



Annual Report

2010

Partners:

Northwest Connections (NWC)
Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC)
Swan Valley Bear Ranger (Ranger)

In cooperation with:

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

Table of Contents

Purpose of Report	2
Introduction	2
Resources	
<i>Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Loaner Program</i>	3
<i>Map of distribution of loaner containers/dumpsters by property</i>	4
<i>Property Consultation</i>	
<i>Fencing Projects</i>	5
<i>Conflict Response</i>	5
<i>Outreach and Events</i>	
<i>Swan Valley Bear News</i>	7
<i>Spring Bear Wake Up Social</i>	7
<i>Swan Valley Bear Fair</i>	8
<i>Research and Monitoring</i>	11
<i>Map of Swan Valley 2010 community bear observations</i>	13
<i>Map of Swan Valley 2010 reported human-bear conflicts</i>	14
Bear Ranger	15
Future Goals	16
Appendix I: SVBR Brochure	18

Purpose of Report

Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) is a multi-party cooperative group comprised of members of Northwest Connections, Swan Ecosystem Center and the Swan Valley Bear Ranger. The purpose of this report to provide a basis to document, summarize and evaluate outreach and education implemented each year within the Swan Valley. This document will serve as a basis for comparison between years of operation for the working group and aid in monitoring progress toward the group’s mission to promote coexistence between people and bears within the Swan Valley. The report also summarizes accomplishments, efforts, and goals of Swan Valley Bear Resources for the supporting partners of the working group. Finally, the report may act as a summary for parties interested and/or unfamiliar with the Swan Valley, Swan Valley Bear Resources, or other watershed-based collaborative conservation efforts.

The following report covers the broad framework for each “resource” SVBR facilitates for 2010 including the Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Loaner Program, property consultations, outreach and events, research and monitoring, and Swan Valley Bear Ranger.

Introduction

The mission of Swan Valley Bear Resources is to offer community resources to promote



*A sow grizzly bear and cubs appear along a small pond the Swan Valley.
Photo: Patti Sowka*

coexistence between people and bears. SVBR is a working group formed by a collaborative effort between local non-profit conservation organizations and community members who have partnered with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP). U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and other natural resource entities, to pool resources, experience and expertise, to address bear conflicts on private property in the Swan Valley.

SVBR is entering the third year of existence. Goals and strategies continue to be re-evaluated so the group may continue to use local knowledge and cooperation to create place-based solutions that diminish human-bear conflicts. SVBR accomplished the 2010 program goals of creating a conflict/observation database, creating a color brochure and distributing nearly all of the bear-resistant garbage containers within the Swan Valley. Continued work occurred on fencing projects for private landowners and creating an alert network for neighborhoods to report human-bear conflict. This report documents efforts and accomplishments in 2010 and future goals for SVBR in 2011.

Resources

Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Loaner Program

Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) administers a Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Loaner Program within the Swan Valley. The program allows community members to check out 64 and 95 gallon bear-resistant garbage containers for free and on an indefinite basis. Loaner containers for the program are purchased with grant dollars. Community members may purchase the containers at anytime and program donations are used to purchase additional containers for loan in the community.



Unbearable bear-resistant garbage container with the lid pried apart by bear and contents emptied. Photo: Adam Lieberg.

In 2010, 46 containers were checked-out by community members bringing the number of loaner containers in the community to a total of 136. Two models of container are available for loan: Unbearable and Bearsaver. Three Unbearable containers were damaged as bears attempted to gain access to the contents. On one of the three occasions, the bear was able to gain a food reward by prying and bending the metal along the lid and emptying the contents. The damaged Unbearable containers were replaced with Bearsaver models. SVBR currently has 7 bear-resistant garbage containers available for loan. The yearly distribution of these containers in the loaner program is shown over the past 5 years in Figure 1.

Bear-resistant dumpsters were purchased and placed at local businesses and in several neighborhoods in 2007. In 2010, SVBR moved two existing dumpsters from locations where they were underused to a new location. Container and dumpster locations are documented with the owner's permission. These locations are mapped by property to examine the distribution of bear-resistant garbage containers throughout the valley in Map 1.

