

BEaR Meeting – 04/21/09

Attendees: Kevin Nelms, Becky Rosamond, Brad Young, Shauna Ginger, Stephanie Simek, Jerry Belant, Morgan Ihlefeld, Patrick Smith, Chris Winter, Melissa Darden, Meg Cooper, Daniel Sumerall, Shaun Williamson, Glynda Clardy, Kathy Shelton, Sabrina Chandler, Steven Rimer, Jared Laufenberg, Debbie Fuller, Hunter Fordice, Terri Jacobson, Stephanie Hodnett

Meeting was called to order by Kevin Nelms, BEaR President, at 1:11p.m. Kevin read Bo Sloan's resignation from the BEaR presidency and a bear update from Alaska. (The bears are doing well.) Updates on what Bo's up to can be found at Sloansinalaska.blogspot.com. Attendees introduced themselves.

Mississippi Bears Update – Brad Young

- Research Update
 - Concentrations of bear in 2008
 - Anywhere along the Ms river – Davis Island especially has seen an increase in bear activity
 - Also along Enid and Sardis Lakes – several bears
 - In Meridian area – sightings increasing and branching into Bienville National Forest
 - Coastal counties, especially around Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
 - P16 – yearling male – moved into Alabama. Denning in very thick area
 - T20 – Francis Landing Hunting Club – Bolivar County, inside the levee. Captured October 5. 215 lbs Male. Moved back across the river
 - U755 – Male- 220 lbs, in live oak grove, Davis Island
 - V715 – Male – 425 lbs., had been collared or had something on his neck at sometime in his life that had left a mark. Think was a bear previously caught at Lake Ophelia. Had not been pit tagged, ear tagged, or tattooed. Davis Island
 - W23 – Female, Briarfield hunt club, Davis Island, 230 lbs. No cubs. Den in bottom of hollow with palmetto bedding.
 - G470 – Female – Again did not have cubs this year
 - H910 – Lost track of. Don't know if collar malfunctioned. Female.
 - D650 – Hog trap bear – still missing. Collar malfunction?
 - L12 – Horn Lake bear - missing
 - E050 – Collar gave released signal but had not released
 - All other bears accounted for
- Greene county poacher (dumped in Perry county) \$15,000 fine. \$10,000 will go to BEaR. (Once pays all to the courts, then money will be transferred to BEaR. May take several years.) 50 hours of community service, 30 days in jail, 3 years hunting suspended
- Pearl River County on WMA, found 3 sets of bear feet (bones). Came from bears killed in Alaska (legally) and taken to taxidermist.

BBCC Report – Shauna Ginger

- Dave Telesco has left – moved to Florida
- 1500 acres restored in LA
- 200 acres restored in east TX
- Partnering to provide 900 bear-proof garbage cans to community. St. Mary Parish. State Wildlife Grants money.
- Purchased 2 portable hog traps to use where feral hog are causing problems.

- Education and outreach has been cut back – previously about 8,500 people/year, probably cut in half.
- Part of grant with Audubon to do restoration in Atchafalaya Basin

Update on Bears in Neighboring States – Shauna Ginger

- Louisiana - Joe Clark – University of Tennessee. Bayou Teche – will start with bait stations
 - Finished last move for repatriation. Total about 48 females and over 100 cubs. No plans to do any more.
 - 6 – 8 bears thought to be poached this year. No justice yet.
- Arkansas – Myron Means – state coordinator – haven’t heard anything
- Alabama – Daniel – interested in starting a bear festival
- Federal Update
 - Initiated 5-year review last year. Draft will be complete by December
 - Lafayette F.O. some habitat restoration work

Addressing Recovery Criteria for the Louisiana Black Bear – Jared Laufenberg, Univ. of TN

