

Public Comments on the Florida Black Bear Management Plan Update

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee (FWC) provided multiple opportunities to collect feedback on the Florida Black Bear Management Plan update (Plan). On October 7, the FWC sent out a press release asking for public comments on the Plan. The FWC created an online survey to collect feedback and received 3,001 comments. The survey asked people whether they would agree or disagree with four statements about different sections of the Plan. Averaged across all five sections, people were either neutral or agreed with statements below:

Neutral or Agreed	Statement
72%	The Plan provides comprehensive coverage of the topics
69%	Information was presented objectively and supported by data
74%	Information was clear and understandable
62%	The list of actions seemed appropriate to support the objectives

The FWC also held two public webinars (October 24 and October 29), where 128 people participated online, over the phone, or in-person. In addition to the public, the FWC met directly with stakeholder groups representing a variety of perspectives. During the week of October 21, the FWC met with 61 members of the seven Bear Stakeholder Groups, and on October 28, met with 19 members of the Statewide Bear Technical Assistance Group. The FWC also received a total of 346 emails, calls, or letters during the open comment period (October 7 to November 6, 2019). Frequent comment topics included:

Topic Area	Comment
Population Management	Anti/Pro Hunting
	Hunt structure comments
	Hunting does/does not affect conflicts
	Prohibit hunting dog use
	Show pros/cons of population management options (e.g., cost)
	Too many/too few bears
Habitat Conservation	Overdevelopment
	Loss of habitat
	Prohibit all palmetto berry picking
	Discontinue winter prescribed burning
Education and Outreach	Increase public outreach
	2016 Responsive Management public survey design questioned
Human-Bear Conflict Management	More underpasses etc. to mitigate road mortality
	Provide free/discounted bear-resistant equipment
Other and General Comments	Use science-based decision making
	More enforcement of existing rules
	Stiffer penalties
	Too many people in Florida
	People are the problem, it is not a bear problem
	Plan well written/too long/filled with jargon