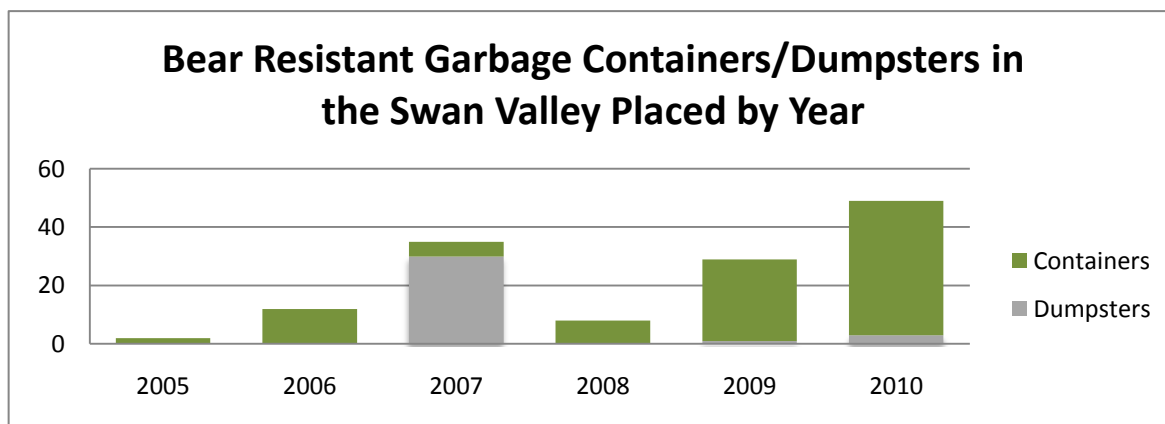
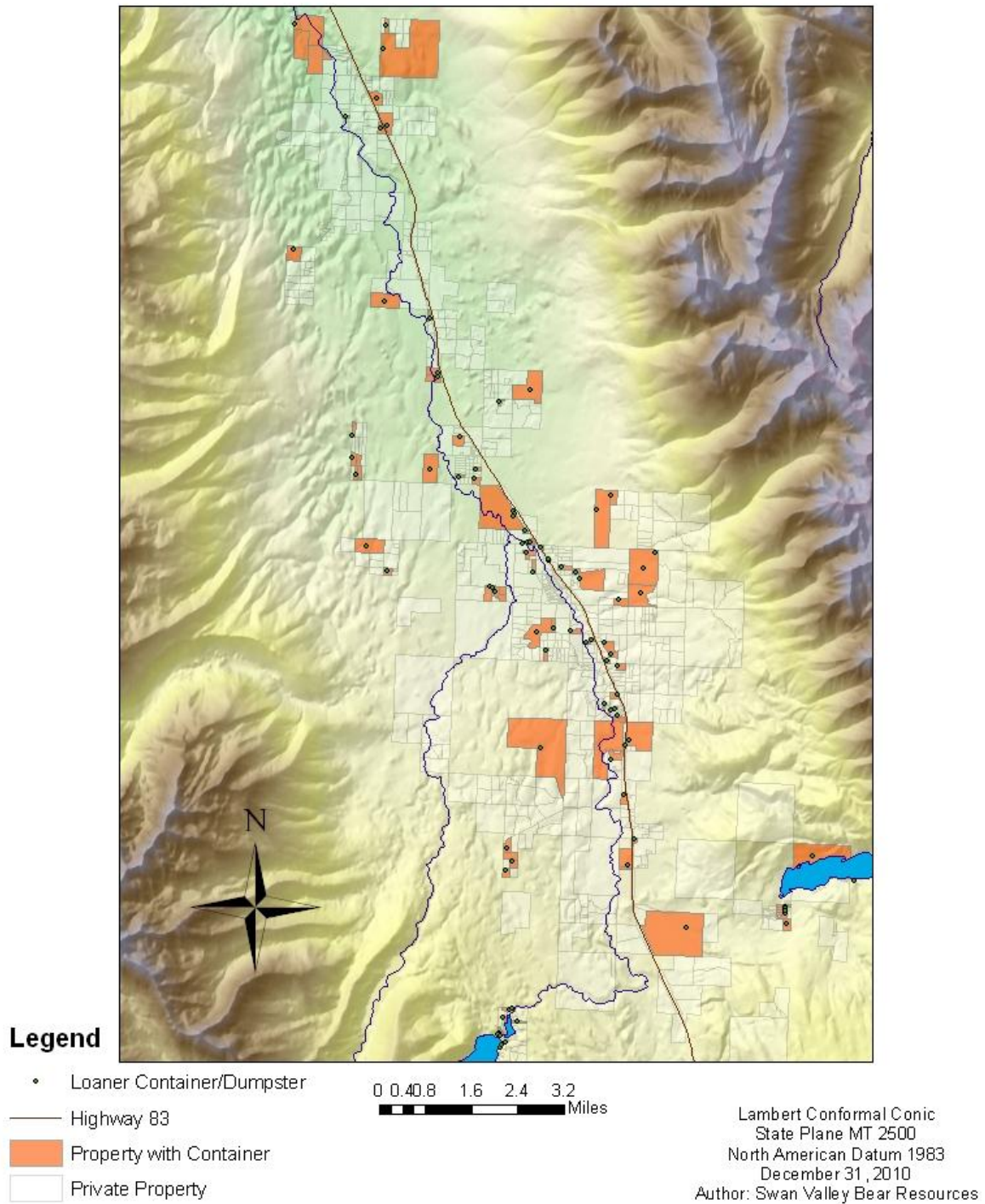


Figure 1: Yearly distribution of bear-resistant garbage containers/dumpsters placed within the Swan Valley as a result of the loaner program.

Distribution of Loaner Containers/Dumpsters by Property in Upper Swan Valley, MT



Map 1: Bear-resistant container/dumpster locations and properties in upper Swan Valley.

Property Consultations

The category of “bear attractants” covers a large spectrum including bird feeders, garbage, gardens, livestock, orchards, pet foods, etc. Depending on their rural livelihood, residents of the Swan Valley may have distinct challenges for securing and removing bear attractants around their properties. SVBR offers consultations with interested Swan Valley residents to cooperatively generate site-specific solutions for securing bear attractants on their individual properties.

