



Action Plan for Communities in Bear Country

Bears instinctively avoid people, but accessible garbage, backyard bird feeders, unprotected small livestock and other attractants can provide a hungry bear with more calories in just a few minutes than a day of foraging in the wild. Once bears learn to rely on neighborhoods and communities for easy, high-calorie meals, human-bear interactions and conflicts inevitably follow.

Good News: Implementing two established and proven long-term solutions will help protect people, property and bears.

Switch To Bear-Resistant Trash Containers

From residential polycarts to large commercial dumpsters, numerous companies produce containers built, tested and approved to resist the most persistent bears.

Studies show that requiring community-wide use of bear-resistant containers (BRCs) is 100% successful at keeping bears out of the garbage, helps keep bears out of communities altogether, reduces property damage and all types of negative interactions, improves community morale and makes residents feel safer.

To find more info about bear-resistant trash containers:
BearWise.org/keep-bears-out



How to Make Garbage Contracts BearWise

Waste management contracts won't include BRCs unless specified by HOA boards or town/county officials. Ask for a copy of the current contract.

Questions to Ask Decision Makers Who is the current provider and when does their contract expire? Can the contract be amended mid-term to specify BRCs? Are there any additional costs? Who decides what companies are asked to submit proposals?

Need Help Funding the Switch? Cost-sharing programs and/or grants can help cover initial costs and additional service fees for residents and businesses. HOAs, counties, communities, state agencies and wildlife advocacy groups may be able to help out. The waste services provider may be willing to spread costs over the life of the contract.

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Cities/towns, counties and HOAs can specify only bids from waste removal companies that provide and service bear-resistant containers/dumpsters will be considered.

"Garbage, bird feeders, fruit trees and backyard small livestock are universally what brings bears near people."

Richard Beausoleil, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife



Implement Effective Ordinances / Bylaws

Garbage isn't the only thing that attracts bears. Creating ordinances and bylaws that address community issues will set standards and make it easier for communities and agencies to make sure everyone does their part to protect people, property and bears.

Most towns / counties can enact ordinances anytime; annual changes are common. HOAs have a process for changing or passing bylaws. Bring leaders a well-crafted sample and show how it will help save money, reduce conflicts and property damage, and make the community safer.

Examples of Ordinances / Bylaws That Create Lasting Change:

- Store trash and garbage in bear-resistant containers or enclosures or inside a sturdy building until the morning of pick-up (for residents and businesses).
- Don't feed birds (seeds, nectar, suet, other foods) during months when bears are active.
- Feeding wildlife or feral cats, or using other attractants to attract wild animals, including bears, deer, turkeys and raccoons, is **not** allowed at any time.
- Small backyard livestock (i.e. chickens, goats), beehives, and fruit trees must be protected by electric fencing.

While every community is unique, many causes of human-bear conflicts are universal. To learn more about ordinances and bylaws other communities have enacted, please visit:

BearWise.org/community-resources



Where to Start

Get the Community Involved

Organize a community meeting and ask your state wildlife agency to do a presentation and answer questions. Ask residents to share stories and photos that highlight the issues. Identify what's attracting bears to your community, establish goals and brainstorm solutions. Invite residents and businesses to join in.

Send BearWise articles to local newspapers and community newsletters to help spread the word. Use social media to connect with neighbors and businesses.

Hand out free BearWise materials at community events and post on social media and local bulletin boards to show that proven BearWise solutions are known and implementing them is the right thing to do for people and bears.

Start a petition to show leaders that residents care, want them to take action and will support solutions.

Work with Leaders and Elected Officials

Make your voices heard by attending town council and HOA meetings, talking with leaders and connecting with them on social media. Review existing bylaws, ordinances and contracts (your state wildlife agency may be able to provide guidance on effective ways to change them or create new ones). Lasting change takes time. Continue to be proactive and focus on prevention.

BearWise Can Help Visit BearWise.org

- Sample ordinances and community success stories
- Free, printable fact sheets and checklists
- Fun stuff like magnets, stickers and signs
- Reprintable articles you can distribute

Prevention is the only effective, long-term solution.

Communities working together can keep people and property safe and bears wild.



Scan QR code
to report
a wildlife
incident

Also visit our website: wildlife.ca.gov

Learn More:
BearWise.org

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