

**Black Bear Management Plan**  
**Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting**  
Thursday, March 29, 2012, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Department of Forestry, Charlottesville

**Meeting Notes**

**Attendees**

**Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) Members**

Mary Arginteanu, Audubon Society  
James Barnes, Piedmont Environmental Council  
Curtis Crump, Landowner, Amherst  
Herb DiStefano, Virginia Association for Parks  
Annie Downing, District Ranger, George Washington & Jefferson National Forests,  
U.S. Forestry Service  
Este Fisher, Virginia Bear Hunters Association  
Doug Graham, Park Manager, Lake Anna State Park  
David Hayse, Martinsville  
Marshall Jones, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute  
Fred Kallmeyer, Bull Run Mountain Civic Association  
Chris Lowie, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Dave McRuer, Wildlife Center of Virginia  
Don Schwab, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bob Scott, BearSmart, Wintergreen  
David Shelor, Landowner, Roanoke County  
David Steger, Virginia Bear Hunters Association  
Jeb Wofford, Shenandoah National Park  
Tom Wood, George Mason University

**VDGIF Staff Observers**

Bill Bassinger  
Jim Bowman  
Jay Jeffreys  
Dave Kocka  
Katie Martin

**Meeting Facilitators**

Jaime Sajecki, VDGIF  
Dave Steffen, VDGIF  
Andrea Criscione, Responsive Management

**Key**

SAC comments are in red font.

## **Overall Comments**

- SAC members accepted and are happy with the plan objectives in general; have some recommendations for the population objectives in Goal 2 and just a few minor recommendations otherwise.
- When all viability regions are included/listed, recommend to use the phrase, “all viability regions” instead of listing each one separately.
- Consider labeling the strategies “Potential Strategies” to communicate the VDGIF’s flexibility to use, not use, improve, or add strategies to meet the objectives.
- Prioritize objectives and strategies.
  - In response, Dave Steffen and Jaime Sajecki (VDGIF) explained that we will later ask SAC members to rate/rank the importance of objectives and strategies.

## **Comments on Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

*Note: The following comments are shown in numerical order of the goals and objectives rather than in order of discussion. For reference, the goals and objectives are shown as written in the draft reviewed for the meeting.*

### **Goal 1 - Population Viability:**

Ensure the long-term viability of the northern Allegheny, southern Allegheny, northern Blue Ridge, southern Blue Ridge, southern Piedmont, and southeastern Tidewater black bear populations in Virginia through a comprehensive research, monitoring, management, education, and protection program.

- Goal 1 is missing a viability region.
- Use language “all viability regions” instead of listing separately.

Objective 1. To determine the viability status of the northern Piedmont and northern Tidewater black bear populations by 1/1/2017.

- Objective 1 accepted by SAC.
- Under Objective 1, strategy d is similar to strategy c; incorporate d into c.

Objective 2. To establish minimum population and habitat criteria required for achievement of long-term viability in the northern Piedmont and northern Tidewater black bear populations by 1/1/2017.

- Objective 2 accepted by SAC.

Objective 3. To determine the most important risk factors that may prevent attainment and/or maintenance of the long-term viability of the northern Allegheny, southern Allegheny, northern Blue Ridge, southern Blue Ridge, northern Piedmont, southern Piedmont, northern Tidewater, and southern Tidewater black bear populations by 1/1/2017.

- Objective 3 accepted by SAC.
- Use language “all viability regions” instead of listing separately.

**Objective 4.** To implement management programs that achieve or maintain the long-term viability of the northern Allegheny, southern Allegheny, northern Blue Ridge, southern Blue Ridge, northern Piedmont, southern Piedmont, northern Tidewater, and southern Tidewater black bear populations by 1/1/2018.

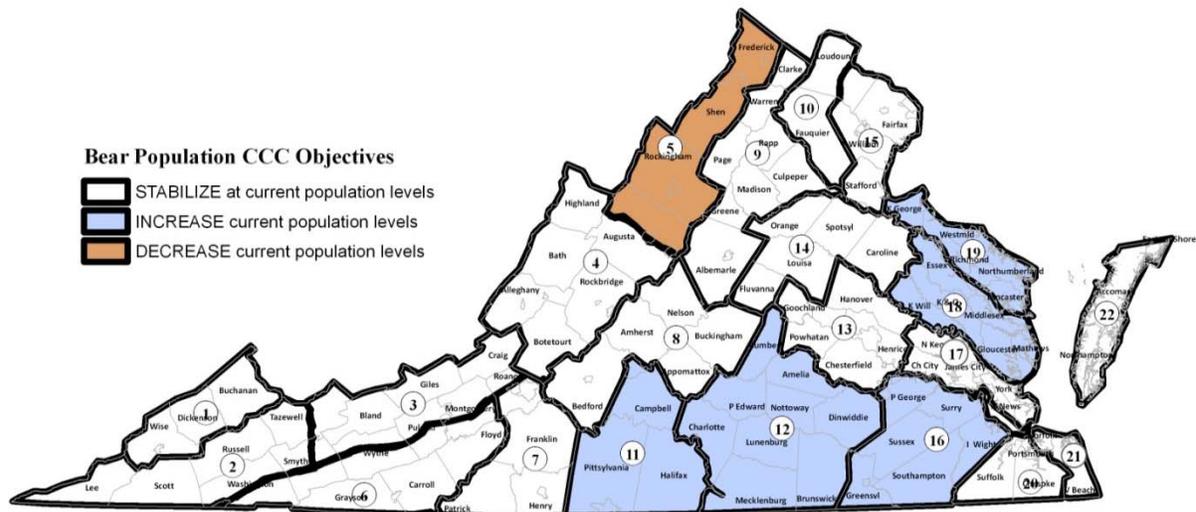
- Objective 4 accepted by SAC.
- Use language “all viability regions” instead of listing separately.