In 2010, SVBR provided a number of property consultations. Many consultations resulted from informal conversations with landowners upon delivery of a bear-resistant garbage container. Outside of these conversations, SVBR personnel visited with 8 landowners during 2010 about securing the attractants on their property. Of these conversations, 5 were a result of a minor bear conflict that had occurred.

Fencing

As an extension of these property consultations, SVBR has assisted local landowners with technical specification, purchase of materials, and hands-on construction of electric fences in the Swan Valley. Cost-share fencing projects are done opportunistically with interested landowners as needs arise. SVBR provided technical expertise, materials, and labor to one fencing project around a large garden on the Lamar property. A faulty energizer was replaced for the Burden project which the landowner had completed in 2009. The information for these projects is summarized in Table 1.

Property Owner	Contribution (Materials and Labor)	Acreage	Description
Lamar	\$388	0.5	Technical consultation provided for fencing design and partial materials and labor donated.
Burden	FY09 \$93 + FY10 \$100 = \$193	.06	Project began in FY2009 and finished in spring FY2010. Included consultation and partial materials.

Table 1: Summary of cost-share fencing projects on private property in the Swan Valley for 2010.

Conflict Response

In cooperation with agency bear-conflict managers, SVBR provided response to minor bear conflicts within the Swan Valley, and assisted in responding to a number of more serious conflicts on private property. Response typically included providing bear-resistant garbage containers, strategizing with the landowners on solutions to prevent further human-bear conflict, and in some cases aiding in clean-up of remaining bear attractants. Frequently, when a conflict is reported, a trained SVBR staffer can respond more quickly than an agency personnel can travel from Kalispell. This approach has a number of benefits. First, SVBR staffers are local and therefore more connected to the community lending familiarity to the residence at which the conflict occurred. Second,

local community members seem to appreciate quick response to their calls. Third, trained SVBR cooperate with agency bear managers and can assess the conflict accurately and relay site specific information to bear managers to better prepare them for their response or in some cases deal with a minor conflict and save busy bear managers a trip altogether. Conflict response was coordinated with FWP bear management specialists in all cases.

Proactive response work was also completed by SVBR in 2010. A large carcass dump was cleaned up within the Condon community. The site at one time was used by the local highway crew to relocate roadkill carcasses from alongside the highway. While this action no longer takes place, the site has remained a popular place for people to dump carcasses and garbage. SVBR and a volunteer removed carcasses and garbage, and then coordinated with USFS law enforcement to post and patrol the site for illegal dumping.



Bags of bones and garbage cleaned up from a carcass dump filling the bed of a pickup in Condon. Photo: Mark Ruby

Outreach and Events

SVBR sponsors a number of outreach efforts and events to bring awareness of our mission of reduce human/bear conflicts in the Swan Valley. SVBR sponsors the Bear News, a bi-annual community newsletter that highlights current events relating to bears. SVBR is proud to host two community events each year, the Spring Bear Wake-Up Social and the Swan Valley Bear Fair. These events provide a forum for experts in bear research, management, and conservation fields to share their findings with our community.

An informational brochure was created in 2010 that outlined what services and resources SVBR offers within the community (Appendix I). The brochure also contained contact information for SEC and the Swan Valley Bear Ranger. The brochure was made available for interested residents at community events such as the Spring Bear Wake-Up Social, 4th of July celebration, and Swan Valley Bear Fair. The brochure was also given to residents that checked out a bear-resistant garbage container. Additional brochures are available at the Swan Ecosystem Center.

Swan Valley Bear News

The Swan Valley Bear News is a bi-annual publication produced by SVBR each spring and fall that contains articles written by biologists, local community members, students, and Swan Valley Bear Resources staff. The publication furnishes local, state, and regional bear information and is mailed to community members throughout the Swan Valley area, other regional agencies and seasonal home owners. A total of 1300 copies of the newsletter were produced for each spring and fall issue in 2010. The newsletter has a current distribution list of 1247. The publication was paid for by FWS in 2010. The Swan Valley Bear News has been published since 2005. Archived copies of all issues of Swan Valley Bear News can be found on SEC's Web site:

<http://www.swanecosystemcenter.org/documents/news&events/newsletters/bearnewsltrs/>

Articles in 2010 included:

Spring:

Spring Brings Challenges for both Bears and People by *Jessie Kissner*

Bears Delay for Better Results by *Mark Ruby*

Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Inventory by *Betsy Spettigue*

FWP Collaborates to Learn More about Urban Bears by *Dianne Tipton FWP (press release)*

Lessons Learned from Little Leonard by *Adam Lieberg*

Fall:

People and Bears Prize Montana's Huckleberries by *Mark Ruby*

Swan Valley Bear-Resistant Containers: Tips & Tricks by *Mark Ruby*

Funds Needed for More Bear-Resistant Garbage Containers by *Betsy Spettigue*

Montana Highway 83 Claims Two Black Bears One Grizzly by *Adam Lieberg*

Spring Bear Wake-up Social

The 3rd annual Spring Bear Wake-up Social was held at the Condon Community Hall from 5pm-8pm on April 22nd, 2010. Guest speakers included Jeff Stetz from the US Geological Survey (USGS) and Tim Manley from FWP. Both presenters gave PowerPoint presentations. A total of 75 people enjoyed appetizers and beverages, provided by Swan Valley Café. Associated costs of the event for 2009 and 2010 are summarized in Table 2.

