



Cyril Hines



Bear Management Update

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This presentation is a follow up item to previous presentations and Commission discussion regarding Conflict Wildlife as part of the Commission Strategic Planning, Initiatives, and Policy Focal Areas. The main topic for today is bear conservation and management and how it fits into the conflict wildlife paradigm.

Commission Consideration

- Approval to publish Notice of Proposed Rule Amendments:
 - ✓ Bear, Fox, and Raccoon Feeding Rule 68A-4.001(3)
 - ✓ Bear Conservation Rule 68A-4.009
- Approve policy positions:
 - ✓ Even more aggressive removal of conflict bears
 - ✓ Advocacy for adoption of comprehensive waste management
 - ✓ Scaring options for public and law enforcement
- Guidance on use of hunting as a management tool



Staff will request Commission action and approval of these rule and policy areas.

Overview

- Background
- Research
- Management
- Proposed Rule and Policy Changes
- Summary



Hargrove/CORBIS/News Star



This slide provides an overview of what I plan to cover today: brief background information on bears; an update on research and our efforts on a new population estimate; management efforts, including addressing conflict bears, partner and stakeholder engagement, and how hunting could be implemented in Florida; and rule amendments to address feeding, harassing, depredation permits, and other bear management approaches.

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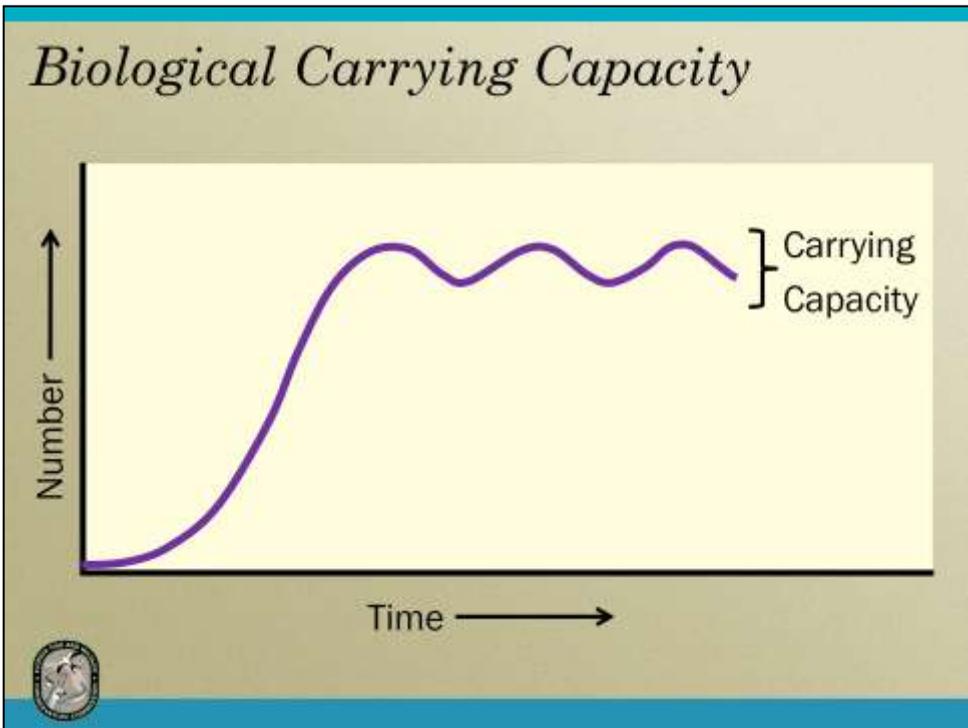
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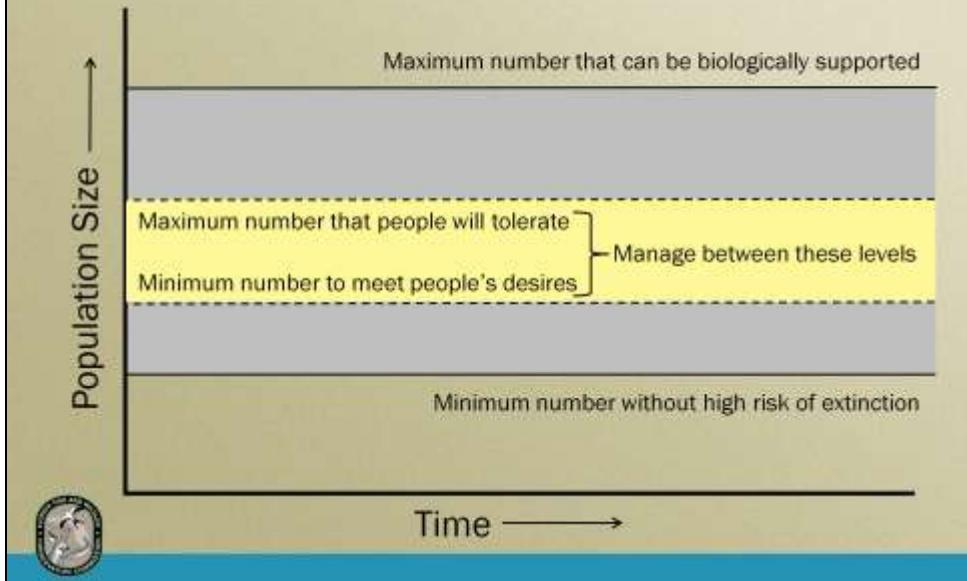
This presentation builds off of the wildlife conflict policy area that Commissioners discussed previously. Bears fit this “Leaning J” concept well.

- The first part of the curve is **Little or no management**. In the early centuries as Florida was settled bears numbered around 11,000 statewide and were over exploited and hunted indiscriminately, which led to the bear becoming rare and almost extirpated from Florida.
- Then came the **recovery management** phase. In 1974 the state listed the bear as threatened with populations estimated as low as 300 – 500 bears. Hunting was closed in all but 3 counties until 1994 when the season was closed state-wide. With protection and improved habitats, bear populations began to rebound and bears become more numerous. In 2002, the statewide population was estimated at 3,000 bears. The bear was removed from the state threatened list in 2012, when our current bear management plan was approved.
- As bear numbers have grown over the past decade and human population has increased, we entered the next phase of management, which is **conflict management**. In recent years conflict has increased dramatically. Bear calls have increased 400% over the last decade. We are striving for sustainable coexistence, and look forward to working with you to see what next steps we might take.
- Where we are right now on this curve is subject to individual interpretation, but recent events suggest somewhere squarely in the conflict management zone.



