

MEETING SUMMARY
Anchorage Bear Committee

Thursday March 14, 2002
ARLIS Library

Meeting participants

Al Meiners and Jerry Lewanski, Alaska Department of Natural Resources; Kellie Peirce, Fort Richardson; Allen Richmond and Mark Sledge, Elmendorf Air Force Base; Jim Posey, John McCleary, and Thede Tobish, Municipality of Anchorage; Dara Scott, Fish and Wildlife Protection; Jeff Hughes, Rick Sinnott, Jessy Coltrane, Colleen Matt, and Cindi Loker, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Meeting purpose

Meeting purpose: to convene the Anchorage Bear Committee (ABC); provide an overview of the Living with Wildlife in Anchorage planning process; highlight current bear conservation and management issues; discuss implementation of stakeholder recommendations; and determine how to involve the public in the ABC process.

Welcome and introductions

Colleen welcomed everyone and discussed the meeting purpose and agenda. The group introduced themselves and agreed that Colleen was an acceptable facilitator for the meetings.

Overview of Living with Wildlife in Anchorage planning process

Rick discussed the history of the process stressing that the purpose of the process was to maintain the positive aspects of wildlife in Anchorage while minimizing negative human-wildlife interactions. He noted that the Anchorage plan calls for step-down planning efforts for geese, moose, and bears. The goose step down planning group has already met and made significant progress. Rick suggested that the goose group be a model for the ABC step-down-planning process.

Rick also mentioned a survey that was conducted in 1997 to determine Anchorage residents' attitudes about wildlife.

ABC

ABC charge and parameters

The ABC agreed that it should limit its scope and time frame to bear issues and 18 months, respectively. At the end of the 18-month period, the group will decide whether to move on to moose issues, with likely changes or additions to membership, or disband.

The group agreed to the following charge (*pending ABC approval*):

The ABC will work together to implement the bear-related recommendations in the Living with Wildlife in Anchorage Plan by taking actions to minimize human-bear conflicts; maximize the benefits of having bears in Anchorage; and maintain healthy bear populations.

The geographic scope of ABC efforts will include Anchorage and its outlying suburbs (i.e., Eagle River, Girdwood, Chugiak). The ABC will concentrate 80 percent of its efforts in the Anchorage Bowl and 20 percent the other areas.

The group discussed the possibility of conducting another survey of Anchorage residents at some point in the process (perhaps next Fall) to help determine the success of the bear recommendations. The group also discussed implementing a survey of military personnel.

ABC membership

The group agreed that the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Forest Service, the Anchorage Police Department, and the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish should be asked to join the group.

Other individuals and entities (e.g., legislative delegates, Fish and Game advisory committees, and the Anchorage Assembly) should be informed about ABC activities or be involved on an ad hoc basis when needed.

Overview of bear conservation and management issues

Rick provided an overview of bear issues in the Anchorage vicinity. The ABC brainstormed specific issues and refined them into a list of general issues that the group would like to address (Attachment A). This list is open to modification as needed.

Public outreach opportunities

The group agreed that the ABC should participate in the Alaska Bear Forum in some capacity. The type of participation will be discussed in greater detail at the next meeting. The Alaska Bear Forum is on Saturday April 13 at the Loussac Library.

Colleen noted some of the educational materials about bears that ADF&G has produced (bumper stickers). She also mentioned that ADF&G will have examples of a “good camp” and a “bad camp” at the Alaska Sportsmen show. She said that the Alaska Wildlife Alliance is looking for displays about urban wildlife for their exhibit at the Sears’ Mall on Mother’s Day.

The group agreed that Rick and someone from the municipality should be points of contact for the media regarding ABC activities. It was decided that a press release is not necessary at this point.

ABC meetings will be open to interested members of the public, but meetings will not be advertised.

Adjourn

Attachment A

Issues that ABC will address

- Inconsistent enforcement regarding attractive nuisances
- Unsecured garbage (dumpster management, dumpster design)
- Accessibility of good, inexpensive garbage containers
- Ignorance of proper garbage disposal
- Overnight backcountry food and garbage
- Bear habitat fragmentation and impact on corridors
- Low density housing vs. corridors (what is best for bears/humans?)
- Sport fishing etiquette regarding fish wastes on streams and at home.
- Feeding birds in summer
- Trail and facility design and location in bear habitat
- Pet food and livestock management
- Opportunities/structural solutions to minimize human-bear conflicts
- Consistency of bear safety and garbage management messages
- Myths about bears (old information circulating)
- Lack of information between managers regarding human-bear conflicts
- Bear population management
- Scheduling garbage pick-up
- Educating children about bears (safety and ecology)
- Trail users in bear habitat, specially people moving at a high rate of speed
- Fire in bear habitat
- Consistent handling of carcasses (moose and bear)
- Appropriate school response to bear problems