

Received via email

Reference: 383554

February 1, 2022

Harry Crosby, President
BC Nature

c/o Betty Davison, Office Manager, BC Nature
Sent via email: manager@bcnature.ca

Dear Harry Crosby:

Thank you for your letter of November 8, 2021, regarding bears and human-wildlife conflicts in B.C. I apologize for the lengthy delay in responding.

Please allow me to begin by saying that I share your desire for a peaceful co-existence between bears and people. Putting down any bear is an unfortunate outcome we work so hard to prevent, but the priority of the Conservation Officer Service (COS) is public safety and that must come first.

I can assure you the COS is working collaboratively with municipalities and organizations across the province to address and reduce bear conflicts. This includes increasing awareness and education around the importance of securing attractants such as garbage, pet food and birdseed, as we know many bear conflicts are preventable.

Conservation Officers continue to conduct bear attractant inspections and take enforcement action under the *Wildlife Act*—which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD)—as warranted against unsecure attractants. It is important to note that any potential legislative changes to the *Wildlife Act*, such as increasing fines with respect to the feeding of dangerous wildlife, also falls within the purview of FLNRORD. Conservation Officers administer, but do not have responsibility for this legislation.

Last year, Conservation Officers spent over 2,000 hours on bear attractant issues, resulting in more than 200 Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders, 140 warnings and 70 violation tickets.

Policies and procedures to help guide Conservation Officers with regard to human-wildlife conflict and response include input from FLNRORD wildlife biologists, subject matter experts and the chief provincial wildlife veterinarian. In consultation with wildlife biologists and other experts, these guidelines are regularly reviewed and adjusted as necessary.

With regard to the research paper you referenced, it may interest you to know that our COS Wildlife Conflict Manager, Mike Badry, contributed to this study. Conservation Officers across

B.C. are working hard every day to help the public understand the importance of securing attractants to prevent bear conflicts, particularly in areas that border bear habitats.

As you know, the issue of human-wildlife conflict is complex, and the progressive work Conservation Officers are doing every day to tackle this issue is extensive. The COS is continually reviewing human-wildlife conflict responses and assigns a high priority to the enforcement and management of dangerous wildlife attractants.

I would like to offer a meeting with me or my Deputy Minister, Kevin Jardine, to more fully discuss your suggestions and the work the ministry is doing to address and reduce human-wildlife conflicts across the province, including our ongoing efforts regarding proactive measures, public education and enforcement action. Please contact my office at ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca or the office of the Deputy Minister at DM.ENV@gov.bc.ca to make arrangements.

I hope you find this information helpful. Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

George Heyman
Minister

cc: Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development