BC Bear Smart Communities Program

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Human Wildlife Conflict Stats

- **Five year annual average numbers:**
  - **29,691** wildlife conflict calls

**Black Bears**
- **17,663** calls
- **140** hazed
- **25** translocated
- **644** destroyed

**Grizzly Bears**
- **521** calls
- **14** hazed
- **8** translocated
- **38** destroyed

**Cougars**
- **3063** calls
- **5** hazed
- **1** translocated
- **150** destroyed

### Predator Attacks in last 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black Bear</th>
<th>Grizzly Bears</th>
<th>Cougars</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Injured</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Killed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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Number of calls to RAPP, 2017-18
(N=33,963)

Calls by Region 2017-18

- Large Carnivore
- Ungulate
- Other
Access to Human Food

People teach bears bad habits.

Habituated and food-conditioned bears are more difficult to drive away than wild bears.

Food-conditioned bears learn to expect human food and are more likely to approach people than wild bears.
What is the Bear Smart Community Program?

A proactive conservation initiative developed in 2004 that encourages efforts by communities, businesses and individuals to reduce human-bear conflicts.

Focus efforts on addressing the root causes of human-bear conflicts.

Community led - completely voluntary

Each community will be unique
The Benefits of Being “Bear Smart”

- Improved public safety
- Reduced property damage
- Fewer bears being killed
Criteria for Designated Bear Smart Communities

1. Prepare a bear hazard assessment.

2. Prepare a bear/human conflict management plan.

3. Revise planning and decision making documents.

4. Implement a continuing education program.

5. Develop and maintain a bear-resistant waste management system.

6. Implement Bear Smart by-laws.
The basic objective is to establish a general, community-specific overview of potential human-bear conflict in and adjacent to the community.

The purpose of these assessments is to identify existing and potential hazards.
The Plan should be designed to address the human-bear conflict issues identified in the Hazard Assessment for the community.
A Planning and Decision Making Process

Higher level plans may be appropriate such as:

- Official Community Plans, Regional Growth Strategies

or as a minimum:

- Regional Solid Waste Management Plans
Implement an Education Program

Bear biology and behaviour.

Practices to manage non-natural attractants.

Proper behaviour during a bear encounter in the community.

A program for communicating current bear activity to the public.
Residential Waste Management Systems

1. Residential Dumpsters
   Located throughout residential areas (i.e., one per 20-35 homes)

2. Large Community Dumpsters or Transfer Stations
   Several large bear-proof containers utilized by the entire community.
3. Retention of Curbside Collection

Discontinue curb side collection

or

Garbage cans must be kept in a bear-resistant location at all times except the day of pick-up.

4. Disposal Directly at the Landfill

Disposal directly at an electrified landfill may be an option for smaller communities.
Implement “Bear Smart” Bylaws

Bylaws may need to be developed to ensure **compliance** with the goals of the “Bear Smart” program.

A **strategy** needs to be created to ensure these bylaws are adhered to.
Bear Smart Successes

Nine designated Bear Smart Communities.

Over 20 communities pursuing Bear Smart criteria.
Bear Smart Successes

Average Number of Bears Killed Due to Conflict

- **Black Bear**
  - 19 yr: 792
  - 15 yr: 786
  - 10 yr: 639
  - 5 yr: 614

- **Grizzly Bear**
  - 19 yr: 46
  - 15 yr: 45
  - 10 yr: 43
  - 5 yr: 40
Bear Smart Successes

![Bar chart showing the average frequency of food-conditioning reports for black bears per year (2012-2019). The chart compares communities that are bear smart (Yes) and those that are not (No).]
Questions

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/human-wildlife-conflict/staying-safe-around-wildlife/bears/bear-smart
There have been visible successes in participating communities, however, despite broad efforts we still see:

• high levels of human-bear conflict in many communities that are still not engaged in the program.
• individuals in participating communities that still do not take responsibility for proper management of bear attractants.
Objectives of the Review

This review looked specifically at opportunities to:

• Measure and improve the effectiveness of the Bear Smart Communities Program.
• Identify other opportunities to enhance the program and foster collaborative initiatives.
• Increase the number of communities attaining and sustaining official Bear Smart Community status.
Methodology

Eight designated Bear Smart Communities invited to participate in a survey to discuss successes and challenges.

Survey conducted by telephone interviews structured in ten questions that were shared before the interview.
Research Findings

*Foster a sense of shared stewardship*

Recommendations

Provide consistent support and direction, backed by strong policy and regulation.
Research Findings

Build continuity and consistency in local Bear Smart programs

Recommendations

Formalize local stewardship groups as a key criteria

Celebrate success
Research Findings

Municipalities to be informed and aligned regarding conflicts and response

Recommendations

Increased focus on outreach, particularly when a bear has been destroyed.
Research Findings

Focus on behaviour and act in a way that matters to people

Recommendations

Reframe the messaging to align with the audience

Focus on effective behavior change
Acknowledgements

BC Bear Working Group