

# Significant Updates to the Bear Management Plan

Staff of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will present an update of the 2012 Florida Black Bear Management Plan (Plan) to the FWC Commissioners for their consideration in December 2019. Staff reviewed the entire Plan, incorporating data collected since 2012 and updating the FWC's approach to bear management and research. The table below provides a brief summary of significant updates to the Plan.

Description of Update	Chapter: Objective (Obj.) or Section
<p><b>Range map</b> Developed new estimate in 2019 that bears now occupy 49% of their historic range (increased from 17% in 1993), and several subpopulations are now connected by occupied range.</p>	2: Current Distribution
<p><b>Population abundance estimates</b> Provided abundance estimates updated in 2016 for six of the seven subpopulations, with a statewide estimate of more than 4,000 bears (50% higher than the previous estimate in 2002).</p>	2: Current Subpopulation Density and Abundance
<p><b>Criteria for minimum genetic diversity</b> Determined minimum genetic diversity needed for long-term survival in 2019. Five of the seven subpopulations are above the minimum genetic diversity, and the two remaining subpopulations show signs of improvement.</p>	2: Genetic Profile
<p><b>Population growth rate estimates</b> Completed growth rate estimates in 2016 for four of seven subpopulations, showing mean annual growth rates of 2.2% to 15.4%.</p>	2: Trends in Land Use and Bear Abundance
<p><b>Injuries caused by bears</b> Added information on the number of people who have sought medical assistance for injuries caused by bears (eight of 13 occurred after 2012).</p>	2: Mortality, 3: Obj. 3 - Human-Bear Conflict Management, and 3: BMU Profiles
<p><b>Regulations and management</b> Included additional information on conservation, management and regulatory activities relating to black bears, including updates from 2012 to 2019.</p>	2: Status, Management, and Hunting

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<p><b>Regulated hunting information</b> Updated and added information on regulated hunting of black bears in Florida and North America.</p>	<p>2: Status, Management, and Hunting and 3: Obj. 1 - Population Management</p>
<p><b>Public Opinion Data</b> Added results of 2016 survey of Floridians’ attitudes and knowledge of bears.</p>	<p>3: Obj. 1 - Population Management, Obj. 4 - Education and Outreach, and BMU Profiles</p>
<p><b>Population Management Options</b> Added a review of current management options, including contracted shooting/trapping programs, fertility control, habitat manipulation, regulated hunting and translocation.</p>	<p>3: Obj. 1 - Population Management</p>
<p><b>Habitat Assessment</b> Provided description of the Statewide Habitat Assessment Index (started in 2018) to establish bear habitat quality, connections and availability. Updated area of potential bear habitat and habitat in Conservation Lands as of 2016, including predictions of habitat availability in 2040 and 2070.</p>	<p>3: Obj. 2 - Habitat Conservation</p>
<p><b>BearWise Funding Program</b> Provided details on cost-share program with local governments to provide bear-resistant equipment, including the substantial funding increase from 2016 to 2019 using proceeds from permit sales for the 2015 bear hunt, appropriations by the Legislature, and proceeds from sales of the Conserve Wildlife license plate.</p>	<p>3: Obj. 3 - Human-Bear Conflict Management and Obj. 4 - Education and Outreach</p>
<p><b>BearWise Outreach Program</b> Adopted in 2015, along with 14 other states in the Southeast, the FWC describes how the regional BearWise outreach program provides consistent messaging about bears and how to avoid conflicts.</p>	<p>3: Obj. 4 - Education and Outreach</p>
<p><b>Bear Stakeholder Groups</b> Added information on how the FWC established seven Bear Stakeholder Groups in 2013 and 2014 to get local feedback on bear management and research efforts.</p>	<p>3: Obj. 4 - Education and Outreach</p>

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<p><b>Bear Management Unit Updates</b>            Added 10 years of BMU-specific data on: bear mortality, human population estimates in relationship to call numbers, core vs. non-core complaints, BearWise funding, non-FWC personnel trained in human-bear conflict response and public attitudes and knowledge about bears and bear management.</p>	3: BMU Profiles
<p><b>Wildlife Feeding Rule and Penalty changes</b>            Provided information on a 2015 change which created a bear-specific feeding prohibition rule that separates intentional from unintentional feeding and incorporates a formal notice of non-compliance for unintentional feeding before a warning or citation can be issued. Also in 2015, documented change to civil penalty of \$100 fine for first offenses of wildlife feeding prohibition rules (except marine fish).</p>	4: Regulation and Enforcement
<p><b>Additional Staff</b>            Added information on new bear positions added in 2015, including five in management, one in research, and consistent funding for up to 25 private contractors to assist in responding to human-bear conflicts.</p>	6: Implementation Strategy
<p><b>Progress Update</b>            Described progress on management and research actions established in the 2012 Plan from 2012 to 2019.</p>	6: Implementation Strategy