

Wildlife Advisory Committee

07 June 2023 / 3:00 PM / COMMISSIONER CONFERENCE ROOM AND ZOOM

Attendees

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Jeff Klausmann; Kathy O'Neil; Tamara Sperber; Wray Landon; Renee Seidler; Mike Lien; Linda Unland

NON-MEMBERS: Commissioner Michael Whitfield; Rob Marin; Bear Wise members - John Beller; Mike Abbott; Sheri Webber; James Webber

QUORUM ESTABLISHED.

CALL TO ORDER. MEETING COMMENCED 3:15pm.

Previous Meeting Minutes Approval.

1. **April 5, 2023 Regular Meeting.** Motion to approve - Wray Landon. Seconded - Tamara Sperber. Vote Approved.
2. **April 26, 2023 Special Meeting.** Motion to approve - Wray Landon. Seconded - Tamara Sperber. Vote Approved.

Agenda

- **Bear Wise Presentation and Discussion.**

Notes: Members of the Bear Wise group described the goals for the program - reduce conflicts between humans and bears within Teton Valley; the approach - community led outreach and education; their efforts to date; and future plans - including community meetings, informational tools and implementation of a program based on the existing Bear Smart Community approach developed in Canada. Details of the program are included in the notes provided to the committee from the Bear Wise group (attached).

Discussion focused on how to best educate the community, how to address conflict mitigation, how to access and utilize research and data in planning updates to the Bear (Conflict) Overlay Map and the county bear conflict ordinance. Regarding planning updates to the Bear Overlay Map, there was a suggestion to make the overlay habitat based. To work in this direction will require reviewing research and data about bear (grizzly and black) selection of habitat, conflicts and recommended buffer zones as well as interacting with state/federal agencies such as Idaho Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife and USGS.. This would provide the best opportunity for research-backed map and ordinance updates. The committee and the group have agreed to collaborate on research and data acquisition which will then guide a collaborative effort to create recommendations for updates to the Bear Overlay Map and its associated bear ordinance. A goal was set to have Bear Overlay Map update recommendations by October 2023 to be followed by a Town Hall event.

Action Items:

- Members of both groups will try to access research and data and meet with other agencies as described
- Present and update at next regular meeting of Wildlife Advisory Committee in July

- **Upcoming WHA policy presentation to BoCC June 12.**
Notes: Jeff Klausmann presented a summary statement to the Wildlife Habitat Analysis policy that will be presented on June 12. Brief discussion of the statement occurred. Statement will be included in the meeting packet for the County Commissioners.

- **“Good Neighbor” booklet for Teton County, ID**
Not discussed.

- **Summer/Fall community outreach possibilities**
Not discussed.

- **Other business.**
Mike Lien introduced a discussion about stream layers in the overlay map. He has been in discussion with county GIS specialist (R. Marin) and Planning staff (J. Krueger) regarding ways to incorporate. Some suggestions were to utilize National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) mapped wetlands; to buffer all creeks; or to use draft FEMA 100 year floodplain data. It was felt that the floodplain data would be most useful and straightforward. Mike Lien will draft language for potential edits to the Land Development Code and will submit to County Planner.

Adjourn

Motion: Renee Seidler; Second: Wray Landon. Vote approved.
Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

ATTACHED NOTES FROM BEAR WISE GROUP

Teton County Wildlife Committee, Teton Valley Bear Wise

6/7/2023

Thanks for the opportunity to present some of our thoughts and ideas to reduce future bear conflicts in the Teton Valley. We are a group of long-term Idaho residents with an assortment of technical backgrounds who were concerned with the recent killing of a grizzly bear 1089 and her two cubs near Tetonia last November. With that event in mind, we are looking to try and reduce potential future conflicts between humans and bears within the Teton Valley. The Teton Valley Bear Wise (TVBW) program is being sponsored by the Teton Geo Center Discovery Hub and Museum, a nonprofit 501(c)3.

We want to celebrate the success of the protection of grizzly bears as a threatened species as defined under the Endangered Species Act and the opportunity it created to allow the resident population of grizzly bears to once again thrive in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. We want to help our community understand how to live with and appreciate bears in our shared ecosystem.