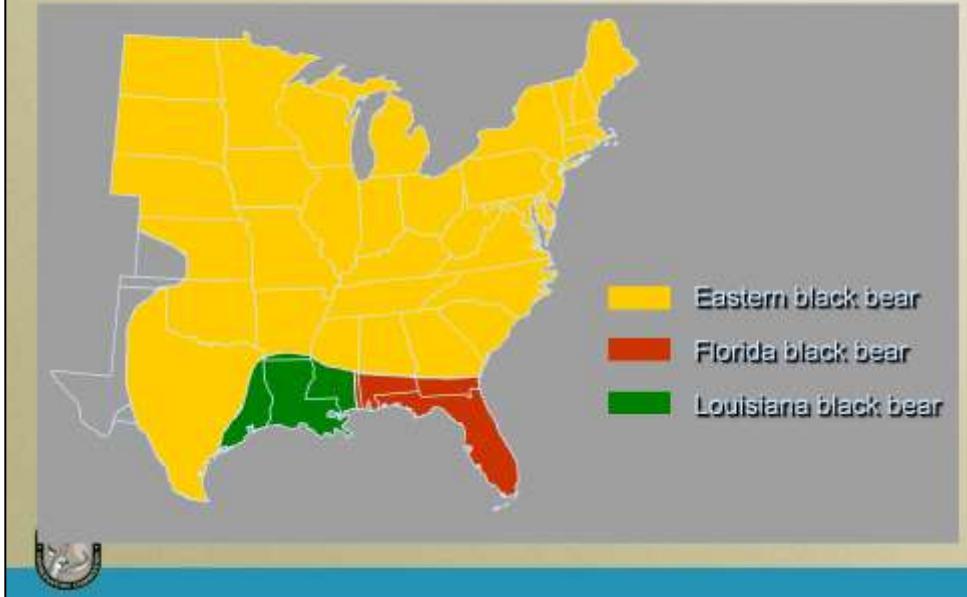
A key concept in how wildlife biologists conceptualize and manage fish and wildlife species is biological carrying capacity. Simply put, the biological carrying capacity is the number of individuals that a given area can support without damage to the natural resources that support them.

Social Carrying Capacity

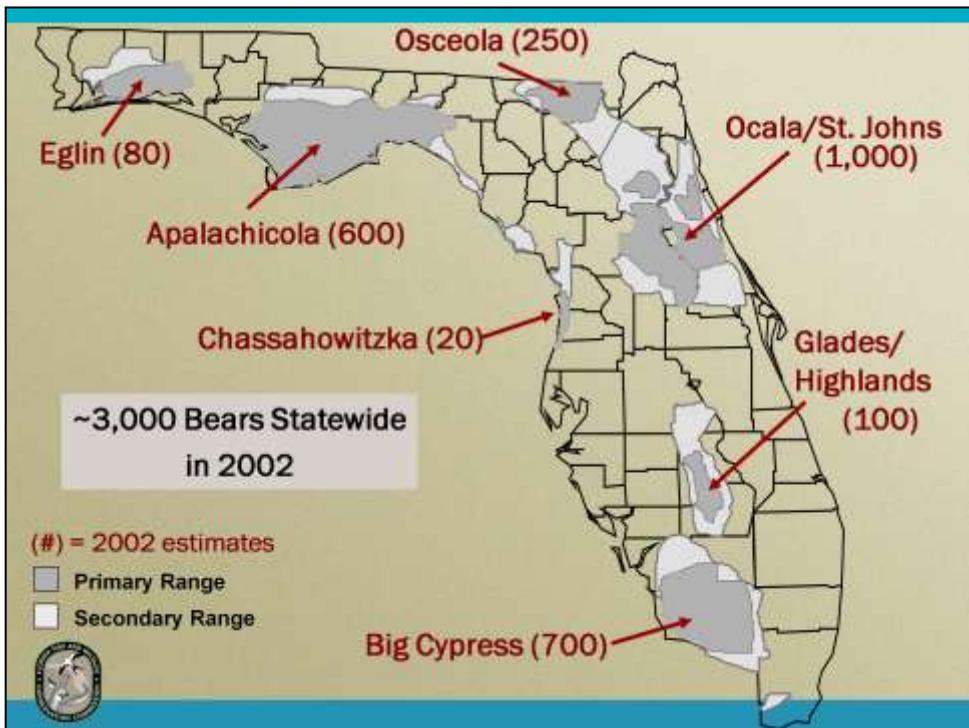


A corollary to biological carrying capacity is social carrying capacity. This is the number of individuals of a species that humans want or can tolerate. Although it can be challenging to achieve, ideally social carrying capacity (yellow zone) lies within the biological carrying capacity of an area (grey zone). Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

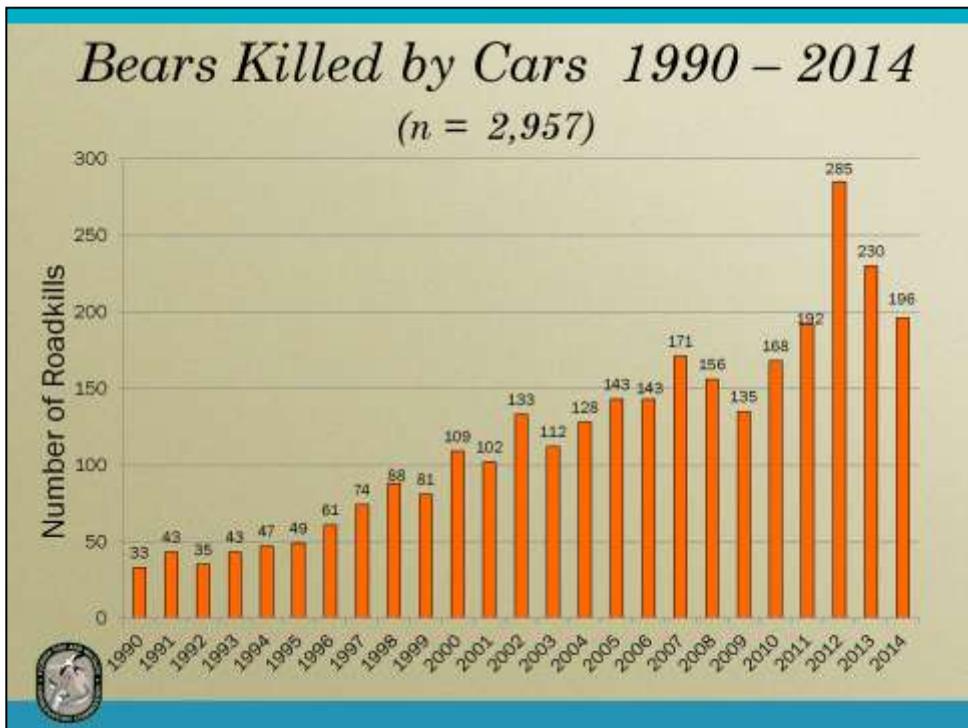
Southeastern Subspecies



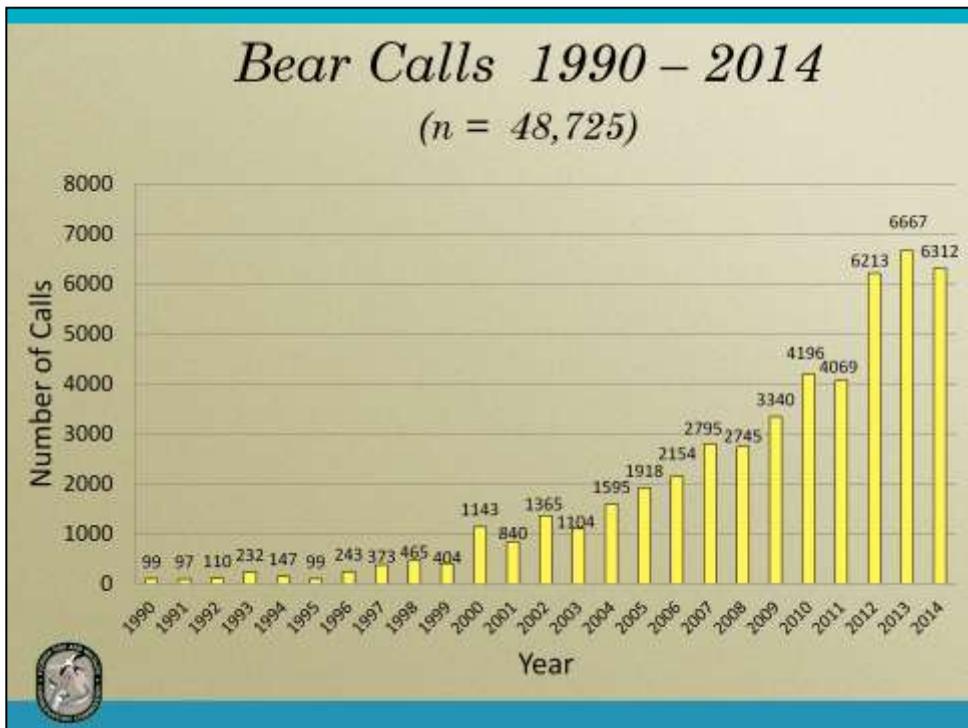
There are 16 subspecies of black bear recognized and three of those subspecies occur here in the Southeastern United States. You can see that the range of the Eastern black bear is much larger than either the Florida or Louisiana black bear. Although the subspecies ranges out of state, here in Florida the only subspecies we have is the Florida black bear.



