



State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

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CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

BOB MARTIN
Commissioner

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

August 1, 2017

Honorable Paul J Smith
Municipal Building
650 Poole Avenue
Union Beach, NJ 07735

Dear Mayor:

Even though bear complaints and sightings are down significantly this year due to management efforts in the form of expanded hunting, New Jersey's black bears are currently searching for food in preparation for the winter, and there may be encounters with residents and nuisance complaints. I am writing to request your assistance in distributing important public-safety information and to let you know how we can help your police officers respond to complaints.

As part of an on-going public-education effort, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) prepared the enclosed one-page flier, "Be a Good Neighbor – Be Bear Aware," to help your residents learn more about living safely near black bears. By outlining simple steps for discouraging nuisance bears in your communities, this public-safety flier can minimize the potential for conflicts between people and bears, and reduce the number of incidents that must be handled by your police department or DEP staff.

I am asking your municipality to help DEP distribute this public-safety flier by duplicating it and enclosing it in your next direct mailing to all residents, and by putting the link to this information on your township website. <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/bearfacts.htm>.

Though the majority of New Jersey's black bears live in the northwestern portion of the state, sightings have been reported throughout the State, so residents in every community can benefit from the safety information in the flier. And folks visiting the many parks, wildlife management areas, and other open spaces in bear country will benefit from knowing how to react to an encounter with a black bear.

The flier reminds residents that feeding bears – intentionally or unintentionally by carelessly leaving out food or garbage – is dangerous both for people and bears. Legislation enacted in 2004 prohibits bear feeding, and it is a significant tool in our efforts to avoid problems between people and bears. We recognize that enforcing this bear-feeding ban may present a considerable challenge to some municipal police departments. However, we also know that feeding black bears has serious consequences; bears that learn to associate people with food are more likely to become a nuisance. Bears that pose a public-safety threat will be euthanized.

Working together, DEP and municipal police departments have been able to respond quickly to residents' complaints about nuisance bears, protecting residents from possible injury and averting property damage. Since November 2000, more than 1,380 local and State law enforcement officers, and State, county and municipal park rangers have completed DEP's Black Bear Response Training Course, taught by our state-certified firearms instructors and bear research/control biologists.

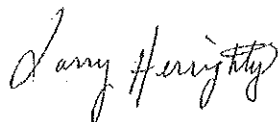
We strongly encourage all sworn law enforcement officers with firearms qualifications certified by the New Jersey Police Training Commission to take this valuable training course. Your police officers will learn how to use conditioning to discourage nuisance bears from interacting with people and to humanely euthanize a bear that presents a serious threat to public safety and property. Officers interested in the training can register by calling Lt. Tom O'Rourke at 609-947-8680, or 609-259-2120.

DEP will continue responding to Category I and some Category II bear complaints in your municipality, including setting traps for bears that break into homes or vehicles, approach people to within 10 feet, kill pets or protected livestock, and some bears in urban areas that are unable to leave the area. Bear complaints that local police are unable to handle should be referred to DEP's Action Hotline at (877) 927-6337. We will prioritize our field responses based upon the level of risk to public safety, the probability of capturing the bear safely, and available DEP personnel. Whenever appropriate, we will advise police already on the scene on how to handle the situation.

After business hours and on weekends, a DEP duty officer will be available through the hotline to provide guidance to responding local officers and to make the decision on whether an on-site response by a DEP person is warranted. Police departments that do not require DEP assistance are asked to report bear-related activity by calling (908) 735-8793 or by faxing a bear incident report form to (908)735-6161.

During the past several years, we have worked closely with municipalities to protect New Jersey's residents and our wildlife, and I greatly appreciate your assistance in continuing this successful partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Herrighty".

Larry Herrighty
Director

Enclosure