Our goal: Avoid and or reduce the future bear conflicts in the Teton Valley and help keep wild bears wild.

Approach:

We feel that it is important to pursue our objectives through a grass roots, community lead effort by taking advantage of existing expertise. Our efforts to date have included the following:

- Sponsored "Bear in Mind" at the Teton Geo Center that brought together Becca Lyons from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and Mikayla Zukowski from People and Carnivores in an open forum discussion with the public to discuss bears in the Teton Valley and ways to reduce potential conflicts.
- Brought Dr. Chris Servheen to Driggs to discuss key aspects of grizzly bear biology, the real dangers that they pose, current and future bear distribution, the importance of conflict management efforts to promote coexistence. The presentation was attended by over 120 residents.
- Initiated distribution of informational materials for short term Rentals.
- Informational section on Bears to be included in the Teton Valley Magazine summer addition.
- Developed an expanding group of community members (32) interested in helping our goal.

Next Steps:

TVBW will continue to its efforts of public outreach and education. This will include the following activities.

Community Meetings: TVBW proposes to conduct additional informational meetings in late summer or fall to help provide informational resources to our community and visitors to help people understand and appreciate the importance of bears in the ecosystem and build tolerance for coexistence with bears. We also hope to gather concerns from the community of perceived impacts of potential management decisions and to help develop strategies to alleviate concerns and address potential impacts.

Informational Tools: TVBW will continue our efforts to provide brochures and pamphlets to both visitors and residents to better inform them on how to reduce potential conflicts and understand the risks associated with bears. This includes working to get information to short term rentals and pursuing the idea of providing information with building permits on clean building sites (especially those in the current bear conflict map).

Grants: TVBW is pursuing several grant opportunities to help establish the Bear Wise program. These grants will help to fund the assessment and management plan, provide support for bear resistant trash cans, electric fencing, bear spray, and informational tools. We will work with local organizations to sponsor specific grants such as RAD curbside for bear resistant trash cans. These grants would limit the potential financial impacts of implementing Bear Wise activities on residents of the valley.

Develop Bear Wise Program

The TVBW proposes to develop a Bear Wise Program in the Teton Valley following the Bear Smart Community approach developed in British Columbia, Canada and has been successfully implemented in several communities around the west. The program must be adapted to our specific location through the following approach.

- *Conduct a bear hazard assessment:* Review the history and pattern of bear conflicts in the community and identify high-use bear habitat, human-use areas and the location and seasonal availability of the human-related non-natural attractants for t bears such as accessible garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders and compost.
- *Prepare a human-bear conflict management plan:* Develop strategies and actions to resolve the hazards identified in the Hazard Assessment thereby reducing the potential for human-bear conflicts.
- *Revise planning and decision-making documents:* Ensure the community's commitment to the Bear Smart Community Program by incorporating Bear Smart practices into official community documents such as solid waste management plans.
- *Implement a continuing education program:* Changing human behavior through education is a key component of human-bear conflict reduction. The community must have an ongoing, consistent education program directed at all sectors of the community (permanent residents, visitors, and transient residents) to reduce the availability of attractants to bears.

Assessment: TVBW has been in contact with several organizations with expertise in reducing human bear conflicts including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, People and Carnivores, Vital Grounds Foundation, and the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation to solicit support. With help from these organizations, we plan to take the next steps in conducting a community assessment. Our near-term focus will be on collecting data on bear interactions and attractant data.

1. Idaho Fish and game sighting and management data.
2. Local Fish and Game warden information
3. Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation Nature mapping data
4. Waste hauler data
5. Report to TVBW web site and Facebook Page
6. Data collected at the Farmer's Market TVBW table

The approach will be to use this data to develop potential spatial distribution of bears within the Teton Valley. We are not set on a specific approach to developing the predictive distribution but will work with our partners to identify the best approach. This effort will provide the foundation for the human-bear conflict management plan and what we see as ultimately providing the basis for revisions to the Teton County Bear ordinance and associated bear overlay (Bear Conflict map).