



Dear Residents:

April 2010

As you know, black and grizzly bears use low elevation private lands throughout the Clearwater drainage. In their endless search for food they can have conflicts with people. Foods associated with humans like garbage, birdseed, livestock/chicken feed, etc., are a leading cause of these conflicts. In an effort to protect human safety and reduce human-bear conflicts Bear Aware Seeley and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are working together on the initiation of Neighborhood Networks.

We seek to develop a network of neighbors to accomplish the following: 1) *minimize the availability of human-related attractants and increase human safety*, 2) *communicate among neighbors about bear activity*, 3) *report observations, incidents, and bear behavior that may pose problems* 4) *use aversive or negative conditioning on black and grizzly bears to teach bears to avoid humans and areas inhabited by humans*, and 5) *report attractant source violations under Montana Code 87-3-130*. We are hopeful that by taking action, Clearwater drainage residents can prevent bears from becoming a problem before they are a public safety risk. Our use of a phone tree is similar to the approach that the Blackfoot Challenge has used to successfully avoid bear conflicts in the Blackfoot Valley. We will be utilizing the new website www.missoulabears.org, for distributing information. These efforts would not be possible without the funding and support received from Defenders of Wildlife, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Living with Wildlife Program and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committees I and E Program.

The project is still evolving but we will start by dividing the valley into Neighborhood Networks. The Clearwater drainage was chosen because of consistent grizzly and black bear activity and a history of human-bear conflicts.

Our proposal for this pilot project is to identify neighborhood networks and assign a neighborhood coordinator to each network. If you observe bear activity and behavior that is unlikely to pose a problem to people (i.e., a “non-problem” situation) you would report the concern to your neighborhood network coordinator or fill out a sighting form on www.missoulabears.org. The website coordinator or network coordinator will notify FWP of any reports.

In “problem-situations” where a bear enters a building or spends time directly next to dwellings, please contact FWP immediately or, after hours, contact 911. FWP will determine what type of response to take, including aversive conditioning. If this bear and attractant sighting approach is successful than we hope to expand to other areas in Missoula that experience bear activity. We are optimistic that more communication across the valley among neighbors about bears will be an effective way to avoid problems with predators.

James Jonkel and Erin Edge will be working with any Clearwater Drainage residents throughout 2010 to assist them with bear resistant garbage storage, specific bear deterrent systems and devices like electric fence kits.

Please contact James Jonkel or Erin Edge if you are interested in learning more about the use of specific devices or techniques for avoiding conflicts.

For more information or to make a report contact www.missoulabears.org



Sincerely,
Bear Aware Seeley
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
www.missoulabears.org

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Bear Issues and Bear Attractant Issues

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks – 406-542-5500

James Jonkel, FWP Bear and Lion Management Specialist

Bob Weisner, FWP Bear and Lion Management Specialist

Bill Koppen, FWP Warden

Jay Kolbe, FWP Biologist

Chris Lorenz, FWP Seeley Lake Parks Division

www.missoulabears.org

Erin Edge, Bear Aware Coordinator, 406-531-6007