

Ensuring Public Safety Resources in Los Angeles County to Address Encounters with Black Bears and Other Wildlife

Los Angeles County is home to a diverse population of 10 million residents, many of whom live near the Angeles National Forest and other mountainous regions. Within this wildland urban interface live a rich tapestry of wild animals including black bears, bobcats, mountain lions, elk, deer and more who often explore neighborhoods searching for food sources and resting places. This has resulted in an increase in human-wildlife “conflicts,” where interactions between residents and the natural habitat may result in unsafe or unwanted encounters.

In 2015, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) launched Wildlife Watch, a leadership response program that aims to empower local agencies and residents to address human-wildlife conflicts in their own communities. Modeled after the National Neighborhood Watch program, Wildlife Watch provides communities with support and training to integrate wildlife management plans specific to the needs within their community.

Recently, human-wildlife conflicts have continued to increase. Specifically, the City of Sierra Madre has seen a surge of black bears in their community and adjoining communities, with a few troubling reports of attacks, bites, injuries, and property damage. An April 2023 article by the *Pasadena Star News* provided several instances of such reports. In 2019, for example, a man sleeping in a local community near the Angeles National Forest was attacked by a bear. The next year, it was confirmed through a DNA check that the same bear bit a Sierra Madre woman sleeping in her backyard. Captain Henry Amos of the Sierra Madre Police Department reported to the City Council that in 2022 alone, his staff responded to 130 calls about black bears in residential areas, with 17 of those calls related to bears that had entered homes and

MOTION

SOLIS _____

MITCHELL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

HORVATH _____

caused property damage.

In 2022, CDFW updated its statewide bear policy to describe the Department's response, methods, and decision-making processes in managing human-bear conflicts. In April of 2023, the Sierra Madre City Council adopted Resolution No. 23-12 declaring the mismanagement of local black bear populations a threat to public safety.

CDFW human-wildlife conflict specialists have been supportive and responsive to Sierra Madre and other communities within LA County. These efforts include providing education about wildlife behavior and the protection of the bears and other wildlife that visit local communities. Their efforts to provide support through community educational programs and neighborhood canvassing have contributed to positive public safety outcomes. However, the City of Sierra Madre and its residents are advocating for a more regional response, as current CDFW policies regarding bear management tend to be statewide and not tailored to the unique conditions within the San Gabriel communities. Additionally, there are only a few CDFW wildlife specialists who must cover hundreds of miles of territory. It is critical that the state continue to provide and augment the expertise provided by CDFW staff in order to protect the residents of Sierra Madre and numerous other communities in Los Angeles County that experience both the beauty and the threat of our wildlife neighbors.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office and Intergovernmental Relations Branch to send a five-signature letter to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director, Charlton H. Bonham, to advocate for:

1. Development of a regional approach to human-wildlife encounters that will ensure the public safety of those living in Sierra Madre and its adjacent communities, as well as the safety of the majestic wildlife neighbors living in the region.
2. Augment and enhance staffing of human-wildlife conflict specialists who can respond to calls for service in a timely manner when human-wildlife encounters occur; and
3. Ongoing proactive engagement with communities to provide education and awareness that is tailored to the unique needs of those living in Sierra Madre and other Los Angeles County communities that are impacted by wildlife encounters.

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