Event Schedule: Doors Open at 5PM and socializing with snacks begin.

6:00 - 6:15pm - Swan Valley Bear Resources presentation – Adam Lieberg and Mark Ruby

6:15 - 6:30pm - Jamie Jonkel (FWP) talks about bear management in Seeley Lake

6:30 - 7:00pm - Jeff Stetz "Using Noninvasive Methods to Monitor Grizzly Bear Population Status"

7:00 - 8:00pm - Tim Manley "Grizzly Bear Management in the Swan Valley"



Jeff Stetz (USGS) presents to the audience in at the Swan Valley Community Center. Photo: Erika Edgely



Tim Manley presents as Jeff Stetz (back right) and Jamie Jonkel (back center) look on from the audience. Photo: Erika Edgely

Spring Bear Wake-Up Social 2009	
Hall Rental	\$30.00
Publicity	\$119.75
Swan Valley Cafe	\$1150.00
Total	\$1299.75
Spring Bear Wake-Up Social 2010	
Hall Rental	\$30.00
Publicity	\$83.10
Swan Valley Cafe	\$1200.00
Telephone	\$7.10
Total	\$1320.20
2010 Volunteer Time (not included in cost)	56 hours

Table 2: Summary of costs associated with Spring Bear Wake-Up Social for 2009 and 2010.

Swan Valley Bear Fair

The 3rd annual Swan Valley Bear Fair was held on August 7th from 11am-3pm at the Hungry Bear Steak House. As a change from the previous years, table presenters at the event were divided and placed into 3 categories: Living in Bear Country, Hiking and Recreating in Bear Country, and Conservation of Bear Country.

To improve marketing for the Swan Valley Bear Fair and to gauge attendance for the event, Bear Fair attendees were asked to complete a short optional survey documented how they heard of the event and where they lived. This information was compiled and compared to 2009 attendance (Figures 2, 3 & 4). An estimated 350 people attended the 2010 Bear Fair. Summary of the table presenters and event schedule is below. Costs associated for the 2009 and 2010 Bear Fair are summarized in Table 3.



Families enjoy the shade during the Swan Valley Bear Fair.
Photos: Erika Edgely



Chuck Bartlebaugh from the Center for Wildlife Information presents on how to use bear pepper spray. Photo: Erika Edgely



Interested folks visit about bears at the Living with Wildlife Foundation table. Photo: Erika Edgely



Erik Peterson from Glacier National Park discusses proper etiquette for camping and hiking in bear country. Photo: Erika Edgely

Food and Drink: Coupons were handed out at the Welcome Table for one free beverage and a bratwurst picnic lunch. Dessert was available for purchase at the Bake Sale table.

Event schedule:

- 5:00 pm - Tents setup (evening before)
- 8:00 am - Begin setup
- 11:00 am - Event kick-off
- 11:30 am - Jamie Jonkel presentation – Bear Management in Seeley and Blackfoot Valley
- 12:00 pm - Beverage and bratwurst picnic lunch is served.
- 12:15 pm - Bear spray demonstration by Chuck Bartlebaugh for people in the lunch line
- 1:30 pm - Tim Manley presentation – Swan Valley Grizzly Bear Management
- 2:30 pm - Announcements and raffle drawing
- 3:00 pm - Cleanup

Other Activities: Kids Table, Bean Bag Toss, Bake Sale, Slushi Machine, Raffle Prize Table

Raffle Prizes: Bear Research Day in Field with Bear Ranger, Bear-Resistant (64 gallon) Garbage Container, An Animal Tracking Clinic with Northwest Connections, Antique Rifle, Antique Brass Lantern, 2 Handmade Wildlife Quilts, Horse halters with lead rope,

Rejuvenate Massage gift certificate, “Kornucopia” pottery, Hungry Bear Steak House gift certificate.

Table Presenters:

Living in Bear Country

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Jamie Jonkel and Tim Manley
 Living with Wildlife Foundation – Patti Sowka
 Cenex Harvest States Electric Fencing – Scott Mackey & Larry Feight

Hiking and Recreating in Bear Country

Bob Marshall Foundation – Paul Travis
 Backcountry Horse Outfitting – Greg Schatz
 Glacier National Park – Erik Peterson

Conservation of Bear Country

US Geological Survey – Jeff Stetz
 Vital Ground – information display board and materials
 Great Bear Foundation – Chuck Jonkel
 Center for Wildlife Information – Chuck Bartlebaugh

2009 Bear Fair Attendance by Geographic Origin

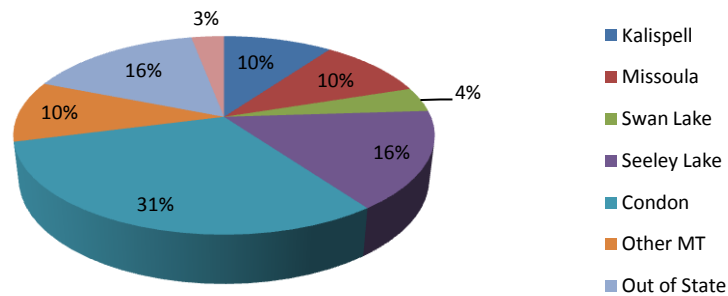


Figure 2: Estimated 2009 attendance by geographic origin. Attendees were asked where they were from as they entered the event.

