

3. Project Description

In response to increased occurrences of human-wildlife conflicts in the Wood River Valley, a meeting of key local stakeholders was called to discuss incidents with mountain lions as well as chronic seasonal incidents with bears, deer and elk. Attendees included officials representing the cities of Ketchum, Sun Valley and Hailey, County Commissioners, Clear Creek Disposal, and staff from Idaho Conservation League, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Fish and Game.

An outcome from the meeting was the Wood River Valley Wildlife Smart Communities coalition, who will strive to reduce human-wildlife conflicts in the Valley by providing guidance, recommendations, education, and assistance in implementing best practices for the safety of Valley residents, visitors and wildlife.

A concerted effort must be made to educate and engage residents of the Wood River Valley to implement strategies aimed at mitigating human-wildlife conflict. A major component of this umbrella approach is to not only educate people about the importance of attractant management, but to also provide them with necessary resources. By using bear-resistant garbage containers, communities can protect both people and bears. Another benefit of using these containers is that it eliminates a food source for prey species (i.e. raccoons and skunks) which in turn attract mountain lions.

Every interaction with wildlife, if not handled appropriately, is a potential opportunity for a person to be injured or killed, or the animal euthanized. This does not have to be the case. With enhanced education efforts, provisioning of proper tools, and a community-wide effort to engage in wildlife safe behavior, residents can discourage large wildlife from living within communities or neighborhoods, resulting in lowered human-wildlife conflicts.

Converting our communities' garbage cans to bear resistant design is timely considering the recent implementation of the food storage order on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

This proposal addresses two of the goals of the Land, Water, and Wildlife Program including:

- Protect and preserve wildlife, habitat, and transit and migration corridors.
- Conserve, restore, or maintain and otherwise provide for proper stewardship of lands and waters.

The intent of the Wildlife Smart Communities coalition is to work towards converting residential garbage containers to automatic bear-resistant containers. The coalition envisions every household north of Ohio Gulch obtaining a bear-resistant garbage container. A grant from the Land, Water and Wildlife Fund will be a critical first-step to help the coalition make that conversion happen, directly conserving and benefiting the wildlife in the Wood River Valley.