

Synopsis of National Research on Effective Bear Management

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In 2005, the New Jersey Fish and Game Council issued a report on "Comprehensive Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) Management Policy". That document defined the New Jersey Fish and Game Council's policies and recommendations regarding the continued management of resident black bears in New Jersey, with a focus on reducing the human conflicts/complaints regarding black bears.

The primary approaches considered were (a) a hunt and (b) a non-violent approach (educating the public about bear's propensity to eat garbage, bear-proofing garbage containers, enforcing ordinances regarding garbage, etc.).

As a life-long researcher, and being aware that this was a controversial issue, I was interested in determining which of these two approaches was likely to be more effective in reducing these conflicts/complaints. Therefore, in 2005 I initiated a search.

I got my data through peer-reviewed literature, as well as that provided by states (mainly from state bear biologists) through the internet and telephone conversations. Data from three national parks, three local communities, five states (including New Jersey) and one Canadian province were studied.

The results demonstrate that at every site in which the hunting approach was evaluated no effect in reducing the human complaints/conflicts was observed (in fact the complaints/conflicts actually increased), while at every site in which the non-violent approach was evaluated, the human complaints/conflicts were markedly reduced.

It is particularly important to note that in the state of New Jersey the number of complaints statistically significantly declined, consistent with using the non-violent approach. My recommendation was that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection consider revision of the proposed policy of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council so as to enhance the non-violent approach to managing New Jersey's black bears, an approach that has already been proven to be successful in New Jersey and elsewhere, and concurrently terminate the hunting option, an approach that has been proven not to be effective.