2010 Bear Fair Attendance by Geographic Origin

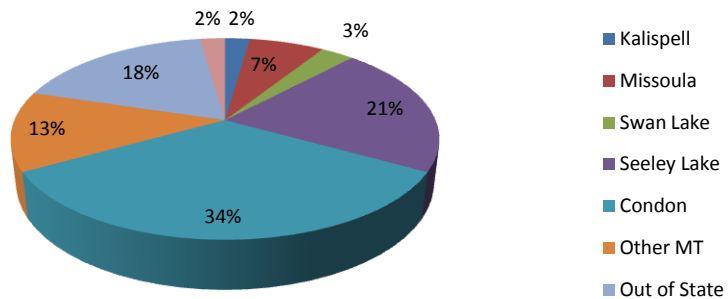


Figure 3: Estimated 2010 attendance by geographic origin. Data was taken by optional survey passed to people as they entered the event.

2010 Marketing Evaluation by Attendance Survey

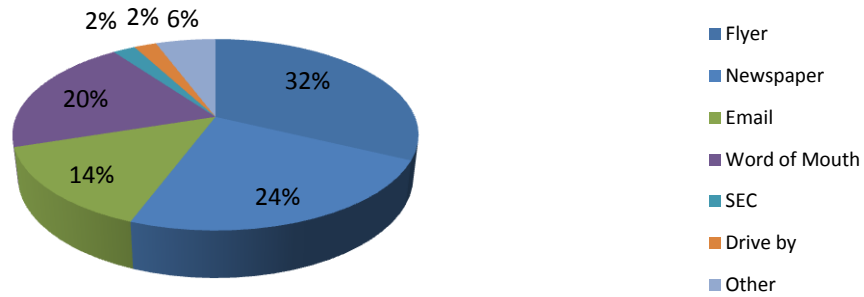


Figure 4: Survey of Swan Valley Bear Fair attendees of how they heard about the event taken from an optional survey passed to people as they entered the event in 2010.

Bear Fair 2009	
Hungry Bear Steak House	\$2184.60
Portable Toilets	\$110.00
Publicity	\$225.04
Supplies	\$285.87
Telephone	\$128.35
Program Expenses – Wind River Institute	\$285.87
Total	\$3219.43
Bear Fair 2010	
Hungry Bear Steak House	\$2,737.00
Portable Toilets	\$140.00
Publicity	\$230.00
Bear Fair Banner	\$97.20
Supplies	\$303.44
Total	\$3507.64
2010 Volunteer Time (not included in cost)	292 hours

Table 3: Summary of costs associated with the Swan Valley Bear Fair for 2009 and 2010.

Research and Monitoring

Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) began organizing community bear observations in addition to major and minor bear conflicts reported within the valley. This documentation is hoped to yield long-term documentation for bear occurrence within the Swan Valley as well as provide annual data on human-bear conflict reported within the valley.

Documenting community bear observations and conflicts has several presumed benefits. First, community reporting of bear observations may further facilitate communication or spatial awareness of bear presence or conflict between neighbors in the

Swan Valley. Increased communication is hoped to create more immediate awareness to secure otherwise unconsidered garbage, pet food, etc. with a bear in area. Documentation may also reveal higher priorities based on conflicts or field observations. Finally,



