



ETON BEAR SMART COMMUNITY PROGRAM

ANNE CARLSON,
COMMITTEE MEMBER

DECEMBER 4TH, 2024

TALK ORGANIZATION

- OUR PRIORITY: COMMUNITY SAFETY
- ABOUT US
- DEEPER DIVE ON FUNDING
- FOCUS ON THE AG COMMUNITY
- TETON BEAR SMART OUTREACH EVENTS
 1. BEAR TRIVIA NIGHT
 2. BEAR FAIR
 3. FRUIT PRESS EVENT
 4. SOCIAL MEDIA
 5. BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR
- LESSONS LEARNED
- NEXT STEPS



BEARS

In the Northern Rockies, grizzly bears are on the move

As grizzlies recover, they're no longer content to roam within the boundaries contrived for them.

Gloria Dickie July 10, 2023

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“Grizzly bears are super cool, and I love seeing them. But I don’t love seeing them in my yard or in my cows.”

Grizzly bear sighted in Pryor Mountains, first in 125 years



Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials say grizzlies haven't been seen that far east in more than a century.

OUR PRIORITY: COMMUNITY SAFETY

- In recent years, community members in Choteau have become increasingly concerned about safety issues associated with living in bear country;
- At the same time that many folks have been having those conversations, new tools have started to become available to help with this need, and are starting to be used much more widely in communities across the West where people have the same concerns;
- With this in mind, we thought we'd start a conversation to share one of these new ideas, which is the development of a pro-active Bear Smart community plan that would center safety before asking if folks think this idea merits a wider community discussion;
- We invited Amber Kornak, a Grizzly Bear Biologist with the US FWS to walk us all through the different stages of the development of a Bear Smart Community Plan, and to share some stories about the experiences of other communities across Montana (like Virginia City, Columbia Falls, Missoula, and Red Lodge) who are also developing Bear Smart Community Plans;
- We're also hopeful that having a Bear Smart Community Plan might open the door to new funding and resources to pay for the parts of the plan that require money.

ABOUT US

- **Community members/ leaders:** Local landowners, Mayor of Choteau, City Council members, Choteau Public School staff/ leaders, Old Trail Museum, Sheriff's Dept., local business owners, outfitters, ag community, and others.
- **Agencies:** MT FWP, US FWS
- **Key partners:** Teton County MSU Extension, Rocky Mountain Front Ranchlands Group, Teton County 4-H Livestock Committee, Heart of the Rockies Initiative, Rocky Mountain Front Community Foundation
- **Funders:** IGBC, People & Carnivores, Vital Ground, Teton County MSU Extension, Margo Company, Sun River Electric Cooperative, AgWest, USDA, USFWS.



DEEPER DIVE ON FUNDING FOR TETON BEAR SMART

GOAL: PREVENTING AND MITIGATING CONFLICT WITH BEARS

WHILE

LIVING AND RECREATING IN BEAR COUNTRY THROUGH EDUCATION

- **IGBC** \$2,500 – multiple educational outreach events
- **People & Carnivores** \$2,000 – focus on repairing/ strengthening grain bin doors
- **Vital Ground** \$2,000 – Fruit gleaning program + fruit press/ bear education
- **MT FWP/ Heart of the Rockies Initiative** In progress – could potentially provide funds for significant expansion of educational outreach events, additional bear safety signage, bear spray rentals for tourists, etc.



FOCUS ON THE AG COMMUNITY

- Grain bin doors that are damaged by high winds or grizzly bears
- Originally partnered with Choteau Public School/ shop class to retrofit doors
- Currently working to identify new opportunities to carry this work forward after retirement of shop class teacher



**TETON COUNTY
BEAR SMART
OUTREACH
EVENTS**

BEAR TRIVIA NIGHT

- Three rounds of bear trivia
- Focus on bear safety, basic biology, and identification of grizzly bear vs. black bears
- Raffle prizes



TETON COUNTY BEAR FAIR



By ~Brian Schutt © 2024

BUILD YOUR BEAR SMART SKILLS

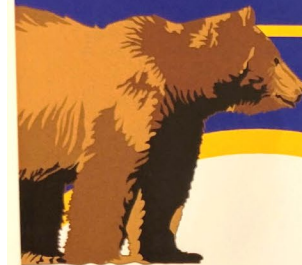


Sunday
**APRIL
21**

2:00-3:30 pm

at the
**WEATHERBEATER
ARENA**

Choteau, MT
Rain or Shine



Schedule of Events

- ✓ Ever discharged bear spray? Using inert canisters, practice spraying it *bear smart* with Ali Marschner and Chad White of MT FWP
- ✓ Will your electric fence deter a bear? Learn to build it *bear smart* with Chrissy Lambert of Wildlife Services and Jenn Swanson of Teton County Extension

Hosted by:
Teton Bear Smart

Sponsored by:



**Free! Adults and
children welcome**







Acantha photos by Melody Martinson

Children and adults learned how to deploy bear spray during a Teton Bear Smart workshop on April 21 at the Weatherbeater Arena in Choteau.

Bear smart 101

Teton Bear Aware offers class on bear spray, electric fencing

By Melody Martinson

Acantha editor

About 40 people from grade schoolers to senior citizens on April 21 learned how to deploy bear spray and how electric fences can be used to protect livestock and more from grizzlies at Teton Bear Smart's second public education event this year.

Teton Bear Smart hosted the 90-minute program at the Weatherbeater Arena in Choteau with help from Montana State University Extension in Teton County, Teton County 4-H, Montana Fish Wildlife Parks, U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, Sun River Electric Cooperative and AgWest Farm Credit.

