

From: Koch, Carl H (DFG)
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2023 4:32 PM
To: Jerry Reddick <J.Reddick@skagway.org>
Subject: [External Email] Addressing Skagway Bear Concerns

[ATTENTION: This Email was received from outside the Municipality]

Dear Chief Reddick,

Thank you for staying connected with me about the concerns that Skagway is having with the brown bear sow and cubs. While we continue to discuss strategies, I would like to offer some suggestions which are an important part of any long-term plan to reduce bear-human conflicts. I know from experience that even if a bear needs to be dispatched for safety reasons, very often another will take its place if the underlying issue is not resolved. I offer some suggestions below that will reduce bears ability to obtain food rewards which is the primary reason for most bear-human conflicts in communities. I think they will help borough residents comply with state laws and local ordinances, reduce the amount of time that the police department, and other agencies spend on nuisance bear complaints, and improve public safety. Here are a few thoughts to consider:

1.) **Dumpsters:** There are numerous dumpsters in downtown Skagway that are inadequate for bear country. Most dumpsters in Skagway are not chained down and many of them have plastic lids with no mechanism to keep a bear from opening them. Dumpsters can function well when they have bear resistant lids and are chained or strapped down to a concrete slab in a manner so they cannot be flipped. It is considerably more difficult for a bear to open the lid of a bear resistant dumpsters when the dumpster is secured in a manner that it cannot be tipped over. I recommend upgrading all dumpsters and the areas in which they are stored in manner that prevents a bear from being able to flip them over and fitting them with metal bear resistant lids. This can be accomplished by installing concrete pads with hooks that they can be chained or strapped to and bear resistant lids. A stop gap measure could be the use of electric fencing. Anything that can be done to help businesses and residents succeed would be win-win for the bears, the residents, and the tourists. It is notable that the sow and cubs have not been back in the two nights since Skagway Police ramped up education and enforcement efforts. Perhaps they the dumpsters have been emptied. More frequent emptying is also helpful.
2. **Solid Waste Facilities:** Since there are concerns about the life of the incinerator and a new solid waste area is being developed, I recommend ensuring that any trash that's stored there is secured from bears. One way to accomplish this could be installing a perimeter fence and electrifying it.
3. **Salmon bake:** Based on feedback I received from local residents and our site visit, the brown bear family that you have been dealing with downtown were visiting the salmon bake back in August and obtaining rewards from the unsecure dumpster. Skagway PD offered an ADF&G loaner electric fence and instead of using it to secure the attractant and making improvements to the dumpster situation, they relocated the dumpster closer to town. It is unclear to me if that resolved the issue for the salmon bake but may have been what brought the same bear family into downtown Skagway where there is a much higher density of humans (and many unsecured dumpsters). Anything that can be done to better secure the food and waste before the next tour season is strongly encouraged. It's notable that the brown bear family is not the only bear concern at the salmon bake this season. An employee told me he allowed his dog to bite a black bear which then became treed prior to the arrival of 100 tourists. During our site visit we also

noted a building with sewage pipes that was protected by a poorly installed electric fence that could use improvement. If they can get a better trash storage system, have trash emptied as often as possible, use electric fences or other means to secure all food and waste and control employees pets, this would drastically reduce conflicts at the salmon bake and possibly also reduce issues at nearby residences.

4. **Livestock**: Chickens, ducks, and other livestock and their food are a strong attractant for bears. ADF&G has helped dozens of folks, secure livestock in other communities through our loaner electric fence program. Currently, Defenders of Wildlife has a program to reimburse 50% up to \$500.00 toward the purchase of electric fencing for use as bear deterrents. While they require some maintenance, a properly installed electric fence is an excellent form of “Passive Aversive Conditioning”.
5. **Shed for DYEA dumpsters unsecure**: The shed for the DYEA residents needs to have the door better secured. The handle hardly required a ¼ turn and may even have been unlocked when the sow was able to get inside. Beefing up the lock or adding an electric fence will be important as the shed holds to dumpsters with plastic lids.
6. **Household trash**: It is against state law and local ordinance to leave unsecure trash outside. Some folks claim to be concerned that the bear will break into their house but there has been no evidence of that happening and that concern is not an affirmative defense against negligent feeding of bears. If they are that concerned, then they should purchase a bear resistant trash container or an electric fence and store the trash outside their home.
7. **Evaluate the bear ordinance**: It may be worth examining the ordinance to see if it is meeting the needs of law enforcement for gaining compliance.

I greatly appreciate all the efforts of the Skagway Police and other community members have made to reduce bear-human conflicts. Several residents spoke about forming a bear committee which sounds like a good idea. I am willing to participate as a technical expert if desired.

Thanks for all the time you put into this matter and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or want any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Carl H Koch.

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