## **Goal 2 - Population and Cultural Carrying Capacity (CCC):**

**Manage and maintain current and projected bear populations at levels adaptable to a changing CCC (e.g. land use, property concerns, economics, recreational opportunities).**

- The goal of maintaining or achieving long-term population viability (per Goal 1) should be of higher priority even when CCC is exceeded.
- Both public attitudes and bear population size can be managed to meet current and projected bear CCC objectives.
- Bear management should be local.
- Maintain black bear populations while recognizing ecological considerations and balancing the needs of other species.

**Objective 1.** To meet and maintain bear population objectives at current or potential cultural carrying capacity (CCC) in each Bear Management Zone (Figure 2) through 2021.



- **Zone 5**
  - Is “decrease” the appropriate population objective? Is this an accurate reflection of what the public and other specific groups want? Should we set a “decrease” objective if we are not absolutely sure?
  - Consider redrawing Zone 5, perhaps make two zones: east of I-81 is different from west of I-81.
  - Need to consider implications of West Virginia hunting regulations on the area west of I-81.

- Zone 14
  - Should Zone 14 have an objective to increase the bear population?
- Zones 18 and 19
  - Why increase the bear population in these zones?
  - In response, Dave Steffen and Jaime Sajecki (VDGIF) explained that the factors taken into consideration included relatively high public tolerance of bears in these zones (especially 19) and low human population densities. On the other hand, the high agricultural land use is an area of potential conflict.
- Are these population objectives adaptable if CCC is successfully changed or increased?
- Consider rewording strategy b; define or clarify “removal” or consider not using examples.
- Consider rewording strategy c as it may be too strong; don’t want to exclude the option or “tie DGIF’s hands” should they need or want to move bears.
- Provide two different population objectives maps for the public to review and comment on.
  - Highlight the areas that differ on the two maps.
  - Explain rationale behind each potential objective; request input on those specific areas/objectives.
  - Zone 5 – ask if there should be a “decrease” or “stabilize” objective for the zone?
  - Also request public input on objectives in all other zones.

Objective 2. Assess and update CCC objectives in each Zone through 2021.

- Objective 2 accepted by SAC.
- Wording somewhat unclear; clarify.

Objective 3. In areas that have potential for conflict with the Zone objective (Zones 5, 16, 18, and urban areas adjacent to established bear populations) change CCC to be consistent with population objectives through 2021.

- What does the objective encompass?
- Wording unclear; can make different interpretations; need to be more specific / clarify.
- Consider role in population dynamics
- Strategy b
  - Is this strategy really an objective?
  - Reword, “any zone,” make more generic rather than specific to Zone 5.
- Strategy a – consider including schools, educating children.

Objective 4. To develop or continue management programs for local bear management areas within the larger management zones through 2021.

- Objective 4 accepted by SAC.
- Strategy b – this should be broader, not just hunting.
- Strategy c – consider rewording; “encourage” may not be the best word.
- Strategy e
  - Consider using “internal resources.”
  - Consider moving to the beginning, using it as an overall strategy for all objectives.

**Goals 1 and 2**

- Consider having Viability Regions and Management Zones match or use same boundary lines.
  - In response, Dave Steffen and Jaime Sajecki (VDGIF) explained to SAC why they are different. Viability Regions roughly conform to physiographic provinces, while the Management Zones also consider more local and site-specific (defined in the glossary of the plan) aspects of land-use and public values. It would be nice to have some more common boundaries, but considering the approximate nature of the Viability Region boundaries, it probably is not that important for bear management.

**Goal 3 - Habitat Conservation and Management:**

**Conserve black bear habitat in Virginia, consistent with bear population objectives and with emphasis on areas of special significance (e.g., areas with source populations and habitat linkages). Conservation may consist of habitat management or protection.**

Objective 1. To ensure habitat requirements meet minimum bear population viability criteria in each of the 8 Viability Regions and cultural carrying capacity objectives for black bear populations through 2021.

- Objective 1 accepted by SAC.
- Reverse order of objectives 1 and 2; it appears that objective 2 would logically happen first.

Objective 2. To refine specific bear habitat quality and associated habitat needs (e.g., amount, composition, linkages, diversity) that meet minimum population viability criteria and cultural carrying capacity objectives for black bear populations through 2021.