Grizzly bear tracks measured on a muddy road. Photo: Adam Lieberg

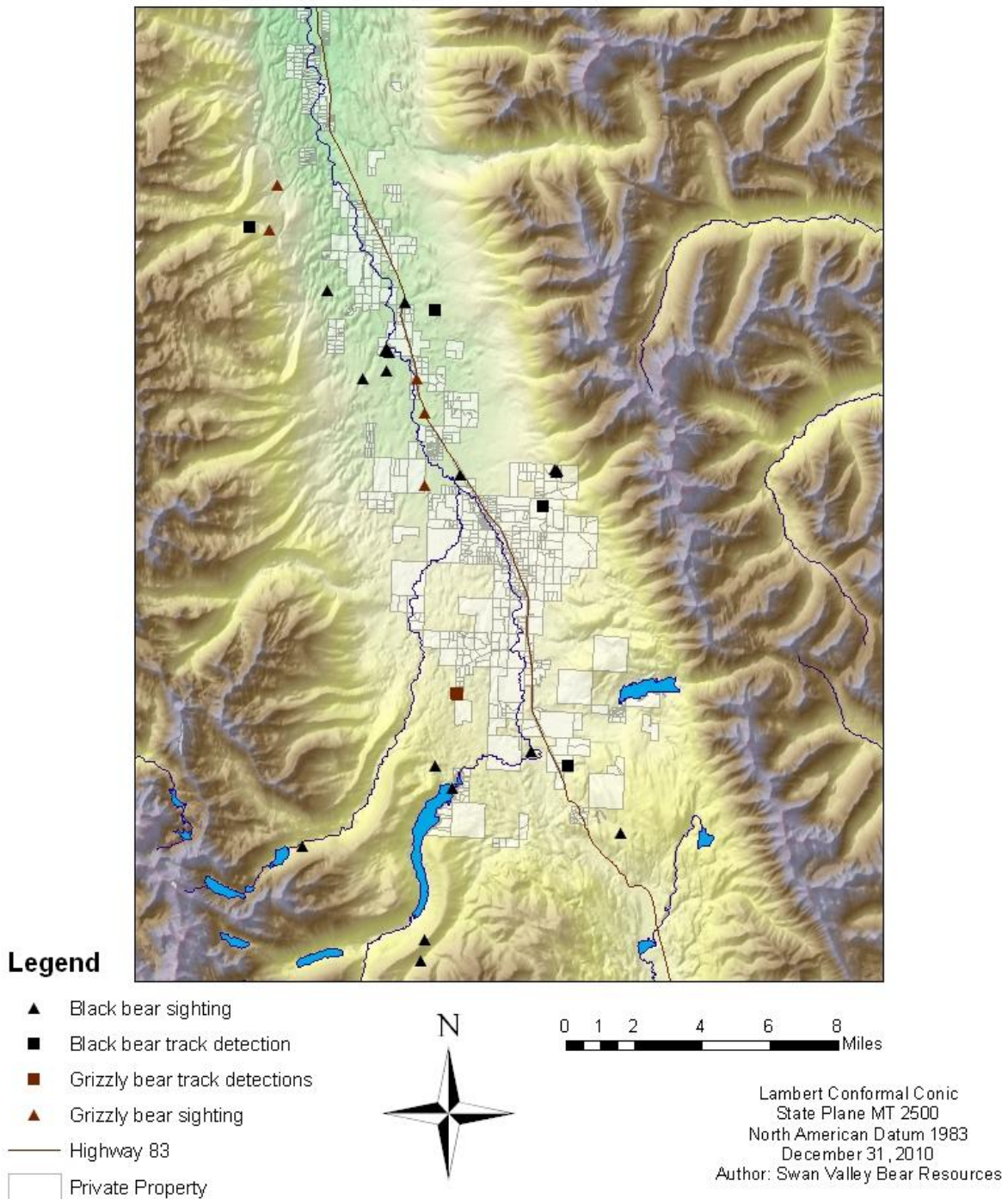
community documentation may help build community capacity for local bear management.

Map 2 depicts the observation data for 2010 for black bears and grizzly bears. Map 3 depicts the spatial location for reported and known human-bear conflicts in the Swan Valley for 2010.

Human-bear conflicts are documented at 3 different levels. Level 1 the lowest level of conflict such as a bear around a home or business. Level 2 conflict is classified as a bear that actively attempts to gain a food reward from human-based attractants such as bird feeders, garbage cans, etc. Level 3 conflict is classified any human-bear conflict that requires response by agency bear management specialists such as bear-caused damage to home or garage in attempt to gain access to otherwise secured attractants.

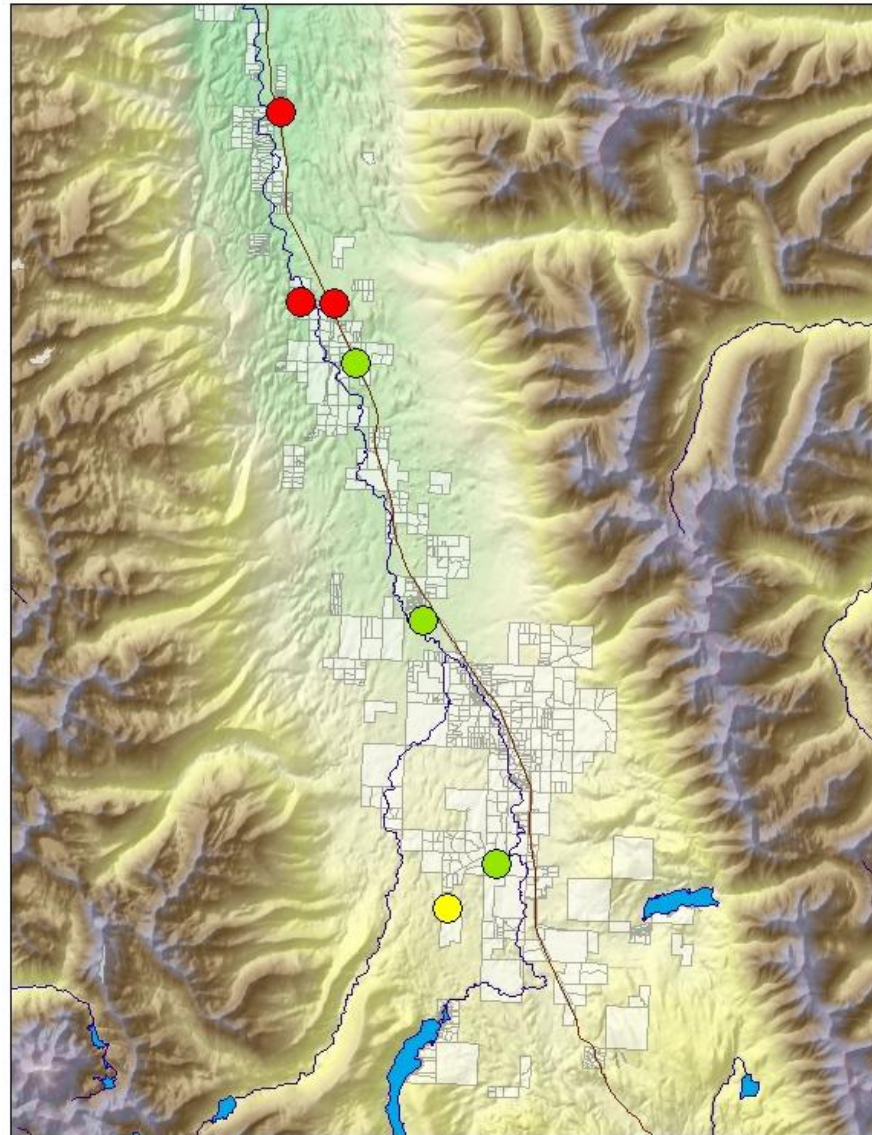
SVBR recognizes the limitations and biases of voluntarily reported observations and conflicts. The observation/conflict database is intended to be a long-range dataset that will aid SVBR in evaluating the effectiveness of outreach and education into the future. Using human-bear conflicts as a metric to gauge progress towards coexistence between people and bears may be useful in the long-term. SVBR will continue to revise and create approaches for further research and monitoring in years to come.

