



Rattlesnake Bear Task Force



Dear Rattlesnake Residents:

May 1, 2008

As you know, black bears are using low elevation private lands throughout the Rattlesnake valley. In their endless search for food they can have conflicts with people. Unnatural bear foods associated with humans like garbage, birdseed, livestock/chicken feed, etc., are a leading cause of these conflicts. In an effort to protect human safety and reduce human-bear conflicts, local residents, the Rattlesnake Bear Task Force, the City of Missoula, and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are working together on the initiation of a Neighborhood Connection Partnership.

We seek to develop a network of neighbors to accomplish the following: 1) *minimize the availability of human-related attractants*, 2) *communicate among neighbors about bear activity*, 3) *report observations, incidents, and bear behavior that may pose problems through the Rattlesnake Bear Task Force website* 4) *use aversive or negative conditioning on black bears to teach bears to avoid humans and areas inhabited by humans*, and 5) *report attractant source violations under Missoula Ordinance 3330 and Montana Code 87-3-130*. We are hopeful that by taking action, Rattlesnake residents can prevent bears from becoming a problem before they are a public safety risk. Our use of a phone tree is similar to the approach that the Blackfoot Challenge has used to successfully avoid bear conflicts in the Blackfoot Valley.

This project is still evolving but we will start by dividing the valley into two areas, upper Rattlesnake valley and lower Rattlesnake valley. The Rattlesnake was chosen because of consistent black bear activity and a history of human-bear conflicts. We will be prioritizing the upper Rattlesnake valley where, bears first come in contact with development and unnatural food attractants. The Rattlesnake Bear Task Force website www.rattlesnakebears.org, will coordinate bear reports and sightings and Missoula Animal Control will coordinate attractant sighting concerns.

Our proposal for this pilot project is: if you observe bear activity and behavior that is unlikely to pose a problem to people (i.e., a “non-problem” situation), please report the concern on www.rattlesnakebears.org. The website coordinator will then notify FWP and other participating neighbors in their area through a phone and email tree.

For attractant sighting issues please notify Missoula Animal Control, who can in turn, investigate and issue a notice of violation of Missoula Ordinance 3330 if necessary.

In “problem-situations” where a bear enters a building or spends time directly next to dwellings, please contact FWP immediately or, after hours, contact 911. FWP will determine what type of response to take, including aversive conditioning. If this bear and attractant sighting approach is successful than we hope to expand to other areas in Missoula that experience bear activity. We are optimistic that more communication across the valley among neighbors about bears will be an effective way to avoid problems with predators.

Over the course of the summer FWP is working to set up a bear-resistant container checkout program for Missoula residents. Currently, FWP has a few 95-gallon bins and 55-gallon drums for loan, free, for temporary solutions to attractant issues. Additionally, James Jonkel and Erin Edge will be working with any Rattlesnake resident throughout 2008 to assist them with specific bear deterrent systems and devices like electric fence kits.



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Please contact James Jonkel or Erin Edge if you are interested in learning more about the use of specific devices or techniques for avoiding conflicts.

For more information or to make a report contact www.rattlesnakebears.org

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
The City of Missoula
The Rattlesnake Bear Task Force
Allied Waste Services

Bear Issues

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks – 542-5500

James Jonkel, Bear Management Specialist

Bob Weisner, Bear Management Specialist

Erin Edge, Bear Aware Outreach Intern

Jeff Darah, FWP Warden Captain

Dan Curtain, FWP Warden Sergeant

Attractant Issues

Missoula Animal Control – 541-7387

Ed Franceschina, Animal Control Supervisor

To Obtain a Bear Resistant Container

Allied Waste – 543-3157

-Will loan 95-gallon Bear Saver Containers for \$10.00/month fee added directly to your bill

Bear Saver – 880-851-3887 www.bearsaver.com

Steve Thompson, USA representative