call Statistics Jessy has summarized the bear call data, but still needs to get the data to John.

Bear Hot Spot Map and Brochure They are ready for printing.

New Garbage Regulation The fine for letting a bear get into your garbage is now officially \$100 and is a mail-bail fine.

Door Hanger Distribution Karen reported that Defenders of Wildlife has funding to print and distribute more door hangers this spring and summer. She will collaborate with Rick and Jessy to target problem neighborhoods for distribution. In addition, Defenders is going to print and distribute more posters this year, and they are planning on a broader statewide distribution. We need to better target Eagle River this year, as Karen felt it was neglected last year.

Media Campaign Committee members conceded that we needed to outline a strategy for our media campaign on garbage and bears. Colleen suggested that Riley Woodford, with ADF&G's public communications staff, be contacted on how to put together a media campaign. We have available PSA's.

Lilly suggested that we consider purchasing an ad that could be used on the radio stations that don't broadcast PSA's. Lilly will contact Riley and coordinate a meeting to discuss the media campaign on garbage. This should be completed by mid-April.

Community Council Meetings Rick has identified 15 community councils that encompass the worst problem bear areas, and 5 additional community councils with slightly fewer encounters. Terry Arnold is scheduling presentations during their meetings in April and May. Rick and Jessy will put together a 15-minute Power-point presentation on bears and bear attractants. Waste Management may participate in these meetings; however, the tipper carts will be mentioned whether Craig can attend the meetings or not. Aaron volunteered to attend the Girdwood Community Council Meeting. Rick is going to write an article for the Spring 2003 Community Council Newsletter about bears in Anchorage.

Letter to the Municipality Regarding Funding for Bear-Resistant Containers John is preparing his budget in May. He will ask for more bear-resistant containers for city parks. Jeff will work with John on this issue.

Waste Management Garbage Tags Jessy and Rick came up with a tag to put on the garbage cans when a bear had gotten into it. Waste management will print and distribute these tags. We need to add “this is not a citation” to the tag and find a new graphic that doesn’t look like a rabbit/pig/bear hybrid. Jessy will send Craig a digital copy of the tag for review. Craig will be able to use the tag information to compile a database of bear/garbage incidents at the end of the year.

Brief Mayor and City Managers about the ABC The newly elected mayor will take office July 1 John will arrange a briefing to introduce the mayor to the ABC’s efforts after the election results are announced.

PSA’s Lilly and Colleen have revised Talkeetna’s Bear Necessities PSA’s to be Anchorage specific. Lilly is currently editing the PSA’s to 30 seconds, as radio stations requested.

The PSA’s will be sponsored by the ABC.

Jerry needs to get the PSA’s approved by the Department of Natural Resources before they can be released with State Parks as part of the ABC.

City Parks Staff Training The summer staff will be arriving the 1st of May. Rick will talk to them and park maintenance staff about bears during their orientation.

Planning and Zoning Jerry voiced concern that the Planning and Zoning Commission needed to be updated about the Living with Wildlife Plan that the city signed. The city is currently revising Title 21, and therefore it is a good time to remind the city about the Living with Wildlife Plan. In addition, Title 21 should include bear corridors and important habitat for wildlife, as well as address planning and zoning in areas with frequent bear-human interactions.

Bears and Trail Planning Rick is supposed to be participating in the Eagle River trail planning; however, he hasn’t been receiving updates from the planners. Jerry will ensure that Rick is on the mailing list. Jessy is a member of the Technical Advisory Group for the revision of the City Parks Plan. She will attend the next meeting on March 11.

MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

Waste Management Mailer Waste Management has room in their March billing to include a reminder that bears will be active soon. Lilly is going to write a few lines for the notice and send them to Craig.

Homer Bear Festival The Bear Festival is on March 28 and 29 in Homer. The festival is a film festival, but will also include a forum and a panel on bear viewing. Joel Bennett will be the keynote speaker. In addition, there will be a variety of bear viewing guides and information on the Kenai and Kodiak bear plans.