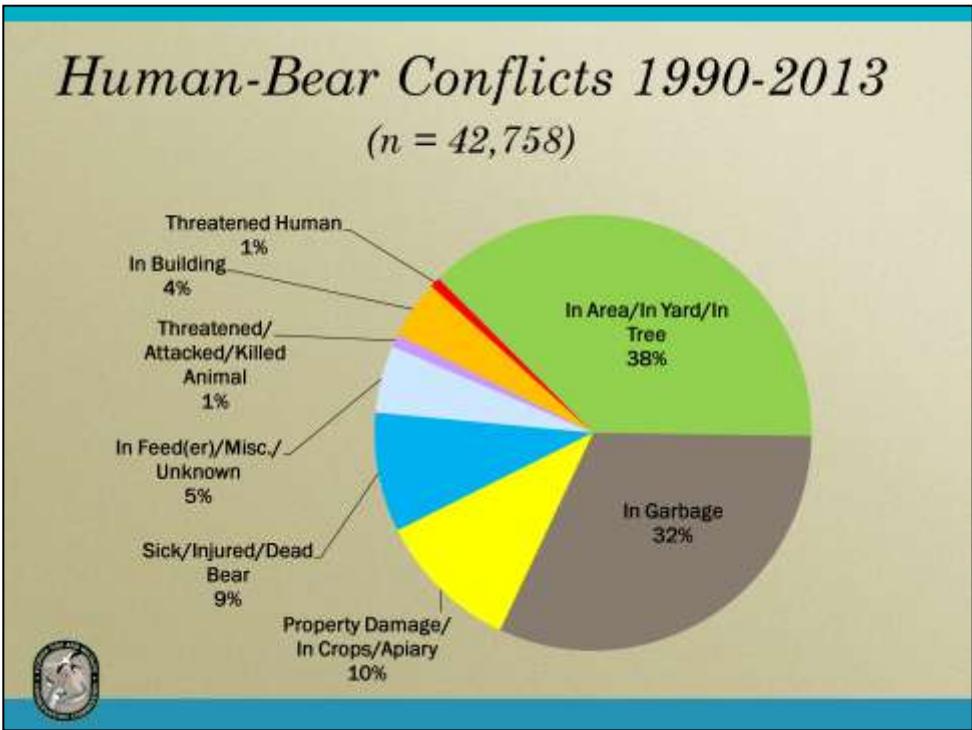
Bears are concentrated in several population centers across Florida where there are large areas of conservation lands. However, bears are very adaptable and can be found almost anywhere in Florida. In 2002, we estimated that there were 3,000 bears statewide and this map represents bear range at that time. FWC generally has depicted bear range as either primary (where densities are higher and there is evidence of female reproduction) or secondary (where densities are lower and there is no evidence of reproduction).



The number of bears killed by vehicles in Florida has increased over the last decades. There are many issues that influence these numbers, like increased vehicle traffic, seasonal food sources for bears, and weather conditions. However, overall, they speak to more bears in the state being susceptible to collisions with vehicles. You can see a dramatic rise in 2012 and it remained high in 2013.



Calls to the FWC about bears have increased dramatically over the last decades as well. Basically, the bear and human populations have been growing, and when both of these groups expand where they are living there can be increased interactions. We also have high density human development right next to bear range, which creates more conflicts. Not all of these calls are negative- many people call to report seeing a bear in their area. Part of this increase in calls likely is due to efforts to better inform Floridians about bears and provide means for them to report to FWC more easily. Nevertheless, these numbers also clearly indicate increasing conflicts between people and bears.



While calls are on the increase, the proportions of the types of calls have not changed dramatically. 70% of the calls received by FWC about bears concern bears getting into the trash, being in a yard, up a tree or in the area. And accessing trash and other human-provided foods is usually the reason bears are in the neighborhood.

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Margaret Croft The Mow Star



Research Overview

- Population Density and Abundance
- Range Update
- Other Projects



Over the next few slides, I will describe current bear research efforts, with an emphasis on the statewide population assessment now underway.

Population Estimate Timeline

Subpopulation	Estimate
Chassahowitzka	2011
Glades/Highlands	June - September 2014
Ocala/St. Johns	June - September 2015
Osceola	June - September 2015
Eglin	June - September 2016
Apalachicola	June - September 2016
Big Cypress	June - September 2016



This tables shows the dates for our recent population estimates for all seven bear management areas. Some areas are complete but all will be done by Fall of 2016.

Hair Snare Setup

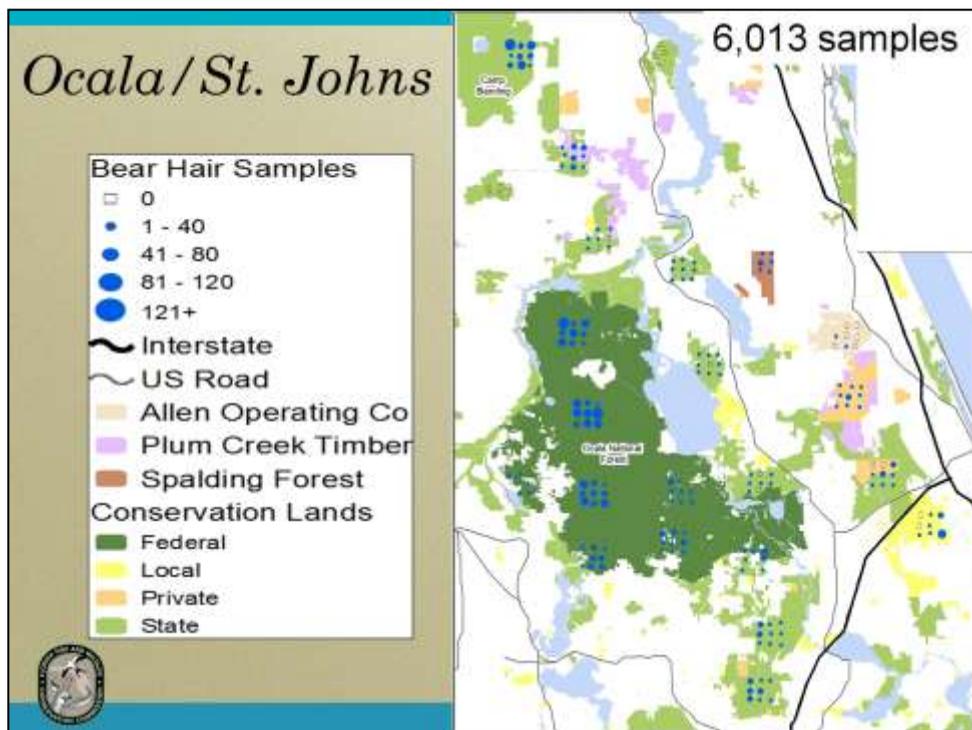


The statewide bear population assessment is based on the simple concept of capturing bear hair samples from baited barbed wire corrals. These pictures show how the corrals are constructed.

