

## **Bear Conflict Management Program**

Submitted by:  
Black Bear Conservation Committee  
P.O. Box 80442  
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

### **Project Need:**

The Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*) was listed as a federally threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1992. Restoration efforts have made progress in increasing the bear populations and their habitat. Human/bear conflicts have increased in areas with human encroachment into bear habitat and a growing bear population. Continuing the successful recovery of the bear will rely heavily on public support, and minimizing conflicts is crucial for the public to view bears as an asset rather than a liability. Due to the legal status of the Louisiana black bear, conflict resolution relies heavily on preventative measures and non-lethal conflict management.

Most conflicts between bears and humans are related to the animals' search for food. An amazingly acute sense of smell enables the bear to find sources of nourishment, and, unfortunately, this can be beehives, garbage, pet foods, and other human-related attractants. Bears lose their instinctive fear of people quite easily when they are repeatedly rewarded with food (i.e., food conditioned), which typically result in conflicts. Problems vary from the presence of a bear in a residential area, actual property damage and/or public safety threats.

The exclusion of attractants that cause food conditioning will ultimately reduce human/bear conflicts; however, costs of implementing exclusion methods are high and require extra effort. The challenge for human/bear conflict resolution is to focus on the most effective garbage management technique that will not overly burden private individuals while maintaining public support for bear restoration efforts. This grant will provide the personnel that can ensure bear-proof materials are available to those who need it and are used effectively to reduce conflicts. Constant monitoring of bear-proof areas is essential to maintain proper use and deployment of this equipment.

### **Objectives:**

The project's ultimate goal is to reduce human/bear conflicts in order to maintain public support for the restoration of the Louisiana black bear. By preventing access to garbage, bears will remain in the woods and out of harm's way in populated areas. The primary objective of this project to minimize human/bear conflicts by providing for personnel and equipment to implement bear-proofing systems to 900 households in areas of the state that experience the highest amount of conflict. In addition, industrial complexes adjacent to these areas will also receive technical assistance to bear-proof their facilities.

**Approach:**

The BBCC will hire and train a field employee as the point-person in bear-proofing efforts in targeted areas. In residential situations, the BBCC will work with the Parish and local officials, the waste removal company, and the bear proof garbage can supplier to determine which neighborhoods need assistance, how many units will be required, and any changes in current waste removal contracts that might be necessary. For industrial complexes, the BBCC will provide technical assistance to the facility manager and resources including a list of contractors who can provide the “bear-proofing” necessary to secure the complex. The BBCC will provide a quick and efficient transition to bear-proof garbage management systems wherever necessary.

LDWF will respond to human-bear conflicts when trapping the offending animal is the appropriate course of action. Management techniques may include chemical immobilization, marking, and hazing upon release.

**Location of Work:**

St. Mary Parish has experienced the highest number of human/bear conflicts statewide. LDWF bear complaint logs indicate that the southern neighborhoods in the city of Patterson have the highest need for bear-proof systems. The towns of Bayou Sale to Burns along Highway 317 and towns in and around Four Corners also experience a high number of conflicts.

**Estimated Costs:**

The total project will cost approximately \$444,530. The BBCC is requesting a total of \$221,965. Those funds will be matched with \$222,565 provided by the BBCC, LDWF, the City of Patterson, St. Mary Parish, and SWeeDec. A detailed project budget table is listed below.

The vehicle will be leased. The BBCC anticipates that this will reduce the 3-year cost of vehicle operation relative to a vehicle purchase. Nevertheless, the expected lease term will be beyond the 1-year grant term. If the vehicle is leased longer than the grant award, the vehicle may be used for other projects actively or previously funded by USFWS Federal Assistance grants.

Due to the high cost of bear-proof cans needed to accomplish objectives in this proposal, the Final Report will contain information detailing 1) the number of cans deployed during the grant period; and 2) the number of deployed cans that were still in place and functional at the end of the grant period.

Estimation of office space and related expenses is explained on the attached letter from the Black Bear Conservation Committee.

### **Key Personnel Qualifications and Experience:**

Dave Telesco has been the Private Lands Biologist for the BBCC since August 2003, and Deputy Director since 2006. He will be the primary person responsible for hiring and training the incoming employee supported in part by this grant. Dave graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry and Wildlife Resources from Virginia Tech University in 1996. After graduation, he worked for 4 years as a technician on a variety of wildlife projects across North America. Dave graduated with a Master of Science degree in Forestry and Wildlife Science from The University of Tennessee in 2003.

Maria Davidson is the Large Carnivore Program Manager for Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Approximately 20% of Maria's time will be dedicated to conflict response. In addition to Maria's time, LDWF regional personnel will respond to human/bear conflicts in their designated areas.

### Project Budget Table

Description	Cost			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Totals
Salary and Benefits	52,200	52,200	52,200	156,600
Travel	30,300	10,600	10,600	51,500
Equipment	2,680	540	540	3,760
Bear Proof 900 Residences	159,710	6,480	6,480	172,670
Office Space	20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000
Project Total	264,890	89,820	89,820	444,530
Total Federal Match	132,345	44,810	44,810	221,965
Total State Match	132,545	45,010	45,010	222,565

Total Project Cost     \$444,530  
 Federal Match         \$221,965  
 State Match             \$222,565