Anne Carlson of Choteau, a wildlife biologist who is a member Teton Bear Smart, and MSU Extension Agent Jenn Swanson welcomed participants. Carl-

son said Teton Bear Smart is a loosely organized group working with state and federal agencies to help people safely live, recreate and work in grizzly bear country.

She encouraged people to look at the exhibits, including a grizzly bear hide and casts of paw prints, to pick up educational literature and to buy raffle tickets for prizes. The main prizes, however, 80 eight-ounce cans of EPA-certified bear spray, were free to everyone who learned to deploy the spray.

Since the Bear Smart group formed in Choteau in 2023, Carlson said, its members have applied for grants to fund education and conflict prevention programs. The group received a \$3,500 grant to work with farmers and Choteau High School shop students, who will weld reinforcements onto grain bin doors to help make them bear resistant since grizzlies enjoy munching on harvested

See BEARS, Page 12 ▶



USDA Wildlife Services conflict prevention specialist Chrissy Lambert explains how the new electric fence enclosing the barn and pen where the 4-Hers house swine and lambs during the fair will protect the animals.

- 50+ people attended the event
- Participants emptied 13 inert bear spray canisters
- 42 bear sprays and holsters were donated
- 6 raffle prize baskets were awarded

FRUIT PRESS EVENT

- Led by Teton County MSU Extension
- Community members could bring fruit harvested from their own apple trees and learn to use a cider press
- Bear spray demonstrations

Two upcoming Teton Bear Smart related events:

Join Conrad Bear techs at the booth located next to the cider press on Saturday between 10:30 and 5:00 at The Threshing Bee! They will have a bear trap, robo bear, and demonstrations in bear spray! Also join the Extension office with your harvested fruit, to use the cider press!

Reducing ripe fruit attractants is a wonderful preventative measure to avoid attracting bears! Bring your own apples and jug.

The image is a composite of two promotional materials. On the left is a poster for the Teton Antique Steam & Gas Threshing Association, established in 1984 in Choteau, MT. The poster features illustrations of vintage agricultural machinery and lists activities such as kids train rides, vintage equipment, grain grinding, pottery making, sawmilling, blacksmithing, and historic buildings. It specifies the event dates as Friday, September 20th (12-5:00) and Saturday/Sunday, September 21-22nd (8-5:00), in Choteau, MT, 2 blocks south of the city park. On the right is a sign for a 'Community Cider Press' event. The sign shows a bowl of fresh apples and text that reads: 'Bring your own apples and a clean jug. Come press fresh apples with MSU Extension for FREE. Community Cider Press'.

SOCIAL MEDIA

facebook



Teton Bear Smart

36 likes • 57 followers

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

- Posting flyers for educational outreach events in Bynum, Dupuyer, and Augusta as well as Choteau
- If requested, sharing lessons learned and focus of the work of Teton Bear Smart with other communities

Fairfield Town Council discusses grizzly concerns

By Vonnie Jacobson Sep 4, 2024



Fairfield High School Principal Paul Wilson explains how the school district communicates with students and their parents during a work session of the Fairfield Town Council discussing how to communicate with the public regarding bear sightings in the area. Also attending the meeting were representatives from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Teton County, Teton County EMS and Disaster and Emergency Services, Teton Bear Aware representative and county resident Mitchel Polars.

Acantha photo by Vonnie Jacobson



Keeping the public safe and providing education on being bear aware were key priorities agreed upon during a work session of the Fairfield Town Council Aug. 28.

CLEARWATER
MONTANA PROPERTIES

JIM BOUN
406.590.5375 | Jim
www.CMPM.com

Clearwater Montana Properties
101 Main Ave. N | PO Box 248
Choteau, MT 59422

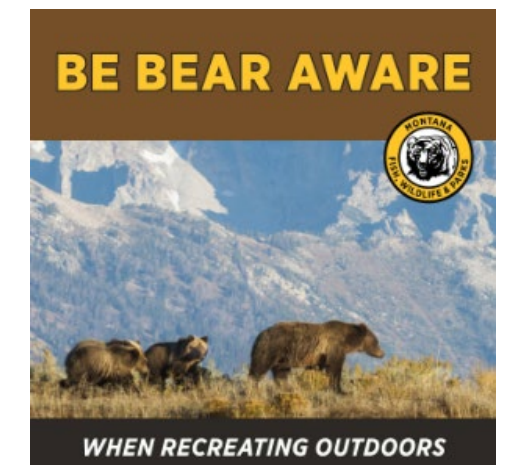
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NORTH

LESSONS LEARNED

- Everybody's time is very, very limited
- Securing new grants to fund community priorities is critical
- Some ideas can be controversial and/or cost prohibitive (e.g., bear-proof garbage cans) so making space to really listen to each other and move slowly is key
- It would be *great* to have more support for all of the Bear Smart Committees / educational outreach programs that are springing up all over Montana.



NEXT STEPS

- Creating an educational outreach event calendar for 2025 that includes new events, e.g., two bear safety events at Choteau Public School, hunter safety refreshers each fall
- Submitting new grants to fund work of Committee
- Re-visiting/ re-thinking the grain silo project
- Continuing to build our Community Bear Smart Plan



THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?

Teton Bear Smart Committee

Anne Carlson (406-548-7964) and Ali Morgan (619-971-2945)

Teton Bear Smart: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Teton-Bear-Smart/61565732104242/>