- Projects within state
 - Mark-Recapture at Tensas
 - Estimate abundance and density, survival and population growth rate
 - Tensas, 2 state areas, private lands (41,000 Ha)
 - Use DNA as “mark” rather than physically capturing animal
 - Summers 2006 – 2008
 - Should have data back from genetics lab by end of month.
 - Should be complete by end of summer
 - Repatriation Red River Complex
 - Estimate population parameters at Tensas and use to model population to look at population growth rate, impacts of removals (relocation or harvest), and population viability analysis
 - Red River – mortality, dispersal and recruitment of females
 - Live capture completed in 2008
 - Will continue to monitor females for another year at least
 - Will begin analysis in 2010
 - Dissertation completed 2012
 - Mark-Recapture in Atchafalaya River Basin
 - Similar to Tensas mark-recapture but solely on private land.
 - Collected 2007 – 2009 (summers)
 - Completed two field seasons, working on third.
 - Then send to genetics lab
 - Analysis should be completed in 2009
 - Final results should be available in 2010
- Criteria for delisting
 - Two viable subpopulations
 - Coastal and upper Atchafalaya constitute 1 subpopulation
 - Need more years of data on Tensas to determine if population is viable, no data collected for viability assessment in coast/upper Atchafalaya population
 - Proposed to continue genetic sampling through 2011
 - Immigration and emigration corridors between subpopulations

- Currently looking to see if there was historical connectivity between subpopulations through genetics.
 - Propose GPS collar study to identify likely corridors.
 - Long-term protection of habitat and corridors
 - Habitat supporting extant subpopulations identified in Critical Habitat designation
- DNA-based population study of Am. Black bear at White River NWR
 - Samples 2004 – 2007 sent to lab
 - Sampled across southern portion of refuge
 - Data analysis currently being conducted – Joe Clark, U of TN
 - Samples collected in 2008 but not sent out to genetics yet.

Update on Critical Habitat Designation for Louisiana Black Bear – Debbie Fuller, USFWS

- Started designating in 1993. But not completed due to moratorium and backlog due to moratorium.
- Even without critical habitat designated, LA and MS were creating and protecting a lot of bear habitat.
- Sued in 2005. Had to designate habitat. Started over with designation. May 2008 made proposal. Became final April 2009
- Designation tied into recovery plan
- Designated 1.2 million acres. Reduction of what was proposed in 1993. But have much better data and GIS capability than in 1993. Used coordinates rather than just natural features.
- Normal forest mgmt activities exempt.
- Economic analysis – only significant impact of critical habitat designation is for oil and gas activities – not significant adverse effect. Only affects federal agencies.
- Entirely within LA. WRP lands are more protected than Critical Habitat Designation and CHD has negative connotation, so WRP lands are excluded (50,000 acres in permanent easements).
- Designation within Mississippi – left out because focused on reproducing populations
- Critical Habitat is lands essential for population to survive, based on population at time of listing.
- Recovery plan due for revision.

Mississippi Black Bear Study: What we have and where we are going – Stephanie Simek, MS State

- From VA Tech originally, with Dr. Vaughn captive bear research
- Shenandoah national park – first wild bear work impacts of gypsy moth defoliation on bears
- Adirondacks and looked at how bears used landscapes. Bears really liked mosaics of landscape.
- Washington State – first genetics work with hair snares in lower 48 states. Mostly looking to determine population size
- Florida – assistant program coordinator then program coordinator for black bear program
 - Focused a lot on human interactions
 - State protected
 - Developed community based programs
- Mississippi
 - Why study bears now
 - Many people don't even realize bears are here

- Bears are hanging on by themselves, but we can be proactive and determine how to handle bears before they become a negative issue.
- Natural colonization of American black bear in Mississippi – proposed research project (Stephanie’s dissertation)
 - Focus areas
 - Habitat use
 - Movements
 - Pathways
 - Barriers
 - Radio collar as many as possible
 - Opportunistic and Systematic
 - As many gps collars as possible
 - Try to fly every 2 weeks
 - Will be state-wide
 - Will add leather links to collar so collar will release after a time
 - Bait starting in May
 - Objectives
 - Refine potential habitat use –
 - Jake Bowman’s work
 - Incorporate CRP and similar lands
 - Impacts of anthropogenic factors
 - Evaluate movement: Constraints and contributors
 - Home ranges
 - All age classes
 - Male movements in relation to females (competition may be more for mates than food)
 - Hair snares as well as collars
 - Evaluate models for dispersal and colonization
 - Delineate corridors using identified constraints and contributors
 - Predict spatial trajectory
 - Model rate for moving across landscape
 - Where will they move and how quickly
 - Impact of human development
 - Current efforts
 - Refine proposal
 - Database design
 - Allow access to other state biologists
 - Capturing
 - Monitoring
 - Time frame 2011/2012 to be completed
 - Stephanie can be reached at ssimek@cfr.msstate.edu with questions or comments.