2010 Grizzly and Black Bear Community Observations in Upper Swan Valley, MT



Map 2: Community reported bear observations within the Swan Valley in 2010. Observations are still being compiled from 2010 for spatial reference.

2010 Reported Human-Bear Conflicts in Upper Swan Valley, MT



Legend

- Conflict rating 3
- Conflict rating 2
- Conflict Rating 1
- Highway 83
- Private Property



0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles

Lambert Conformal Conic
State Plane MT 2500
North American Datum 1983
December 31, 2010
Author: Swan Valley Bear Resources

Map 3: Community reported human-bear conflicts within the Swan Valley in 2010. Reported and known conflicts are still being compiled for spatial reference.

Bear Ranger

The Swan Valley Bear Ranger is a position cooperatively funded through private grants, FWS, USFS, SEC, Plum Creek Timber Company and DNRC. The bear ranger offers various educational programming to local schools, private groups, and agency field crews. The bear ranger also visits designated campgrounds, dispersed sites, and hunting camps to discuss appropriate bear food storage techniques and regulations with campers. In the summer of 2010, the bear ranger visited campgrounds from Memorial Day to the end of general rifle hunting season. Educational programs and campers/campsites visited by the bear ranger are summarized in Tables 4 & 5.

Beyond educational programs and public lands food storage, the bear ranger acts as a liaison between agencies and private property owners on human-bear conflicts. The bear ranger aids in local bear monitoring and research efforts and served as a member of SVBR.

	# People	Age Range (yrs.)	Program Type
Bear Education			
Information on food storage, bear behavior, bear pepper spray, safety during bear encounters, bear biology, habitat, and best practices for living with bears			
Great Northern Fire Crew	25	25-35	Field
Swan Valley AARP	12	60-80	Classroom
Condon Community Council meeting	35	20-75	Open to public
Swan Ecosystem Center After School Club	10	8-14	Field
Holland Lake Campfire Talk - Bears	21	8-70	Campground
US Forest Service Regional Lands Meeting	30	30-60	Field
Swan Lake Ranger District Bear Safety and Training	50	18-60	Classroom
Flathead Rotary International	100	20-75	Program
Bigfork High School Biology Classes	50	16-18	Field
Living with Bears in Swan Valley - Spring Bear Wake - Up Social	75	12-70	Open to public
Swan Valley Bear Fair - Public informational Event	350	8-70	Open to public
Essex Bear Fair - Informational Speaker about Swan Valley	35	12-70	Open to public
Total	793	--	--

Table 4: Summary of educational programs hosted by bear ranger in 2010.

	# People	# Campsites
Camper/Hunter Outreach		
Campsite visitation and discussion with campers about bear food storage requirements and recommendations for camping in bear country.		
People approached about food storage (May 25 th – Oct. 16 th)	456	237
Hunters about food storage and bear identification (Oct. 23 rd – Nov. 27 th)	65	23
Total	521	260

Table 5: Summary of campers and campsites in the Swan Valley visited by the bear ranger in 2010.

Future Goals

SVBR continues to evolve in its ability to work within the community to create feasible solutions that promote human/bear co-existence. Goals set for 2011 include purchase of more bear-resistant garbage containers for the loaner program, neighborhood networking framework, increased consistency among bear educational programs, future fencing projects, and continuation of existing programs.

Only 7 bear-resistant garbage containers remain in the inventory of SVBR's loaner program. Funding is being sought for additional containers to be loaned within the community. Containers are not only used proactively for garbage storage, but are an important tool to provide to community members reacting to conflicts. SVBR will continue to secure funding for purchase of additional containers and provide the containers for use within the community.

The Swan Valley is a nearly intact ecosystem where community and habitat values are interwoven. Maintaining high levels of personal contact within the community is critical to build community trust and foster a responsible community atmosphere in a wild, rural environment. SVBR plans to check in with community recipients of bear-resistant garbage loaner containers. An informal phone call or conversation may yield vital information to how well the containers or the program is working. Often these types of conversations reveal unreported human-bear conflicts or ideas/concerns from community members on which SVBR can focus. Personal contact within the community continues to improve personal trust and community investment towards sustainable cohabitation with bears in the Swan Valley.