- Objective 2 accepted by SAC.
- Reverse order of objectives 1 and 2; it appears that objective 2 would logically happen first.

**Goal 4 –Recreational Opportunities:**

**Provide and promote a diversity of bear-related recreational opportunities (hunting for recreation and population management and nonhunting) based on education and information that minimize negative human-bear interactions, encourage outdoor experiences, and promote keeping bears wild. Recreational opportunities should not support activities that prevent attainment of black bear population objectives.**

Objective 1. To determine non-hunting demands and satisfactions for bear recreation by 1/1/2017.

- Objective 1 accepted by SAC.

Objective 2. Inform the public about non-hunting recreational opportunities through 2021.

- Objective 2 accepted by SAC.

Objective 3. Consistent with black bear population objectives, to maintain diverse recreational bear hunting satisfactions from archery, muzzleloader, firearms without the use of dogs, firearms with the use of dogs, and bear-dog training seasons through 2021.

- Objective 3 accepted by SAC.
- Consider rewording or clarifying what is meant by “satisfactions.”

Objective 4. Identify and manage for appropriate allocation of hunting opportunities among hunting methods by 1/1/2014.

- Objective 4 accepted by SAC.
- Consider moving to before objective 3 to follow chronological order of target dates.

Objective 5. To determine black bear hunter satisfactions and constraints to participation in Virginia by 1/1/2016.

- Objective 5 accepted by SAC.
- Consider moving to before objective 3 to follow chronological order of target dates.

Objective 6. To develop and promote management programs and regulations that keep bears from being habituated to humans, decreases access to human related food sources, and prevents dependency on humans ongoing through 2021.

- Objective 6 accepted by SAC.
- Consider rewording simplify and/or clarify; it is confusing as written.

#### **Goal 5 - Ethics of Bear-Related Recreation:**

**Ensure that black bear-related recreation (hunting and non hunting) methods in Virginia are fair, safe, sportsmanlike, humane, ethical, and legal and that those methods are consistent with and respect the rights of private property owners and other Virginia citizens. Harvested bears should be utilized.**

Objective 1. To identify and manage nonhunting bear-related recreational activities that result in conflict with Virginia citizens by 1/1/2018.

- Objective 1 accepted by SAC.
- Consider rewording to clarify.
- Consider making last objective.

Objective 2. To identify, describe, and document bear hunting activities (e.g., when, where, type of hunting) that result in conflicts with landowners and other Virginia citizens by 1/1/2015.

- Objective 2 accepted by SAC.

Objective 3. Implement programs to reduce conflicts between bear hunting activities and other Virginia citizens (especially landowners) by 25% by 2021.

- Objective 3 accepted by SAC.
- Do we want a percentage in the objective?
- Consider rewording to “at least 25%.”

Objective 4. To describe fair, sportsmanlike, humane, and ethical bear hunting methods that include utilization of harvested bears and implement programs that ensure compliance in order to preserve the value of hunting as a source of recreation and a population management tool by 1/1/2015.

- Objective 4 accepted by SAC.
- Consider shortening; end objective at “compliance.”

### **Goal 6 - Human-Bear Problems:**

**Mitigate loss of personal property and income, and promote human safety while:**

- **Attaining bear population and recreation objectives.**
- **Minimizing negative interactions by fostering sound, proactive management practices that keep bears wild.**
- **Ensuring consistent, shared public / agency responsibility for human-bear problems.**
- **Using hunting as the preferred method when lethal methods are required to manage problem bears.**

Objective 1. To implement and review explicit and cost-effective response policies/guidelines that utilize both non-lethal and lethal options for managing nuisance bear complaints through 2021.

- Objective 1 accepted by SAC.
- Strategy c – consider rewording.

Objective 2. Promote effective nuisance bear management options to reduce negative human bear interactions through 2021.

- Objective 2 accepted by SAC.
- Consider rewording to clarify.
- Consider wording carefully regarding use of “promote.”

Objective 3. To identify, develop, and implement site-specific management options for unique bear management units through 2021.

- Objective 3 accepted by SAC.
- Strategy c – remove reference to compensation, based on previous SAC discussions and agreement to remove compensation from the plan.

Objective 4. Promote citizen initiatives that prevent negative human-bear interactions through 2021.

- Objective 4 accepted by SAC.

Objective 5. To reduce the demand for out-of-season kill permits for agricultural bear damage by 50%, through 2021.

- Consider that the language “kill” permits reduces public support.
- Should we specify a percentage?
- Consider reducing timeframe by about half; maybe by 2016 instead of 2021.
- Consider rewording to clarify; maybe “reduce requests” instead of “reduce the demand.”
- Strategies – include more specifics about non-lethal techniques.

## **Glossary**

- Add definitions for:
  - BCC
  - CCC
  - BPOP

## **Public Review**

- Provide two maps for public comment; ask specific questions about map.
- Submit to Board of Supervisors for review.
- Advertise on TV.