Administrative

- Approval of previous minutes and membership report – Becky Rosamond
 - Copies of minutes sent out via email
 - Prior to meeting, had 2 paid members. 7 members paid today
 - Kathy moved, Meg seconded, approved.

- Financial report – Stephanie Hodnett
 - Income mostly dues, print sales and calendars
 - Expenditures mostly related to Entergy grant
 - Balance about \$8,200

Project Progress

- Black Bear SAFE CRP – Kevin Nelms
 - Currently have about 290 acres in Holmes county; 90 acres enrolled in Coahoma Co w/53 ac. Approved; 60 acres in Washington county with 150 acres showing interest
 - Brad and Daniel wrote article for Wildlife Issues
 - Kevin and Daniel wrote article for Wildlife MS
 - Daniel wrote article for TNC
 - News getting out, just a little slow getting going (several folks interested that aren't in black bear area.)
 - Over winter, FSA added extra money and incentive to the whole field practice cp-31, so more folks going into this rather than SAFE (still bear habitat, but slightly different practices.)
- Entergy Grant – Becky Rosamond
 - To date have approximately \$2,200 left of the original \$15,000
 - Breakdown (approx.):

GPS collars	\$6,300
Flight fuel	2,000
Education materials (tent, booth, tablecloths, graphics)	4,500
 - Need to get skull replica, etc.
 - Wanted to do new Entergy grant – but Entergy changed grant requirements this year – don't want anything that small. So for 2010 need to pull together proposal that includes research needs as well as education.
 - Investigated Wildlife Challenge Grant, but would require a 50% match and they would hold our matching funds. Decided not to apply.
- Aerial Telemetry Project – Brad Young
 - Will get about \$2,100 once skull/print/scat purchased

Great Delta Bear Affair 2008 Update – Meg Cooper and Melissa Darden

- Youth education day Friday before festival (500 fourth graders)
- About 6,000 people during the day.
- Showed slides from event
- Next year, October 23 and 24th.

Old Business – Action items from previous BEaR meeting

- Bear Mount – Kevin – Still action item
- Website – Shauna – turn in if not done yet.
- Education Products – Becky/Terri/Jane – waiting for money
- Logos – Kevin – no progress at this point

New Business – Kevin Nelms

- Election of new Vice-President
 - Propose Kevin to serve one more year as president, Sabrina Chandler to act as vice-president then become president beginning January 2010.
 - Approved by all present.

- GDBA 2009
 - Tommy Shropshire and Meg Cooper submitted project proposal in February
 - Becky motioned to accept proposal as written, Shaun seconded. Approved.
- Administration Project
 - Meg moved to accept administration project, Melissa seconded. Approved.
- Action items
 - Calendar project – contest of trail cam pictures, **Kevin** and **Meg** to follow up with **Cathy** and **Connie, Shauna** to check with website regarding entering or voting on-line, **Terri** will assist also. Terri suggests future calendar of kids with teddy bears. Another idea would be a calendar with kids' drawings of bears.
 - Bear license plates – Dr. Belant asked about – in order to do a specialty plate, need to have 200 pre-sold.
 - Stickers with bear logo – Kevin checked on them. 50 about \$3 each (vinyl inside or outside window sticker). Buy in large quantities (500) and drops to much less. **Kevin** will follow up with **Sabrina** on pursuing this
 - Stephanie suggested temporary tattoos as handouts for kids. Meg said have a GDBA tattoo that doesn't cost much to make.
 - Shauna asked about Rex's film. If completed should show film at next meeting or next GDBA. Needs to be followed up.
 - Bear Mount – **Kevin**
 - Website – **Shauna**
 - Logos – **Kevin/Becky**

Concluding Remarks – Kevin Nelms

- Location for next meeting: Jackson, Museum Natural Sciences
- Date: Wed. Sept. 30
- Board meeting prior to general meeting

Meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.