ISSUES ADDRESSED

CHILDREN NEED BETTER BEAR SAFETY AND ECOLOGY EDUCATION

Causes of the Problem

- Teacher ignorance
- Parent ignorance
- Bears aren't here attitude
- Fear (bears are scary)
- Mixed messages of appropriate behavior
- Poor examples (school dumpsters)
- Lack of wildlife ecology in curriculum
- Lack of outreach
- Ignorant about responsibility
- Agencies don't have a clear message aimed at kids

Target Audience

- Teachers (private/public)
- Parents
- Home School
- Elementary school kids (through middle school)
- Preschool
- Scouts/youth groups

Message to Audience

- Don't let kids run ahead when you are hiking
- Stay together
- Tell an adult if you see a bear
- Don't run or panic
- Carry noise makers
- Listen/ Be alert
- Garbage draws bears
- Where are the bears? What is bear habitat?
- Safety and Ecology

Tools to Deliver the Message

1. Teacher workshop and Teacher Academy
2. Bear Necessities book and song/ Bear Kit

3. Classroom visits/ Visits with youth groups
 4. Electronic/Web unit for the teachers and other educators
 5. Inservice for Librarians
 6. Youth groups
 7. Creative writing contest/ bear stories
- Project Wild online
 - Kids coloring page in the newspaper
 - Inservice planning days
 - Sim City
 - Scout Conservation Merit badges
 - Library display

Evaluation

- pre- and post-test (could be on website)
- Teacher feedback
- Fewer bear garbage incidents
- Kit check-out record from ARLIS
- Website hits

SCHOOLS DO NOT ACT APPROPRIATELY TO BEAR PROBLEMS

Causes of the Problem

- The school is part of the problem/ open dumpsters and trash cans
- Administrators don't take responsibility for attracting bears
- Over-reacting to possible danger

Audience

- Administrators

Message

The ABC decided that we needed two separate checklists to deal with bear issues on school grounds or at bus stops. One of the checklists would be a preventative list and the other would be reactionary. We would stress to the administration that the checklists and outlined protocols would help ensure the safety of the children. The checklists would stress that "YOU" can effect change. For example, the administration is responsible for removing potential bear attractants from the school grounds. Removing these attractants would help ensure the safety of the children.

Rick and Jessy will draft the checklists, and after review, these protocols will be distributed to administrators or Risk Management. An additional list will be distributed to bus drivers. This checklist could be constructed in the form of a decision tree.

Jessy will map the school locations against the bear hot-spot map.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

Bears and Garbage Pickup Days The ABC is still concerned with the current Saturday pickup schedule in bear problem areas around town. Rick suggested that when WMI revises their pickup schedule that bear problems should be incorporated into the revisions. Craig of WMI agreed; however, revision of route schedules is unlikely for several more years. Until then, tipper carts and mesh cages will be offered to those neighborhoods with bear problems and Saturday pickups. The group agreed that this issue does not need further discussion at a full ABC meeting.

Pets and Livestock Message One of the issues raised in initial ABC meetings was proper storage and handling of pet and livestock foods. The committee agreed that messages about pet food and livestock as bear attractants should be included in the message concerning birdseed and bears. The group agreed that this issue does not need further discussion at a full ABC meeting.

Structural Solutions to Minimize Human/bear Conflicts This would include trail design and placement to minimize human/bear conflicts and disturbance to bears. In addition, it was mentioned that this should also include lot divisions and landscaping. This issue was referred to the Habitat Subcommittee and should include Theede in the discussions

Management of Bear Populations in Anchorage There was some discussion concerning the management of bear populations in Anchorage. It was suggested that we conduct another public opinion survey to update and refine the findings of the previous survey. Jeff reminded the group that we're talking about a "social carrying capacity" for bears. In addition, members generally felt that management of bear populations should be ADF&G's responsibility. The group agreed that this issue does not need further discussion at a full ABC meeting.

Enforcement regarding attractive nuisances is inconsistent. The group thought that this is an issue that needs discussion by the full group and should be taken up with the enforcement agencies present, perhaps at the next ABC meeting.

NEXT MEETING

- The next ABC meeting will be held on April 22 at 8:30 at ADF&G.
- The habitat subgroup will meet on March 18th at 8:30am at ADF&G in Jessy's office. Finishing this map has been identified as one of the highest priorities for the next meeting.
- Lilly has tentatively scheduled the media meeting for April 16, at 10:00 am.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.