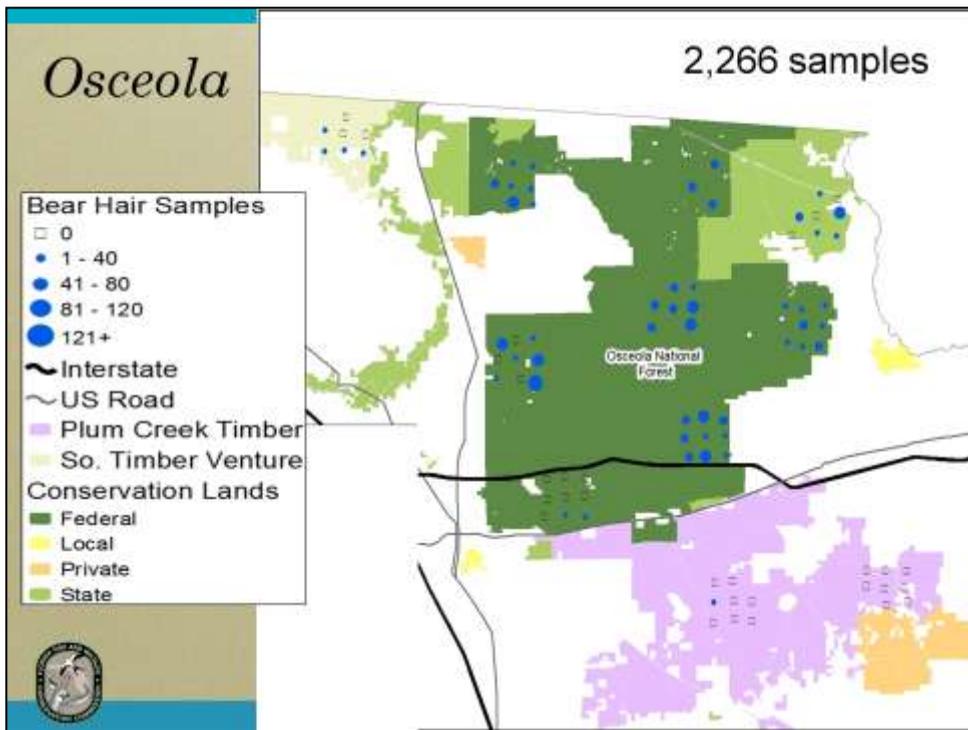
Hair Snaring



Bears enter the corrals to get the bait and leave hair samples behind on the barbed wire. Each bear may leave many samples from a single visit and may visit multiple times during the study period.



This slide shows the preliminary results of our population assessment work in the Ocala, St. Johns area. The blue circles show bear hair snares with the size of the circle indicating the number of hair samples collected. The sampling design consists of a grid of hair snares composed of a number of 3x3 clusters (9 hair snares) spaced approximately 12 km (7.5 miles) apart. Spacing for snares within the clusters is approximately 2 km (1.25 miles). About 18% of snares were on private lands, mostly managed timber company lands. Hair snares were baited and monitored once per week for 6 weeks and we collected 6,013 hair samples between June 16 - July 25, 2014. Please note that this number is not the number of bears in the area because individual bears leave many samples and revisit sites throughout the study period. The number of bears will be estimated from the genetic identification of individuals which then will be run through sophisticated population estimation models.



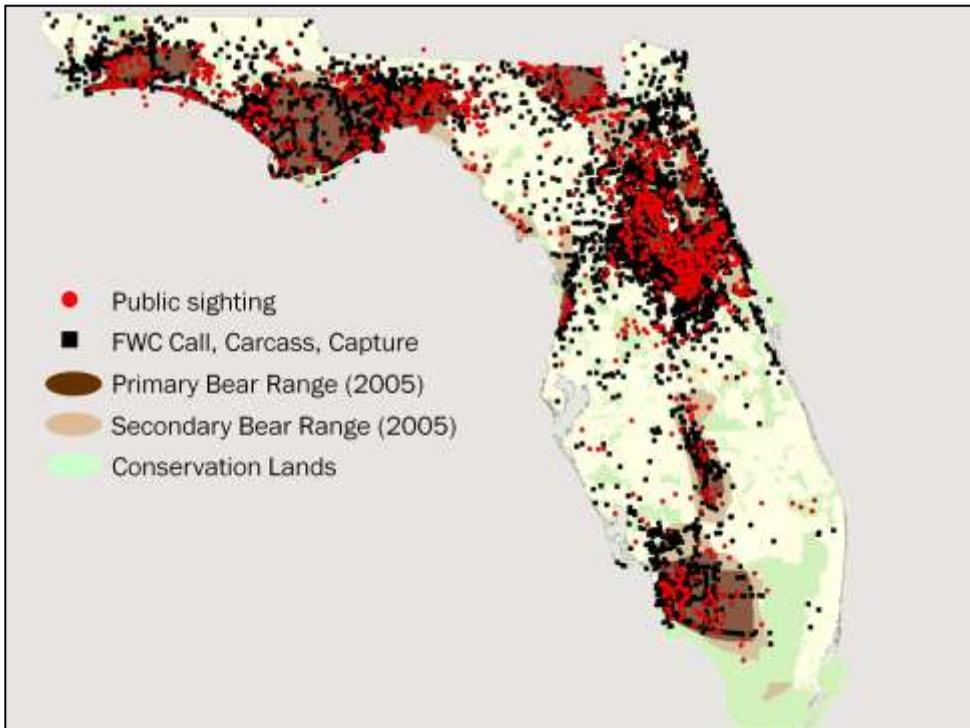
We collected 2,266 hair samples between June 16 - July 25, 2014 in the Osceola study area. It is important to note the apparent barrier of I10, seeing the lack of bear activity south of the highway.

Public Sightings Website

- Since October 1, 2013, received over 2,700 records
 - ✓ 25% include photos
- Data support current bear range and indicate expansion
- Supports presence in areas where FWC data sparse



Another aspect of our research on bears is how we are updating our range maps. On Oct 1, 2013, we started a website for the public to be able to tell us where they are seeing bears. The idea was to have people who are out in the woods tell us where they have seen bears. We have received over 2,700 records at this point and 25% included photos. Overall, the sightings data corroborate FWC's current range maps and support anecdotal data that bear range is expanding. The sightings are a great benefit in certain areas, where we don't have much data from roadkill, calls, and research.



This slide shows a map of the call, capture and carcass data in black, coupled with public sightings in red. These sightings will help us create and keep updated range maps.