To improve community involvement and strengthen lines of communication, SVBR continues to work to develop network neighborhood groups within the Swan Valley modeled after efforts within the Blackfoot and Clearwater watersheds. A neighborhood network involves phone trees in geographically-grouped neighborhoods where

information about bears in the area can be rapidly disseminated among neighbors by local area coordinators without a high degree of effort by agency managers.

Increasing effectiveness of educational approaches requires both consistency of current methods and long-term evaluation. Planning for educational materials can aid in replication of themes and reinforcement of educational messages. SVBR plans to take a more forward thinking approach to the Swan Valley Bear Newsletter, Spring Bear Wake-Up Social, and Swan Valley Bear Fair by creating more consistent messages throughout each program and link subsequent educational materials between events. The goal is to present clear, supported and consistent materials specific to the community.

SVBR completed 3 fencing projects in 2009 and aided with 1 project in 2010. The busy field season, willing landowners, and needs of existing programs stretched SVBR personnel too far to participate in the same fashion as was done with the cost-share fencing projects in 2009. SVBR plans to donate less actual labor and move to more an administrative role for fencing projects. This role would be comprised of matching private landowners with expertise, materials, and contracted help. The goal is to continue to provide local partnership with landowners interested in fencing projects without over-committing members of SVBR.

SVBR will continue to examine areas for improvement of existing programs with the final goal of maintaining rural values while creating partnerships to promote human-bear coexistence within the Swan Valley.

Partners:

Northwest Connections (NwC)
Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC)
Swan Valley Bear Ranger (Ranger)

Supported by:

American Wildlands
Defenders of Wildlife
Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
Plum Creek Timber Company
Private Donations
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Wildlife Land Trust

January 6, 2011

Prepared by: Adam Lieberg (NwC), Betsy Spettigue (SEC), Mark Ruby (Ranger)

Appendix I: SVBR Color Brochure

(8.5 x 11 size front and back folded into 3 panels)

SVBR Partners

Northwest Connections
Swan Ecosystem Center
Swan Valley Bear Ranger



A grizzly bear testing a bear-resistant garbage container.
Photo by Derek Reich/Zooprax Productions.

Contact Us

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Supported By

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Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee
Montana DNRC
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Plum Creek
Private Donations
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
Wildlife Land Trust

6/10

Using community resources
to promote human-bear
coexistence

Swan Valley Bear Resources

About Us

The mission of Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) is to offer community resources to promote coexistence between people and bears. SVBR is a collaborative effort between local non-profit conservation organizations and community members who have partnered with the U.S. Forest Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and other natural resource management entities, to pool resources, experience and expertise in addressing bear conflicts on private property in the Swan Valley.

In 2004, research and management data indicated that the Swan Valley had become a mortality sink for grizzly bears within the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem recovery area. Trends also showed that an increasing number of these mortalities were human-caused, related to unsecured bear attractants (i.e. bird feeders, garbage, etc.) on private property.

The goal of SVBR is to honor our rural way of life while at the same time providing resources and site-specific recommendations for interested landowners to secure bear attractants and reduce human-bear conflicts.

Loaner Program

One of the most dangerous temptations for bears in the Swan Valley is unsecured garbage. Once a wild bear learns to find food in garbage, his or her chances for survival are drastically reduced. SVBR is pleased to offer bear-resistant garbage containers on loan to anyone in the community. These 64 gallon, wheeled containers have a self-latching lid that prevents bears and other critters from accessing the garbage inside. When used properly, bear-resistant garbage containers are an important tool for teaching bears to stay away from garbage by denying them a food reward.

SVBR's bear-resistant garbage containers can be checked out for FREE!!! These containers were purchased through grants and donations for community use. Future donations to the Loaner Program will help purchase additional bear-resistant garbage containers.



Property Consultations

Landowners and residents of the Swan Valley who are interested in reducing and/or eliminating bear attractants around their homes and property can contact SVBR for property consultations. We have a network of skilled individuals and organizations who have experience dealing with a variety of bear attractants, including bird feeders, garbage, gardens, livestock, orchards, pet food, etc.

Recently, SVBR has assisted three local landowners with the implementation of electric fencing to protect livestock from conflicts with bears. We are equipped to provide technical information on fencing specifications, as well as to offer resources on where to purchase appropriate materials. In addition, we can help landowners search for potential cost-sharing opportunities and recruit volunteers to assist with fence construction.



Outreach and Events

SVBR sponsors a number of outreach efforts and events to help bring awareness to our mission of reducing human-bear conflicts in the Swan Valley. SVBR sponsors the Bear News, a bi-annual community newsletter that highlights current events relating to bears. SVBR is proud to host two community events each year, the Spring Bear Wake Up Social and the Bear Fair. These events provide a forum for experts in the bear research, management, and conservation fields to share their most up-to-date findings with our community. Additionally, Mark Ruby, the Swan Valley Bear Ranger does bear education outreach at area schools, local campgrounds, and for agency field crews and private groups by special request.



Children pose with a bear mount at the Swan Valley Bear Fair. The annual event organizes specialists and demonstrations for the community about different aspects of Montana bear management.

Research and Monitoring

The Swan Valley has long been a hot-spot for bear research and monitoring. SVBR hopes to add value to existing studies by tracking the effectiveness of efforts to reduce attractants on private property.

