



## **FWC thanks Lake County Commission for passing ordinance to help reduce bear conflicts**

### **News Release**

Thursday, June 23, 2016

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### **New Bear Wise ordinance will encourage more Floridians to take steps to remove bear attractants**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) today commended the Lake County Commission for taking proactive Bear Wise steps to reduce bear conflicts in Lake County communities. The County Commission passed an ordinance that requires residents to remove food attractants such as unsecured garbage, and encourages the use of bear-resistant trash cans. Bear Wise communities commit to learning to coexist with bears, knowing when and how to report bear activity, and securing all potential food sources.

"Thank you to the Lake County Commission for taking the meaningful and appropriate steps to help residents understand the importance of securing and removing trash that might attract bears," said FWC Commission Chairman Brian Yablonski. "We will continue to partner with counties and local governments across the state to ensure they have the tools they need to pass similar ordinances."

Keeping bears from lingering in neighborhoods is important for bear conservation and human safety. In the past few years, there have been three serious bear attacks on residents in this area. If bears associate places where people live and work as an easy place to find a meal, they will gradually lose their natural fear of humans, which leads to more human-bear conflicts.

Approved during last year's legislative session was \$500,000, which includes \$375,000 from bear hunt permits, that will allow the FWC to help local governments make bear-resistant containers more available in communities with high levels of human-bear conflicts. Local governments that have an ordinance requiring trash and other bear attractants to be secured will receive at least 60 percent of the funding. FWC has reached out to the 14 counties with the most human-bear conflicts to offer assistance and provide sample ordinances.

The Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida also recently awarded a grant of \$325,000 to increase the initial \$500,000 to \$825,000. These additional funds come from sales of the Conserve Wildlife license plate (also known as the bear tag).

Yesterday, the FWC Commission voted to postpone bear hunting in 2016. The agency will continue its outreach, research and education efforts to reduce human-bear conflicts. To learn how to become Bear Wise, visit [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear) and click on "Bear Wise Communities" on the left side of the page.