Additional Research

- Economics of Bear-Resistant Trashcans - UF



LJ World.com



Career Intelligence

- Bear Habitat Use in Wildland/Urban Interface - UCF



DOH-FWS-11-11



Other ongoing research on bears in Florida includes:

- The University of Florida is evaluating FWC's efforts and incentives to get municipalities to provide bear resistant garbage containers to residences.
- The University of Central Florida is collaring and tracking bears in the vicinity of Wekiva State Park to study their movements around urbanized areas.

Results from these studies are not available at this time.

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Bear Management in Florida

- Florida Black Bear Management Plan approved in 2012
- 4 Conservation Focus Areas:
 - ✓ Population Management
 - ✓ Habitat Conservation
 - ✓ Human-Bear Conflict Management
 - ✓ Education and Outreach



FWC developed a 10-year management plan (approved in 2012) that guides the Bear Management Program. The plan was part of the process to remove the bear from the state threatened list. The plan guides everything we do for bears in Florida, including policies, rules, and actions, and helps FWC with annual work plans and progress assessment. The plan is considered a statewide framework that will facilitate managing bears with increased local input and participation. The goal is to maintain sustainable bear populations in suitable habitats throughout Florida for the benefit of the species and people. A sustainable population would be a population with a low risk of extinction, therefore not considered threatened under the state system. Suitable habitats means areas that have natural food sources and sufficient space and cover to support the population. For the benefit of people means we provide opportunities for multiple uses and enjoyment of bears while maintaining public safety.

Bear Management in Florida is multi-pronged and includes several approaches:

- We collect data to monitor population levels and health status by region.
- We also have worked on land conservation efforts to secure habitat that provides regional connectivity for bears and have ongoing land management efforts in place for those lands.
- To manage conflicts, FWC staff responds directly to conflict situations and has trained first responders in techniques to address human-bear conflicts.
- Staff interact with thousands of people each year to provide assistance and information on resolving problems with bears.
- FWC has formalized stakeholder involvement by setting up seven Bear Stakeholder Groups to gain local input on bear management.

Population Management

- Bear Management Units
- Monitoring Mortality, Especially Roadkill
- Hunting Options



The next slides describe the elements of bear management directly related to population management.



This map shows bear range and the Bear Management Units (BMU) where we are currently developing stakeholder groups to get regional input on bear management issues and solutions. The plan can be thought of as a statewide framework that, through the establishment of BMUs, will bring bear management to the local level. We recognize that each bear subpopulation has different characteristics and interacts differently with the local community. We have formed local stakeholder groups to help us better understand the community and to develop specific approaches that will work best in those areas of the state. Participants include interested citizens, nonprofits, land owners, and county and municipal governments.

Stakeholder Engagement

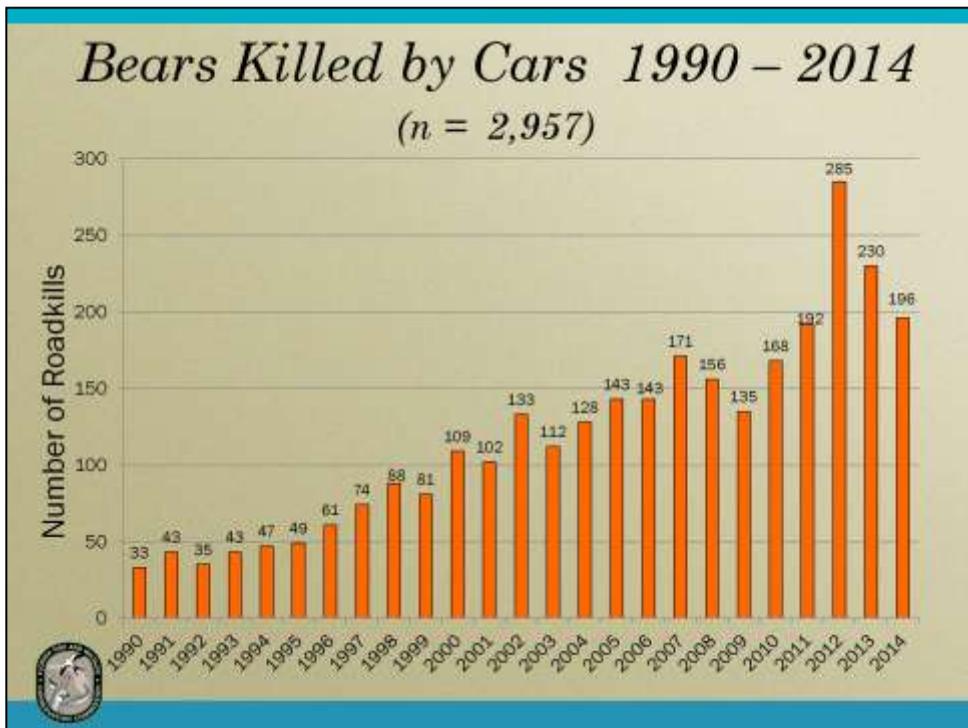
Bear Management Unit	Meetings	Participants
West Panhandle	3	85
East Panhandle	6	101
North	2	61
Big Bend	3	17
Central	7	489
South Central	3	32
South	3	161
TOTAL	27	946



Bear Management Unit government briefings and public meetings were held across the state over 27 meetings. The objective of the meetings was to generate interest in participation for our local Bear Stakeholder Groups. In addition to the initial set up meetings above, Bear Stakeholder Group activity includes:

- West Panhandle has met 4 times.
- Central and South have each met twice.
- East Panhandle has met once.
- North, South Central and Big Bend will meet soon.

To continue local input and coordination, our intent is to have each group meet every 3 months.



Another element of our population management is monitoring and addressing mortality, especially roadkill. As shown earlier, the number of bears hit and killed by cars has increased over the past 25 years. These collisions can cause significant property damage and injury to drivers. We work with the Florida Department of Transportation to post signs warning motorists of areas where they are likely to encounter bears and to install underpasses where appropriate to reduce collisions with bears. Also, FWC staff tracks bears killed as part of our conflict response and from reports by the public.

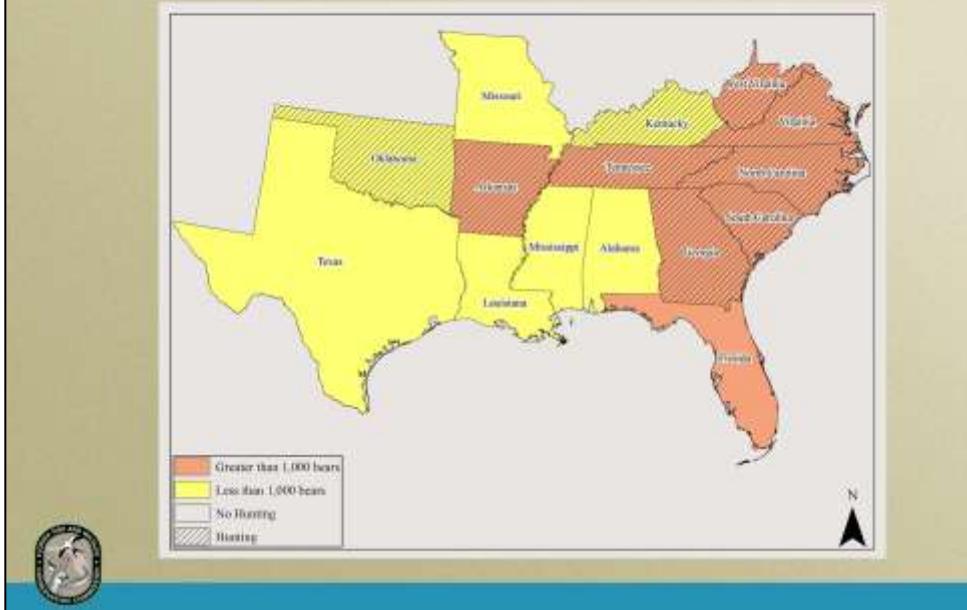
Florida Black Bear Hunting

- 1936 – First regulated harvest
- 1950 – Bears classified as a game species
- 1994 – Bear hunting closed statewide
- 1981 to 1994:
 - Average harvest = 46 bears/year
 - Harvest range = 22 to 68 bears/year



Bears in Florida were hunted until 1994 when the season was closed to help reduce mortality factors on bears. Prior to 1936, there were no hunting protections for bears. Since then, progressively more restrictive regulations on hunting were put into place to manage the populations appropriately.

