



## 10 communities apply for BearWise funding

### News Release

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**Photos available on the FWC's Flickr site:** <http://bit.ly/2vnjVhi> 

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has received applications from 10 communities for \$515,283 in BearWise funding to help reduce human-bear conflicts.

Eight counties applied for BearWise funds: Collier County Parks and Recreation, Franklin County, Highlands County, Lake County, Orange County, Seminole County, Volusia County and Walton County. Two homeowner's associations also submitted applications: Air Force Enlisted Village in Okaloosa County and Holley by the Sea Improvement Association in Santa Rosa County. Their requests total \$998,425.

The FWC will evaluate the applications, prioritizing the communities with BearWise ordinances requiring residents and businesses to keep garbage secure from bears. BearWise ordinances can be passed by a county, city or homeowner's association. The funding helps offset the costs for residents and businesses to acquire bear-resistant trash cans and dumpsters. The FWC plans to announce the funding awards in mid-November.

"Feeding on garbage is the main reason why Florida black bears appear in neighborhoods," said David Telesco, who leads the FWC's Bear Management Program. "This funding will make it easier for people to secure their trash, keeping both people and bears safe."

Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature approved \$415,283 of the funds, with the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida providing an additional \$100,000 from sales of the Conserve Wildlife license plate. Sixty percent of the \$415,283 must go to communities that passed BearWise ordinances requiring residents and businesses to keep their trash secure until the morning of garbage pickup. Lake, Orange and Seminole counties and Holley by the Sea Improvement Association in Santa Rosa County all applied for funding and have BearWise ordinances in effect.

Last year, the FWC distributed over [\\$800,000](#) in BearWise funding to 11 counties, three cities and one homeowner's association to purchase 5,100 bear-resistant trash cans and 3,800 sets of hardware to secure regular trash cans. Over 75 percent of last year's funding was provided to communities with BearWise ordinances.

The FWC will evaluate the applications based on the following criteria:

- Is there a local ordinance in place requiring residents and businesses to keep trash and other attractants secure from bears?
- How many households in the area are experiencing significant human-bear conflicts?
- Will the community match the funding, either with money, in-kind services or both?
- What is the likelihood the project will result in a community-wide reduction of human-bear conflicts?
- How many residences and businesses may benefit from the project?

In addition to providing BearWise funding, the FWC will continue to meet with counties, cities and homeowner's associations to encourage efforts to enact BearWise trash ordinances. The FWC anticipates 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 on Florida black bears, including how to reduce conflicts with them, visit [MyFWC.com/Bear](https://myfwc.com/Bear) and click on [Live BearWise](#), watch the [BearWise Communities](#)  video and read the [A guide to living in bear country](#) brochure.