

The Florida Black Bear

Mitigation, Management and Preservation

Back from the edge of Extinction...



The Florida Black Bear enjoyed a protected status until 2012. In the 1970's we came close to losing this majestic and iconic species unique to Florida, when their numbers plummeted to around 300 individuals due to hunting and habitat destruction.

In 2015 after 21 years of not being hunted, the FWC re-instituted a bear hunt.

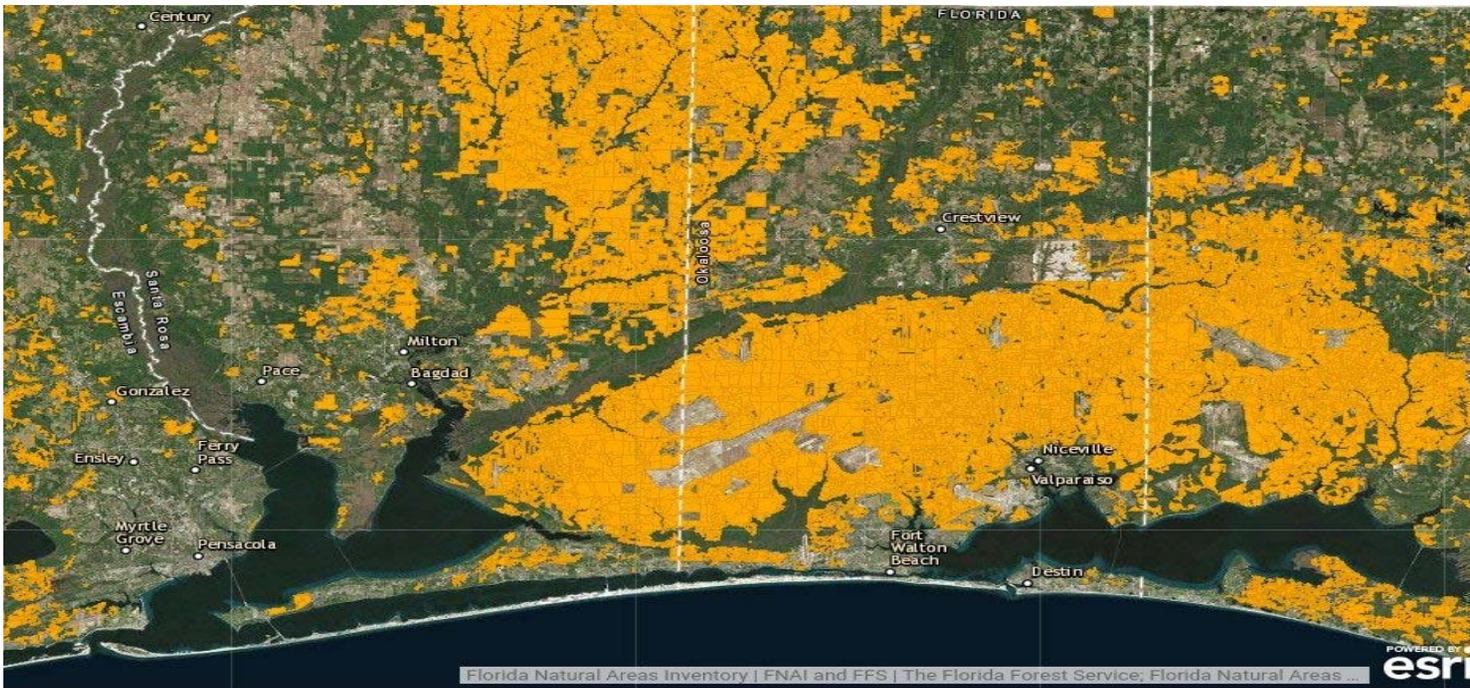


- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has reported a 400% increase in human-bear interactions in the past 10 years.
- 30% of the bear complaint calls to the FWC are related to bears getting into the household garbage.
- Another 38% relate to general interaction such as bears walking around in the community.
- According to the FWC's statistics, only 1% of the calls have been classified as a public safety incidents.