Southeastern Bear Hunting



Most states (32 of 41) that have resident black bear populations allow hunting and use harvest as a population management tool. The only states other than Florida in the Southeast that do not allow hunting have small populations of bears that still are recovering from near extirpation from those areas. Approved methods for hunting bears include still hunting, hunting with dogs, and hunting over feeding stations.

Conceptual Hunting Framework

- Consider hunting as a tool to manage bear populations and help reduce conflicts
- Take a conservative approach to ensure no negative impacts to bear populations
- Use Bear Management Plan as foundation
 - ✓ Bear Management Unit (BMU) framework
 - ✓ Population levels and goals by BMU
- Limit total mortality to $\leq 20\%$ of any subpopulation
- Females with cubs and bears <100 lbs protected



The following slides depict staff's preliminary thinking on how hunting bears could work in Florida. These ideas will need to be fine tuned and solidified if staff is directed to proceed with developing a hunting season. Staff thinking on how a hunt could be structured in Florida is founded on ensuring hunts would be sustainable to the population and meet management objectives. Also, staff recommend erring on the side of being conservative with harvest until we get several years of experience and data. Then, as appropriate, we could liberalize seasons. Black bear populations can sustain up to 20% mortality annually without negative effect. Therefore, staff recommend limited hunts that would contribute to an overall mortality rate of 20% or less within each Bear Management Unit. The overall mortality rate would include road mortality and removals due to conflict.

Conceptual Hunting Framework

- Limited special opportunity hunts, by permit
 - ✓ Permits available to anyone interested
 - ✓ Limit number harvested by BMU
 - ✓ \$100 permits for in state residents
 - ✓ \$300 permits for out of state residents
- 1 week season in Fall
- Private and public lands
- No hunting over feed or dogs allowed
- Mandatory check-in for all harvest



Staff thinking on how a hunt could be structured in Florida is founded on ensuring hunts would be sustainable to the population and meet management objectives. Also, staff recommends erring on the side of being conservative with harvest until we get several years of experience and data. Then, as appropriate, we could liberalize seasons. Black bear populations can sustain up to 20% mortality without negative effect. Therefore, staff recommends limited hunts that would contribute to an overall mortality rate of 20% or less within each Bear Management Unit. The overall mortality rate would include road mortality and conflict removals. FWC has authority to charge up to \$300 for a special opportunity permit. The average cost of bear hunting in other states is approximately \$50 (range \$25-136) for in state residents and \$255 (range \$65-506) for out of state residents. Therefore, staff proposes \$100 for in state residents and \$300 for out of state residents, with proceeds going back to black bear conservation efforts. Also, staff recommends setting a one week season at first to help limit harvest to intended levels.

Potential Areas and Harvest Limits

BMU	2002 Population Estimate	20% of Population Estimate	Recent Average Roadkill	Recent Average Euthanasia	Potential Harvest Limit
East Panhandle	600	120	65	10	45
North	250	50	8	1	40
Central	1,000	200	118	23	60
South	700	140	7	3	130



This slide shows the areas of Florida and possible harvest limits for bear hunting in those areas. These numbers are for reference and are not being proposed as actual harvest levels. They are intended to give Commissioners a sense of what numbers are likely. The harvest limits were calculated by taking 20% of the average population estimate from the 2002 statewide study and subtracting from that number the most recent five-year average of both roadkill and euthanasia for bears within each BMU. It is important to note that these numbers are based on older population estimates and likely will increase when newer estimates become available in 2015 and 2016. Also, it is important to note that hunting alone will not likely reduce bear conflicts sufficiently in urban and suburban areas, but it has proven to be an effective measure in other states to manage bear populations and support other actions that more directly address human/bear conflicts.

Managing Bear Conflict



Helen Hoyce



WR Fox



Carlyce Howard



BearSmart



BearSmart



Most human-bear conflicts come from people inadvertently providing food to bears. Bears have an excellent sense of smell, so they can detect food from miles away. Also, bears need large amounts of food to fatten up for winter dormancy. The key is to eliminate anything that attracts a bear and holds it in an area around people: pet foods, outdoor grills, bird feeders, and importantly garbage. Statewide the biggest attractant for bears is unsecured garbage and we have focused much of our response on garbage solutions.

Addressing Human-Bear Conflicts

- Provide technical assistance
 - ✓ engage with > 20,000 people/year
- Partner with local governments and waste companies
 - ✓ 11 counties offer bear-resistant trashcans
- Provide bear response trainings for local responders
 - ✓ 1,500 trained from 60 agencies since 2007
- Respond to specific human/bear conflicts
 - ✓ 20 contractors to catch and remove bears



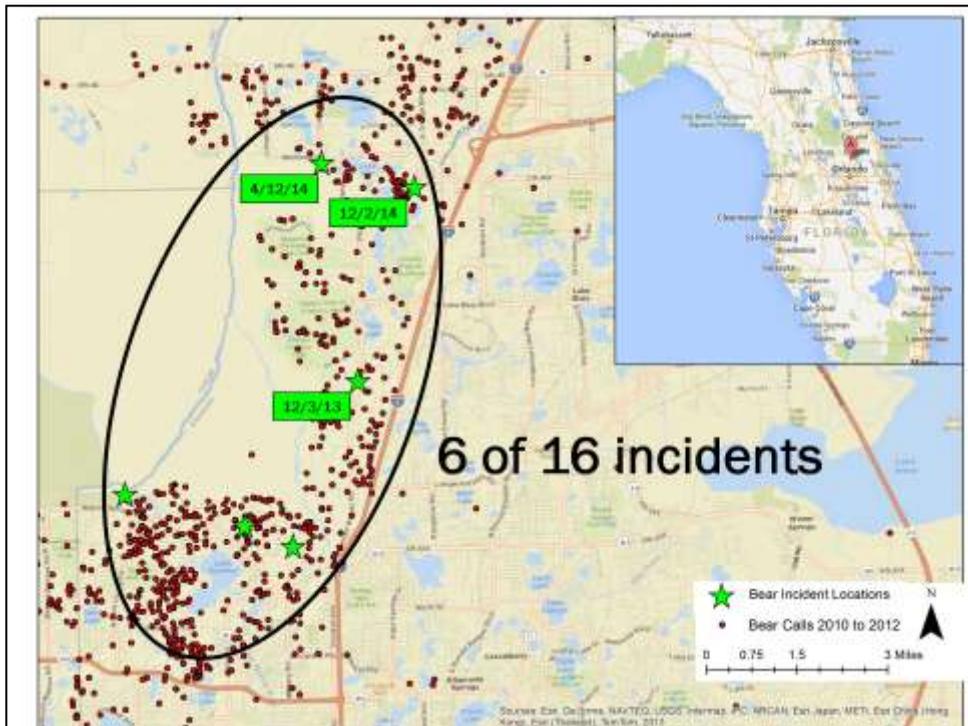
FWC staff talks directly with people calling about particular bear issues and provides information on how to address conflicts. FWC provided grant funding to assist 9 of the 11 counties that now offer bear-resistant trashcans to their residents. The 11 counties are: Franklin, Gadsden (Midway), Highlands, Lake, Leon, Okaloosa, Orange, Santa Rosa, Seminole, Volusia (DeBary), and Wakulla. Of the 1,500 people we have trained, over 800 are staff from partner agencies. We capture an average of 60 bears each year, and half of those are put down (either road injured or safety concerns/conflict).

