



FWC receives 19 proposals from local governments for bear-conflict reduction funding

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Photos available on the FWC Flickr site. Go to: <http://bit.ly/2eNzrxW> 

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) received 19 proposals for \$825,000 in available funding dedicated to help communities take a "BearWise" approach to reducing human-bear conflicts. The FWC is now moving forward with the process to allocate "BearWise" funding to communities and local governments in bear range.

"We're excited to partner with these communities on this important step to keep bears out of garbage," said FWC Commission Chairman Brian Yablonski. "I would like to thank all of the local governments who have submitted proposals for consideration and for their partnership in reducing conflict with wildlife throughout Florida. We look forward to appropriately allocating this important funding that was made possible by Gov. Scott, the Florida Legislature and the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida."

Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature approved \$500,000 of the funds primarily using proceeds from the 2015 bear hunt, and the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida provided an additional \$325,000 using proceeds from sales of the "Conserve Wildlife" license plate. Sixty percent of the \$500,000 from the Legislature must go to local governments that have passed trash ordinances to reduce human-bear conflicts. Trash ordinances require residents and businesses to keep their trash secure until the morning of garbage pickup. The FWC received applications from four counties that have either already passed or are in the process of passing trash ordinances (Lake, Orange, Santa Rosa and Seminole counties). The total amount of funding requested from the FWC is approximately \$1.9 million. The following communities applied for bear-conflict reduction funding:

- Bay County
- Collier County
- Franklin County
- Gulf County
- Lake County
- Leon County
- Marion County
- Orange County
- Putnam County
- Santa Rosa County
- Seminole County
- Volusia County

- Wakulla County
- The City of Daytona
- The City of DeBary
- The City of Carrabelle
- Farm Worker Village Neighborhood Association
- NatureWalk Homeowner's Association
- Springs Landing Homeowner's Association

"If we can keep trash secure, we can eliminate the main reason why bears spend time in neighborhoods, which can help reduce human-bear conflicts," said David Telesco, who leads the FWC's Bear Management Program. "By providing this funding we are helping communities keep both people and bears safe."

The BearWise funding opportunity was announced on July 11 and applications were due Oct. 14. A panel of FWC staff is evaluating each application and will announce funding allocations once that process is complete. Applications will be scored based on several factors, including:

- Does the municipality have an ordinance in place that requires residents and businesses to keep trash and other attractants secure from bears?
- How many households within the municipality are in an area with significant human-bear conflicts?
- How much funding will the municipality match for the project (funds or in-kind or a combination of both)?
- What is the likelihood the project will result in a community-wide reduction of human-bear conflicts?
- How many residences and businesses are expected to benefit from the project?

The FWC plans to announce which communities will receive funding by mid-December.

In addition to providing BearWise funding to communities, the FWC will continue to meet with local governments to encourage and support efforts to enact BearWise trash ordinances. The FWC anticipates that the implementation of such ordinances coupled with this year's BearWise funding will result in a reduction in human-bear conflicts across the state.

For more information about bears including how to reduce conflicts with them, visit MyFWC.com/Bear.