Santa Rosa County

- ▶ According to FWC 2016 statistics, 6% of the bear state-wide conflict calls come from Santa Rosa County.
- ▶ A majority of the calls are originating from the southern part of the county where there is a higher population density of approximately 52,000 residents.

Santa Rosa has very little suitable bear habitat or natural areas for feeding and denning especially in the southern portion of the county. This makes human garbage even more appealing.



Photocredit:FNAI

When conflicts Happen...

- ▶ Currently the FWC human-bear conflict mitigation procedures include:
- ▶ New funding for counties with high human-bear interaction to institute ordinances that require bear-resistant garbage cans or lid modifications.
- ▶ Hazing of bears that wander or forage in the communities (Shooting them with paintballs bean bags, etc.
- ▶ Shooting “Nuisance” bears
- ▶ Yearly State-wide bear hunt begun in 2015.

Bear-resistant garbage cans

- ▶ FWC survey research showed strong support for each of the potential approaches:
 - ▶ 90% supported keeping trash secure until the morning of pickup
 - ▶ 63% supported building a shed to secure trash
 - ▶ 81% supported adding hardware to made can more bear-resistant
 - ▶ 93% supported laws requiring attractants to be secured
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- ▶ FWC research has also demonstrated several successful waste management test programs which proved to drastically and reliably reduce human-bear conflicts by up to 95%.



Bear-resistant garbage cans

- ▶ The FWC has stated, that unless ordinances are passed by counties and enforced to ensure compliance by a majority of residents, bears will continue to seek food from homes with unsecured garbage.
- ▶ Cost of lid modifications to existing trash cans can be as little as a few dollars.
- ▶ According to FWC survey results, 67% respondents supported leasing a bear resistant can for an extra \$6-8 per month.