Bears Injuring People

- 16 people have been injured by bears in Florida since 1976
- ✓ 7 people intentionally interacted with the bear



Despite our best efforts, there are times when bears do injure people. There have been 16 people injured by bears in Florida since 1976 when we started keeping formal records of bear activity. Almost half of the cases involved someone intentionally interacting with a bear, such as hand feeding it or hitting it. 80% of these interactions resulted in minor or moderate injuries to people and 20% have been quite serious.



FWC created a plan in 2009 to respond to incidents when a bear injures a person. The plan guides staff involved through their roles and responsibilities. The plan creates a local team, consisting of the Regional Law Enforcement Commander, Biologist, Director, Public Information Coordinator, and Bear Management Program staff. They communicate regularly to discuss events and come to consensus on actions to take within FWC policy. After each incident, we come together and make improvements based on lessons learned.

People Injured by Bears since 2012

- 12/2/13 - Longwood woman walking dogs attacked by female bear with cubs
- 4/12/14 - Lake Mary woman walking in yard attacked by female bear feeding on garbage
- 12/3/14 - Lake Mary woman walking dog attacked by female bear with cubs
- 12/21/14 - Eastpoint teenager walking dog attacked by female bear with cubs



There have been four serious attacks on people by bears over the past year. Along with significantly increasing conflict situations across the state, these attacks have caused FWC staff to reassess the pace and aggressiveness of implementation of our Bear Management Plan. In response, we are taking even more aggressive and proactive actions to ensure human safety and are accelerating consideration of hunting as a population management tool.

Eastpoint Response

- 6 bears captured
- 4 bears euthanized
- 2 cubs moved to Osceola NF



Following the attack in Eastpoint, FWC staff responded promptly and removed six bears from the area. Four of these bears were euthanized and two cubs were moved to Osceola National Forest. One of the four bears euthanized, an adult female with cubs, was identified through genetic matching to have been the bear that attacked the victim.

Taking Action

- Expand bear-resistant trashcan availability
- Partner with local government on ordinances, outreach, and law enforcement training
- Amend rules for feeding, hazing and removal permits
- Even more aggressive removal of conflict bears
- Considering hunting to manage populations



Managing conflicts with bears will require increasing efforts in many ways. Properly securing garbage and other attractants is the most important aspect of reducing conflict situations with bears. As we move forward, FWC staff intends to work with local communities to implement comprehensive waste management in conflict areas. In response to increasing conflict situations and four serious attacks over the past year, FWC staff is taking an even more aggressive and proactive approach to conflict bears that linger in urban and suburban areas. These bears may pose a safety risk to residents and FWC actively is engaging to remove that risk. FWC staff also will continue to educate the public about how to reduce and prevent conflicts with bears. Lastly, we will periodically update statewide bear population and range estimates to inform management decisions. There is no single answer to eliminating human/bear conflicts, but a comprehensive approach applying several measures together can greatly reduce the likelihood of serious incidents or attacks in the future.

2014 Expansion of Conflict Response

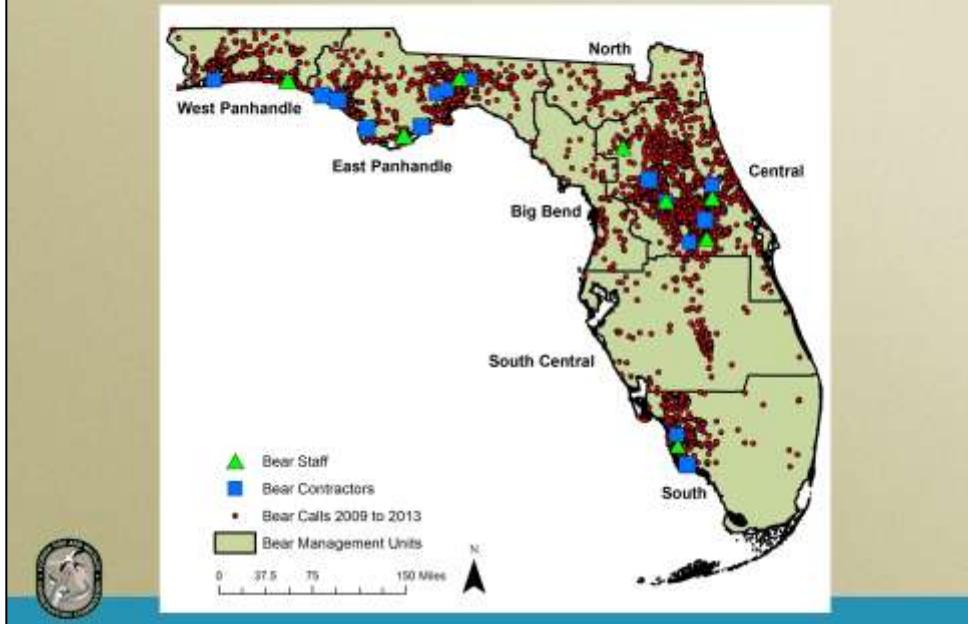
- 3 new full-time Area Bear Biologists
- 7 additional Bear Response Contractors
- Increased traps, vehicles, and other equipment



In response to rapidly increasing conflicts and several incidents where bears seriously injured people, the FWC requested and received funding from the legislature for increased bear response and management in 2014, which resulted in:

- Increased capacity for field response by adding more traps, vehicles and other equipment
- Additional staff to increase ability to respond to conflicts
 - ✓ 7 additional Bear Response Contractors
 - ✓ 3 full-time Area Bear Biologists
 - ✓ 2 Senior Wildlife Assistance Biologists.

Location of Bear Staff in Florida



This slide shows the location of FWC bear staff and contractor resources in Florida.

Additional Improvements in 2014

- 2 new full-time staff to address 'Big Picture' issues
- Implemented new agency-wide conflict database
- Survey of public knowledge and attitudes on bears
- Accelerated population assessment



These additional resources help FWC's response to general wildlife conflicts (bears, pythons, coyotes, iguanas, monitor lizards, etc) and have further developed our capacity to respond to human-bear conflicts. We now have an improved agency database to track wildlife conflict calls. Also, we have initiated a human dimensions study on public knowledge and attitudes about bears and related issues and solutions. Lastly, these additional resources have enabled FWC to accelerate the statewide bear population assessment to inform management decisions and actions.

Importance of Bear Resistant Cans

- Made by several manufacturers
 - ✓ variety of models
- Long history of use across the country
- Are more expensive than traditional cans
 - ✓ Can discourage use
- FWC has encouraged their use for years



Bear resistant trash cans have been in use for decades and are a foundational element of reducing human-bear conflicts.

