

REGION 1 MEETING MINUTES

Black Bear Management Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 29, 2010, 1:40-3:15 pm

Virginia Department of Forestry

Attendees

Herb Distefano, Virginia Association for Parks, Spotsylvania County

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Brian Gallagher, Central Virginia Beekeepers Association, Albemarle County

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Doug Graham, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Spotsylvania County

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Fred Kallmeyer, Bull Run Mountain Civic Association, Prince William County

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Tim Kidwell, Powhatan County

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Adele Maclean, Sierra Club/Falls of the James, Southside

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Dave McCarthy, Virginia Master Naturalist, Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve Chapter, Loudoun County

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Ken and Dale Pickin, Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, Williamsburg

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Lt. Shawn Sears, Henrico Police Animal Protection Unit, Henrico County

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Sheryl Winkler, Spotsylvania County

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Kim Winter, Piedmont Environmental Council, Fauquier County

kwinter@pecva.org

Absent

Mary Arginteanu, Audubon, Richmond

mary.arginteanu@gmail.com, maryarg@aol.com

Dave Burpee, Virginia Bowhunters Association, Fairfax

burpeed@verizon.net

Cate Lanier, Marriot Ranch, Fauquier County

(540) 364-2627

John Zehler, Fluvanna County

Note that a complete listing of SAC members, including telephone numbers and email information will be distributed to the entire group.

Meeting Goals

- Introductions (including those who were absent)
- Identify and discuss bear-related issues for your region
- Establish dates and locations for future SAC meetings and the best ways to communicate amongst your regional group and the statewide group
- Recommend any other individuals or organizations that should have representation on the regional SAC

Identification of Issues

Bear Population Discussion Segment

Issues Identified

Cultural carrying capacity/public tolerance for bears

- Increasing number of bear sightings: bee hives, bird feeders, pet food
- By locality:
 - Powhatan: not enough information
 - Albemarle: populations increasing
 - Spotsylvania: populations increasing
 - Prince William: not enough data
- The decrease in habitat plus the increase in both bear and human populations causes problems; hunting can't control it.

Dog hunting

- Why hunt with dogs?
- Dogs running through private property
- Mistreatment of dogs apparent in some cases

Public awareness

- Hunters may not know what tags on bears mean
- Education
 - Website
 - DVD—public
 - Outreach
 - Nuisance areas

Strategies/Other Comments

- Fewer bears in Area 1 but Increasing, so most counties in the region allow bear hunting; fewer hunters in the region than in the rest of commonwealth, but may increase. Longer hunting season, too
- Last 10 years, no unprovoked attacks by black bears in Virginia
- Increase hunting opportunities in appropriate areas

Bear Habitat Discussion Segment

Issues Identified

Changing habitat

- Habitat loss
- Hard mast as bulk of bears' diet—forests changing to maple, oaks being eaten before they grow
- Climate change; how will it affect habitat?

- 961 square miles of forest lost in Virginia each year and number of houses increasing
- Timber profits in pines versus oaks; loss of mast
- Land use issues
- Future habitat loss and quality
- Virginia habitat coordination

Strategies/Other Comments

- Contiguous migration corridors probably not a critical need as might be for other species.
- As communities grow, need to improve quality of habitat; move away from species-specific habitat.
- Compact connected communities
- Replacement habitat: timber companies, tree farmers should plant appropriate trees for habitat, not just garbage trees. Trees with mast, variety. Appropriate native trees.

Bear-Related Recreation Discussion Segment

Issues Identified

Bear-related recreation issues were divided into two categories for the discussion: consumptive and nonconsumptive bear-related recreation.

Consumptive bear-related recreation

- Deer and turkey hunters may not know how to hunt bear
- Hunters are only a means of control
- Types of hunting: archery and firearms, black powder

Nonconsumptive bear-related recreation

- Enthusiasm about sightings varies by locality: In Williamsburg, people don't want more bears; in Carolina County, people are glad to see them
- Fear
- Interest adds to experience
- Natural resources tourism, economic driver

Strategies/Other Comments

- Information management: teach people where to go to see bears
- Education is key for hunters and for citizens; safety, one factor

Human-Bear Problems Discussion Segment

Issues Identified

Response to human-bear problems

- Nuisance complaints; reaction of authorities, response
- Darting, trapping, relocating
- Budget concerns
- Political pressure
- Pressure on localities regarding children, pets, etc.
- Sensationalizing issues
- Overreaction
- Feedback regarding complaints
- Chronic complaints or "nuisance nuisance complaints"
- Agency coordination; state and local officials

Agricultural damage

- Agriculture—money
- Compensation—who pays? Insurance? Hunting fees? Taxpayers?
- If license fees increase, this may mean fewer hunters and fewer areas to hunt

Human populations contributing to bear behavior

- Feeding bears
- Bees—occasional problems

Strategies/Other Comments

- Game office: answering machine only without a live person not a help in the event of a sighting and upset citizen
- Education: Important to give the general public information re: human/bear issues. Outreach.
- Education and children: for DVD, identify SOLs that apply; educate teachers, train them.
- Public outreach campaign: TV messages targeted to adults, residents of specific areas.
- Nuisance bears: contact that neighborhood group—phone calls? Brochure
- Animal control agencies should interface with DGIF. County defines the issue.
- Educate beekeepers to put electric fence up first before hives.
- Need a standardized response from local officials—across the state, in conjunction with state officials. Defined categories of complaints (category 1 complaint, category 2, etc.) with similar responses statewide.
- Develop a state policy. Involve local officials, game department, police, and the public. Administer it through the game department.
- Homeowners Associations information meetings with animal control officers, DVDs (Spotsylvania)—a good model. State or local officials invited

Upcoming Meetings

The group discussed possible upcoming meeting locations. The group agreed that the 2-3 upcoming meetings should be held in a central location instead of different locations. The group agreed that the Lake Anna area was optimal.

Potential dates

- August
- September
- October

Action Items:

1. Responsive Management to provide meeting minutes for regional group breakout sessions
2. Responsive Management to coordinate second meeting locations, dates, and times for each region
3. Responsive Management to develop a clearinghouse online for access to meeting materials and distribute all information to SAC members
4. VDGIF to identify additional regional representatives for SACs
5. SAC members to review the technical portion of the bear management plan in preparation for the next SAC regional meeting
6. SAC members to begin thinking about issues identified and values associated with these issues for upcoming meeting