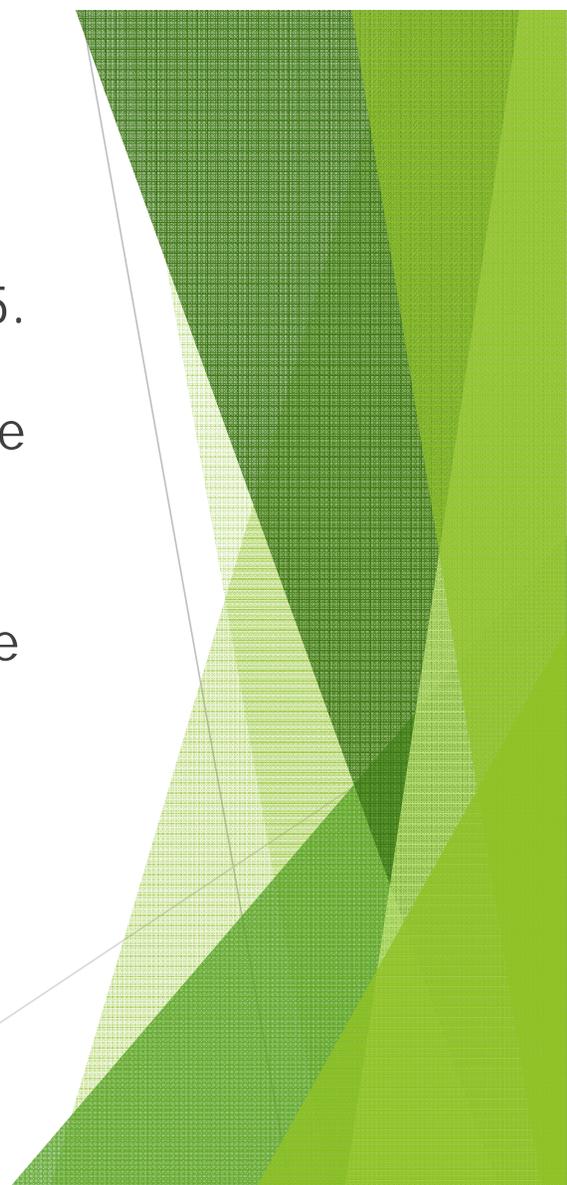
Support for trash can Ordinances

- ▶ There is strong support for trash can Ordinances state-wide. Seminole County has recently put an Ordinance in place, with Wakulla, Valousia, Lake, and Orange County currently drafting such Ordinances to be implemented July 2016.
- ▶ A total of 2,075 people have additionally signed a petition for affordable Bear Resistant Trash Cans in the State.
- ▶ Trash Can Ordinances that can dramatically lower human-bear interactions are important for the public's safety and the prevention of future human injuries.