Promoting Use of Bear Cans

- Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida Grants to:
- Cost-share 50% of purchase price:
 - ✓ 50 for Orange County
 - ✓ 40 for City of DeBary (Volusia County)
- Paid delivery fee and first months of extra charge:
 - ✓ 100 cans in Leon County
 - ✓ 200 cans in Franklin and Wakulla Counties
- Purchased materials, coordinated volunteers to build sheds:
 - ✓ 70 bear resistant sheds for Collier County
- Provided \$40 credit for first 500 who sign up:
 - ✓ 500 cans for Seminole County
 - ✓ Lake and Highlands counties similar



We must be flexible in working with local governments as they each have different waste management contracts and arrangements for garbage removal. Toward this end, we have utilized Conserve Wildlife Tag grant funding from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida to cost share with local municipalities and counties the use of bear resistant trash cans.

Securing Garbage Works!

Location	Bear Interactions Before	Bear Interactions After	Reduction
Okaloosa County (modified)	71%	32%	55%
Volusia County (bear resistant)	97%	5%	95%



FWC has conducted two studies of the effects of securing trash from bears. In Ft. Walton Beach (Okaloosa County), 250 regular trashcans were **modified** with hardware to make them more bear-resistant. In Glenwood (Volusia County), 120 **bear-resistant trashcans** were provided to residents. Both the modified and bear-resistant trash cans resulted in significant decreases in conflicts.

Bear Wise Communities

- Regulations require all trash and other attractants to be secure
- Fines for repeat violations
- Education for residents/workers
- Partner communities:
 - ✓ Hurlburt Air Field, Okaloosa County
 - ✓ Wingfield North, Seminole County
 - ✓ Ave Maria, Collier County



Securing garbage and attractants is just one element of a “Bear Wise” approach to living with black bears. FWC staff is working with several communities on being Bear Wise and key elements include: securing trash and attractants, regulations to require use of bear resistant trash cans, fines for repeat violations, and education for residents and workers. Public safety must always come first as we consider the best ways to manage human/bear conflicts in Florida.

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Changes to Bear, Fox, Raccoon Feeding Rule

- Clarify prohibition on feeding
- Prohibit feeding of coyotes
- Clarify purpose: to protect public safety and property



Staff recommends replacing the existing language of Florida Administrative Code Rule 68A-4.001 (3) with the following:

Placing food or garbage, allowing the placement of food or garbage, or offering food or garbage in such a manner that the person knew or should have known it attracts black bears, coyotes, foxes or raccoons and in a manner that is likely to create or creates a public nuisance, property damage, or a public safety risk is prohibited.

This change will provide clarification that the rule applies when people knew or should have known their actions would attract these species. Coyotes are attracted to human-provided foods such as garbage, as well as prey on other animals attracted to human-provided foods. Lastly, staff recommends adding 'property damage, or a public safety risk' to the existing language of 'public nuisance'. Adding this language clarifies the reason why we have this rule, which is to protect property and public safety, not merely prevent what some might consider a public nuisance.

Proposed Legislative Changes

Feeding Rule Penalties:

- Current = 2nd degree misdemeanor
- Proposed Penalty Change
 - All feeding rules (except Marine Fish):
 - 1st Offense = Non-criminal, \$100 fine
 - 2nd Offense = 2nd degree misdemeanor
 - **Bears and Crocodilians Only**
 - 3rd Offense = 1st degree misdemeanor
 - 4th+ Offense = 3rd degree felony



In conjunction with the changes to FWC's feeding rule, staff recommends and is working with the legislature to change the penalties associated with the feeding rule. Staff proposes a penalty system that starts with a civil penalty of \$100, however, after the first offense, each subsequent offense is a criminal infraction and the severity of those penalties increases from the 2nd to 4th offenses. There are multiple species involved with FWC's feeding rules and these changes would only apply to bears and crocodilians.

Changes to Bear Conservation Rule

- Remove 'Florida' from all bear references
- Allow for bear depredation permit when:
 - ✓ damage to property
 - ✓ protective methods defeated OR no viable options
 - ✓ FWC unable to capture after 4 trap nights



FWC staff is recommending removal of the word 'Florida' from all bear references to be consistent with existing rules (all of which use 'black bear' not 'Florida black bear') and for clarity in enforcement. Staff also is recommending adoption of rules that allow for depredation permits to be issued in appropriate settings where other measures are not working. Depredation permits would allow a landowner to remove bears if they are causing property damage, and protective measures like electric fencing have failed or are not feasible, and FWC staff has been unable to trap the bear for four or more days. Depredation permits would not be issued in cases that do not meet this criteria or when the safety of surrounding residents may be an issue.

Changes to Bear Policy

- Allow property owners/lessees to scare bears:

- ✓ paintball guns
- ✓ Slingshots
- ✓ bear spray



- Allow agencies/org. to train with FWC to use:

- ✓ shotguns
- ✓ starter pistols
- ✓ other non-lethal



Other recommendations are to allow homeowners and renters to have more options to scare bears off their property, including paintball guns, slingshots, and bear spray. Also, FWC currently trains public safety personnel to scare bears with many different types of non-lethal methods, and then issues them a permit to scare bears. Under this policy amendment, once they are trained, they would not need a permit. Facilitating these hazing actions is important to empower local people to be part of the solution by re-enforcing a healthy fear of humans into bears.

Overview

- Background
- Research
- Management
- Proposed Rule and Policy Changes
- **Summary**



Margaret Croft The Mow Star...





Again, all of these elements discussed today fit into the larger context of conflict wildlife and how to move further into sustainable coexistence for both bears and people.

Key Next Steps

- Short Term
 - ✓ Accelerate removal of conflict bears
 - ✓ Use hunting for population management
 - ✓ Expand bear-resistant trashcan availability
 - ✓ Partner with local government on ordinances, outreach, and law enforcement training
 - ✓ Amend bear rules
- Long Term
 - ✓ Implement comprehensive waste management in conflict areas
 - ✓ Periodically update statewide bear population and range estimates



The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is responsible for managing bears in Florida. Agency efforts are directed by policies and actions set forth in FWC's Florida Black Bear Management Plan, which was approved in 2012. The overall approach is multi-pronged and focuses on maintaining bear populations at healthy levels while ensuring public safety, use, and enjoyment of the bear resource. Human safety is the agency's paramount priority and the agency's approach to human-bear conflicts can be broken down into core short- and long-term components, which deal with addressing immediate safety issues and addressing food attractants and population management for the long-term. Many of these issues, particularly comprehensive waste management, go far beyond the ability of FWC to handle alone. We all must share in the responsibility to manage human-bear conflicts effectively.

Request for Commission Action

- Approval to publish Notice of Proposed Rule Amendments:
 - ✓ Bear, Fox, and Raccoon Feeding Rule 68A-4.001(3)
 - ✓ Bear Conservation Rule 68A-4.009
- Approve policy positions:
 - ✓ Even more aggressive removal of conflict bears
 - ✓ Advocacy for adoption of comprehensive waste management
 - ✓ Scaring options for public and law enforcement
- Guidance on use of hunting as a management tool



Staff requests Commission approval to publish a Notice of Proposed Rule amendments for feeding rules and the Bear Conservation rule. Staff also requests Commission direction on major policy considerations.