



## FWC Applauds Orange County for Working to Reduce Conflicts with Bears

### News Release

Tuesday, November 01, 2016

Photos available on FWC's [Flickr site](#).

Today, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) commended Orange County for unanimously approving an ordinance that will help reduce human-bear conflicts in neighborhoods in the northern portion of the county. The ordinance requires residents to secure garbage and encourages the use of bear-resistant trash cans. Unsecured trash, and other attractants, are the number one cause for humans coming into contact with bears. This summer, FWC researchers, in partnership with the University of Tennessee, employed cutting edge modeling to confirm that Florida's robust black bear population is estimated to be over 4,000 bears. More bears in Florida means more chances for human-bear interaction, which can be dangerous.

"In order to reduce bear conflicts across the state, our agency must rely on the important partnerships that we have built with local communities," said FWC Executive Director Nick Wiley. "Thank you to the Orange County Commission for taking this very meaningful step to help reduce the potential for human-bear conflicts. The FWC will continue to inform Floridians on how to best avoid coming into contact with a bear."

The FWC passed a unanimous resolution in June 2015 encouraging counties, municipalities and homeowners associations to develop ordinances or bylaws that require garbage to be secured from bears. The resolution directed FWC staff to provide technical assistance to local governments and homeowners associations, including model ordinances.

Orange County's new trash ordinance is similar to ones already passed by Seminole, Lake and Santa Rosa counties. Rules requiring trash to be kept secure have also been passed by the City of Fort Walton Beach and Hurlburt Air Field in Okaloosa County, Wingfield North, Wingfield Reserve, and Springs Landing homeowner's associations in Seminole County, and Cypress Dunes homeowner's association in Walton County. The FWC continues to work with communities with bear populations to adopt "BearWise" policies. "BearWise" communities commit to learning to coexist with bears, knowing when and how to report bear activity, and securing all potential food sources.

To ensure Floridians have the resources necessary to properly secure their garbage, the FWC is currently working to distribute \$825,000 to communities to become more "BearWise" by providing bear-resistant equipment and other methods to reduce conflicts. These efforts are in addition to the agency's existing program of over a hundred staff who work year-round to educate people about bears and respond to human-bear conflicts.

To learn how to become BearWise, visit [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear) and click on "BearWise Communities" on the left side of the page.