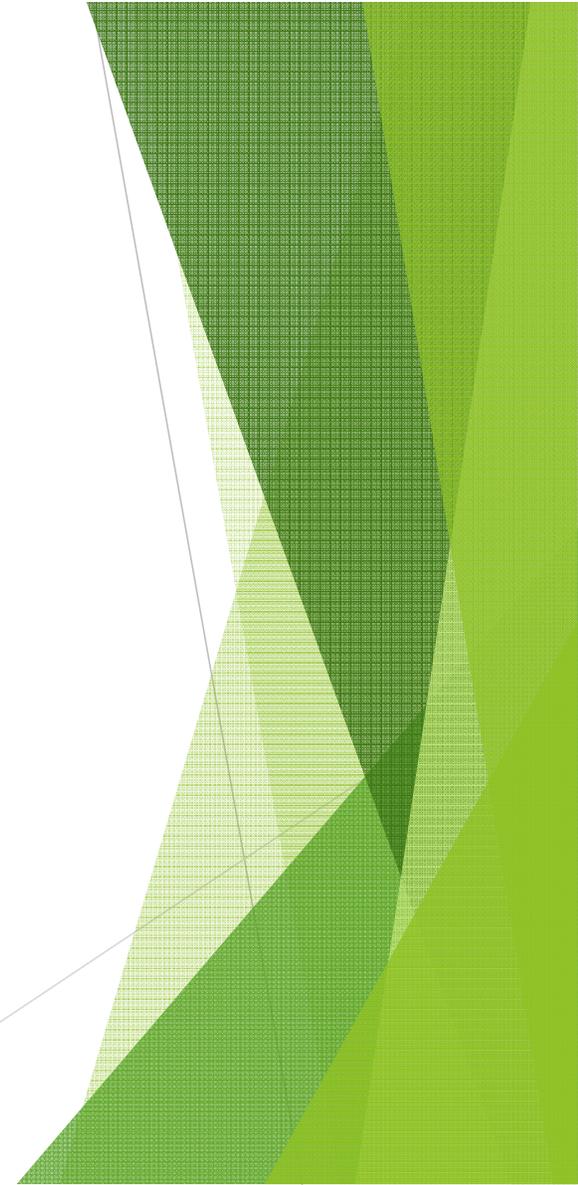
Bear Management in Florida

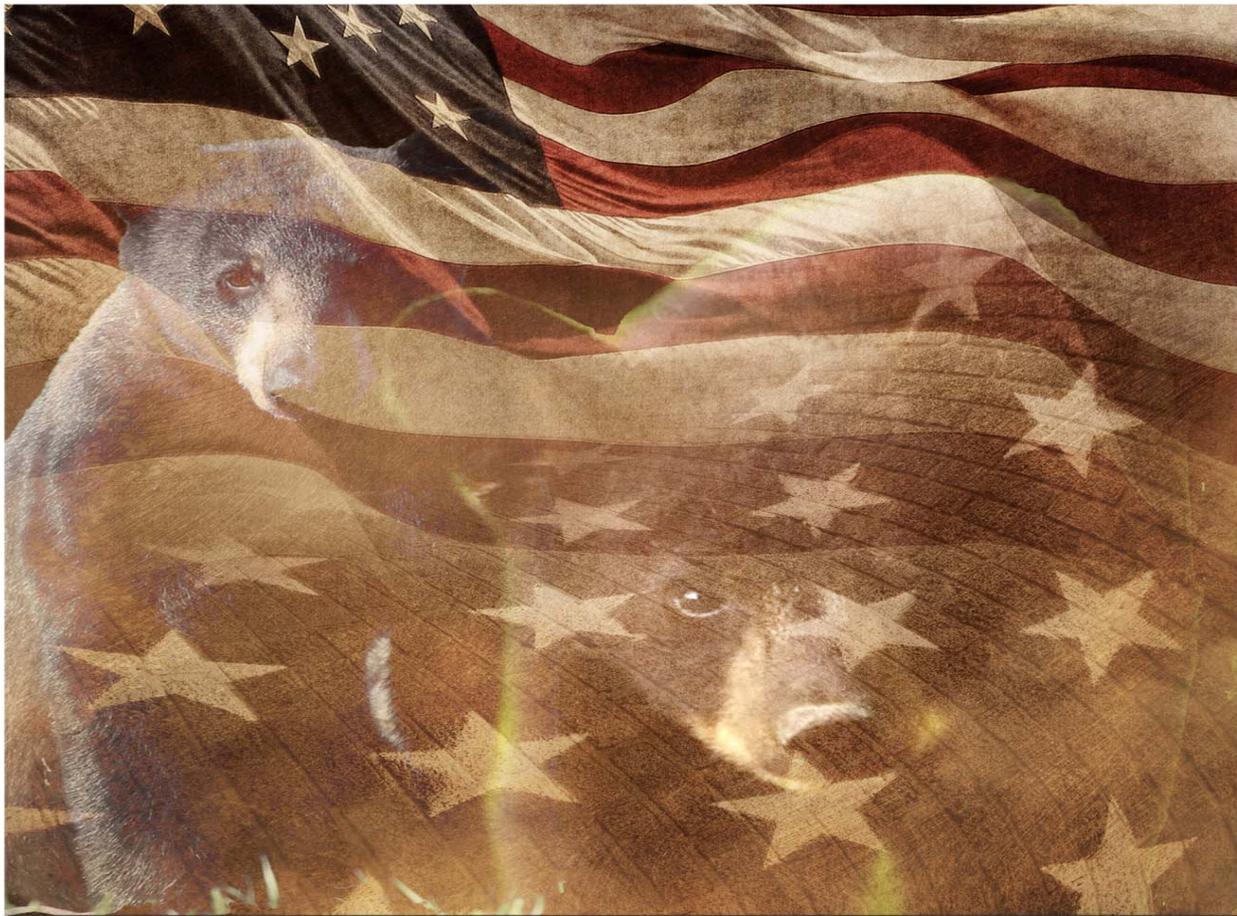


- ▶ Unfortunately before these programs could be instituted state-wide the FWC re-instituted hunting as a population management tactic.
- ▶ Even though the admit that hunting will likely not reduce human-bear conflicts in high-interaction areas.
- ▶ In fact, the 2015 Bear hunt did not reduce human bear conflicts, with an increase in calls to the FWC from neighborhoods across the state after the hunt.

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- ▶ The FWC listed human-bear conflicts as a significant reason for allowing the destruction of over 10% of the black bear population through an authorized hunt in 2015. Lactating mothers and cubs were killed, already genetically isolated bear populations throughout the state were further reduced.
 - ▶ Based on an outcry from both the scientific community and a large proportion of Florida residents opposed to the use of hunting in managing this iconic species, the FWC recently voted to temporarily stop this management procedure in 2016.
 - ▶ However, Florida Black Bears will continue to perish due to killing of nuisance bears entering communities, traffic accidents, and loss of natural food sources and habitat.

Please help us ensure the future of the Florida Black Bear...





I HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE