

BEaR Meeting – 4/29/08

Attendees: Kevin Nelms, Bo Sloan, Becky Rosamond, Ray Aycock, Shauna Ginger, Sabrina Chandler, Jim Monk, Paul Davidson, D.L. Wesley, Brad Young, Richard Rummel, Shaun Williamson, Daniel Sumerall, Glynda Clardy, Cathy Shropshire, Steve Melton, Darren Miller, Stephanie Allison, Stan Yeagley, Gil Ray, Robbie Fisher, Calvin Lunceford, Kathy Shelton

Meeting was called to order by Kevin Nelms, BEaR President, at 1:06 p.m.

Mississippi Bears – Brad Young

- Still doing a lot of educational activities
- 2008 bear sightings/den checks
 - F920 – Hunter Fordice’s bear – had 2 cubs on WRP tract in spring ‘07. Numerous sightings, got into one bee hive. Collar malfunctioned and released in early April. Had a range of about 40 square miles with the cubs.
 - D21/G470 – Wilkinson Co. Female. Last 3 winters has denned in the same general areas. Re-collared this year with a 3-year GPS collar. No cubs this year.
 - C610 – large Yazoo NWR male – Collar is dead, but bear is still wearing collar.
 - H910 – Yazoo NWR, did walking tour of Delta last year. Stayed on Delta N.F. since re-collared last summer. No cubs this spring. Denned near Holly Bluff.
 - D650 – initially caught in hog trap in ‘05 – damaged teeth. 420 lbs last year. Danted and replaced collar this spring, appears healthy. Antenna on old collar gone, so couldn’t get GPS readings. Very little information downloaded (40 points during the last year.)
 - E050 - Caught in Anguilla following female. Right ear gone – tag missing. Have not flown area yet to locate. Denned on north end of Delta N.F. Will try to catch and replace collar this summer.
 - I789 – Caught on Davis Island, Diamond Point Hunting Club. GPS collar. Has been displaced by water, moved back to Tensas NWR. Young male, approximately 250 lbs
 - J320 – Female denned on Texas Lake last year. Swam across and now on Delta N.F., south of the Dummy Line Road. (Originally from Felsenthal.) Had one female cub. Den currently surrounded by 5+ feet of water. Female has been climbing up and down tree to take care of cub and to forage.
 - 417 – Denned on island in Lake Washington. Female. Will try to replace collar this summer. Has yearling female with her.
 - 411 – Originally on Ashbrook Island, displaced by water, last seen in Bolivar County near base of mainline levee. Has 2 cubs with her.
- Southeastern/eastern Mississippi bear sightings have greatly increased particularly Clark, Kemper, Perry, Forrest Counties, along AL line, DeSoto N.F., Red Creek area.

- Will be expanding efforts to that area to trap/collar bears. Also will expand to the Nachez area.
- MSU Black Bear Research
 - Dr. Jerry Belant – starts 7/15/08 – extensive bear experience and research
 - Will be conducting research for the State
 - Proposed research calls for collaring 10 additional bears throughout state
 - Estimate resource use
 - Estimate home range and movements
 - Validate and refine existing model
 - Funded through State Aid to Wildlife money

BBC Report – Paul Davidson

- Repatriation – this year moved 7 bears, 12 cubs from Tensas to Red River. Two abandoned.
- Compiled all data from last 20 years for USFWS review. Since 1988, 460 bears have been identified. Overall average 2.5 cubs /litter, with 80% survival of cubs.
- Several grants, one approx. \$240K for being Bear Aware for coast of LA, bear trash cans, staff person. (150K for garbage cans)
- Paul applying for USDA SARE grant to fund electric fencing for beehives and outreach to bee keepers.
- BEaR could possibly partner with BBC to put together SARE grant
- Bayou Teche bear festival. This past week (Paul organized.)
- Working to get Coastal Impact Assistance money for land acquisition to try to increase land base for Bayou Teche NWR which is currently very fragmented. Also, would like to see Bayou Teche staffed.

Update on Bears in Neighboring States – Shauna Ginger

- Reported poachings in Mississippi
 - Bolivar County (per Brad) – a dead bear was found dead near a gut pit at a hunting club. Initial report was shot in the head. However, blood came from bear's nose. Was not shot (no trauma to head, no sign of shot in body, no poisons detected). Could not find cause of death. Carcass too decayed to be able to analyze further.
 - Sharkey County (per Brad) – outside of Rolling Fork, found skull with hide still attached. Bullet hole in back of skull. Apparently, bear killed in Danbury, WV in 1980's, kept in freezer with intent to make a rug, eventually, freezer cleaned and pelt/skull just dumped on turn row. (Thrown out in August, found in Nov/Dec.)
 - SE MS (per Shauna) – alleged illegal take hopefully will result in the prosecution of two folks in federal court. Sounds like will be a strong case. Four witnesses have testified, indictment pending. BEaR had agreed to put up reward money for tips, but not needed (they can use Lacey Act money)
- Federal – Debbie Fuller – Critical habitat should be released any day now.
- Arkansas
 - State-wide record kill – 400, mostly Ozarks and Ouchitas

- Still monitoring bears at White River (Dr. Clark, UTenn)
- Monitoring Felsenthal – 3 of 4 bears that could, did have cubs
- No plans to move bears this year.
- Louisiana
 - Red Creek area repatriation – 43 bears and 94 cubs over 8 years
 - Atchafalaya (2nd year) and Tensas River Basin (3rd year) hair study – will be analyzing data to look at impacts of repatriation. Hope to expand and do one on coast as well.

Mississippi Black Bear SAFE – Daniel Sumerall

- Program where individual states could build own CRP program to target specific species.
- Mississippi received 7,950 acres for Bear habitat CRP, targeting north and south Delta and batture land. (Proposal put together by BEaR and TNC.)
- Project area covers 2.2 million acres. (Funded with \$9.9 million.)
- CRP practices,
 - wetland restoration (semi-permanent – at least 3 feet deep, 9 – 12 months of year)
 - bottomland hardwood trees and shrubs (CP38-C), planted on 10 x 10 spacing (436 trees/acre) up to 5% must be soft mast or shrubs and vines
 - Must use at least 3 species
 - No more than 60% hard mast
 - Cypress/water tupelo and/or overcup must be included where appropriate
- \$100 sign-up bonus and rental payment per acre, depending on habitat
- Our role
 - Monitoring (Brad’s work)
 - Press detailing program
- FSA training for administering program is beginning
- Sign-up should begin as soon as new Farm Bill in place

Other SAFE projects – Steve Melton

- Different than typical CRP – can’t just plant and walk away
- 15 year contracts
- Rental rates based on soil types
- Current cap on Farm Bill at 39 million acres, currently at 34 million. Talk of reducing cap to 32 million to save money. Hopefully would still allow wiggle room with SAFE. Should know by end of week.
- Black Belt Prairie SAFE
 - Training next week in Aberdeen for FSA
- Bobwhite Quail SAFE
 - Training next week in Rolling Fork and Marks for FSA

Administrative

- Approval of previous minutes and membership report (by end of meeting, had total of 19 members) – Becky Rosamond
 - Paul made motion, Jim seconded. Approved.

- Financial Report – Kevin Nelms
 - Account balance at end of year: \$18,375.54
 - Up from \$1005.61 at the beginning of the year.

Project Progress

- Website – Shauna Ginger
 - Shauna can update website
 - Has been putting news items up
 - Send articles to Shauna
 - Calendar of events, minutes and annual report will be on website, bear sighting can be reported there
 - Have sold prints and calendars, can pay dues there
 - Need to delegate writing sections to folks
 - Kevin – History
 - Terri – Education
 - Brad – Research
 - Kevin – Landowner Assistance
 - Brad – Bears in Mississippi
 - Bo and Brad – Beekeeping and Conflict Management
- Entergy Grant – Becky Rosamond
 - Received Entergy grant for \$15,000 for education and research
 - Paid Charlie \$2,000 for flight time
 - Spent about \$1,500 on education booth
 - Entertaining suggestions for additional projects that fall under education or research.
 - Bear mount – need new one (check with folks in Safari Clubs) – Cathy has contact
 - Collars (\$650 for refurbishment, \$3,000 for new) – Brad will put together request and send to Kevin
- Bear booth – Kevin Nelms
 - Know what we're getting, have artwork done (**Thank you, Natalie!!**), just need to order.
 - Getting a 3 fold tabletop with header with name and logo, 2 tablecloths with logo and tent with logo.
- Bear Crossing Highway Signs – Stephanie Allison, Sabrina Chandler
 - Got assistant state traffic engineer involved – they were interested and excited to help.
 - Within 1 week, had 50 signs (3' x 3') available. Signs posted in Delta N.F. as well as other locations.
 - Got good publicity as a result of the signs (state and local papers as well as USA Today)
 - Additionally, MDOT printed identical, smaller (2' x 2') signs for educational purposes.
- GDBA Project Update 2007 – Bo Sloan
 - BEaR's single biggest project
 - Been doing since 2002

- 400 school children at education day on Friday (run by Sharkey Co. Soil and Water Conservation)
- Trail ride the week prior on Delta N.F.
- Friday night had \$25/ticket social – Billy Joe Cross wild game cooking
- Saturday – 7,000 attendees, 60 vendors, bike ride, run, entertainment, fireworks, Wildlife Olympics (high school students – teams of 5, academic competition, archery, obstacle course, had 7 teams)
- This year’s event - Oct. 25, 150th birthday of Teddy Roosevelt
 - “Bearing it all for 150 years—The Legend and the Legacy”
- Calendar
 - Project completed in 2007
 - Still have some left

Old Business – Action items from previous meetings

- Sabrina – signs, done (see above)

New Business

- GDBA 2008
 - GDBA asking to use \$12,094.42 left from last year as seed money
 - Will be looking closely at costs and attempt to cut costs where possible
 - Paul moved to accept as project, Darren seconded, approved
- Administration Project
 - \$220 web hosting
 - \$75 P.O.
 - \$50 charity tax filing
 - \$75 misc (postage, etc.)
 - \$150 for booth rental
 - Shaun motioned, second by Bo, approved
- Election of new Directors (3 year, staggered terms)
 - Expiring Terms: Jim Monk, Melissa Darden, Meg Cooper, Tom Rosenblatt
 - Proposed Replacements: Stacey Shankle (TNC), Hunter Fordice (Landowner), Renew terms: Melissa Darden, Meg Cooper
 - Darren motioned, Shauna seconded, approved.
- Annual Report
 - Have 2 weeks to make changes/addendums/subtractions
 - Send any changes to Kevin by May 13th, after which report will be final
- Others
 - GDBA requesting BEaR to handle gun raffle. Don’t know exactly how much was made on raffle (estimate \$400 – 600).
 - Discussion regarding willingness to sell tickets, what type of gun, state law regarding raffling shotgun
 - Overall, membership supportive
 - Paul motions that Kevin look into raffling another gun, Bo seconds and offers to help.
 - Shauna – with all the sightings increasing in South Mississippi, we need to do something in that area. Kevin mentioned that Board has been given that direction.

- Kevin – from board meeting, we have gotten a lot of requests for information re: bears. Action item from board meeting to try to find someone to develop professional education products on bears
 - Paul suggests checking with Zoos (AZA) (Cathy may have contact)
- D.L. Wesley – Bee Keepers Association
 - May 16 – 17, seminar at Ag Museum in Jackson (June in Hattiesburg, later at State)
 - MS 27th in nation in honey production
 - MS 1st in nation in honey production/hive (90 lbs/hive)
 - Africanized bees 40 – 50 miles west of MS/LA state line
 - Since they arrived in 90's, have only been 17 deaths. (Not high compared to death by other causes.)
 - Educational materials released to public in fall.
 - Do not know of any in MS yet.
 - Every person injured by Africanized bees knew hive was there and was trying to move or use weedeater/lawn mower near hive. Contact expert if find a swarm.
 - Cannot easily distinguish between Africanized and European honeybees – requires lab test
 - Small hive beetles – biggest current threat to hive. Lays 25 – 30 eggs, for every single bee egg.

Action Items

- **Kevin** follow up with Cathy regarding contact with Safari Club for bear mount
- **Kevin** order bear booth
- **Brad** – request for collars to Kevin
- Website assignments – complete and send to Shauna:
 - **Kevin** – History
 - **Terri** – Education
 - **Brad** – Research
 - **Kevin** – Landowner Assistance
 - **Brad** – Bears in Mississippi
 - **Bo** and **Brad** – Beekeeping and Conflict Management
- **Kevin** contact Paul re: SARE Grant
- **Kevin** and **Bo** – look into raffling gun at GDBA
- **Kevin** – provide elementary curriculum guidelines to Becky
- **Becky** – look into contracting for development of educational materials for teachers
- **All members** – review Annual report and give Kevin any changes by 5/13/08

Concluding Remarks

- Location for next meeting: Starkville (Bo motioned, Shaun seconded, approved)
- Date: ten. Oct. 7. Kevin will check to make sure doesn't conflict with TWS meeting and that State can host.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.