

# Bear Smart Community Initiatives

*Communities across the Northern Rockies are taking proactive steps to keep people and property safe and bears wild. Join the effort by becoming a Bear Smart Community.*

## What is a Bear Smart Community?

A Bear Smart Community is a *community-led* and *community-wide* effort to prevent human-bear conflicts. The goal is to keep people and their property safe, and bears moving along.



Any effort by a landowner or business to keep bears from being drawn to their property is a good one. Community initiatives go one step further. Engaging groups, local officials, neighborhoods, and community leaders to consider a Bear Smart

Community Initiative is a way to expand the benefits of conflict prevention. Bear Smart Initiatives can also give residents and businesses a way to strengthen community, hold fun events, and welcome visitors with confidence. A “community” can be an unincorporated residential area, city or town, housing development, resort, or other definable and connected area.

## Solving Problems Together

Bear Smart Initiatives look different from place to place because each locale is different. To have a lasting impact, the program needs to address the types of bear conflicts unique to the community and evolve in a way that works for all stakeholders. Yet, even with a community’s distinct challenges, there are some common needs in places where people and bears share the landscape:



**Education** on the history of bear conflicts in the community and bear behavior can help people take some simple steps toward reducing risks.



**Attractant Reduction** keeps bears from coming around by making sure they can’t access anything with a food scent like pet foods, birdseed, fruit trees, grills, or small livestock.



**Waste Management** is a challenging but important part of reducing bear attractants. Using bear-resistant canisters and dumpsters can drastically reduce the risk of conflicts.

To learn more about becoming Bear Smart, visit [PeopleandCarnivores.org](http://PeopleandCarnivores.org), [BearSmart.com](http://BearSmart.com), and [IGBCOnline.org](http://IGBCOnline.org).

To help communities with Bear Smart efforts, People and Carnivores provides resources. Learn more at [PeopleandCarnivores.org/BearSmart](http://PeopleandCarnivores.org/BearSmart).

# How to Become a Bear Smart Community

*The path to becoming a Bear Smart Community looks different for each location. It's not always linear, and often takes time. Here is an outline of how a group might work through this process, which may require more time at some stages and less at others, or repeating certain activities.*



## Learn & Build

**To begin a Bear Smart Initiative, talk with community members** and local officials to learn about bear issues and people's interest in addressing them. Take time gathering support. Conducting small conflict-reduction projects might help. Progress is best made by forming a working group or committee of diverse stakeholders. This may happen easily or over time. Contact People and Carnivores for input or guidance.

## Assess

**Conduct an assessment** to understand the human-bear conflicts and their causes (attractants), the landscape, and various stakeholders in the community. Communities may work with Montana FWP, consultants from qualified nonprofits, or informally gather information on their own.

## Plan

**Create a management and action plan** based on the assessment findings. The plan should identify solutions to the conflicts and risks, including removing or managing attractants, securing waste, and providing education and outreach. The group will also need to identify roles and accountability, timelines, a budget, and potential funding sources.

## Implement Solutions

**Carry out the management plan and implement solutions** in a way that works for the community and the budget. Some communities may begin by addressing one issue at a time, while others may address several attractants in priority locations. Some communities pass ordinances requiring bear-safe practices.

## Monitor & Sustain

**Keep the efforts going.** As projects are completed, evaluate the results and update the management plan. Create a long-term plan to stay Bear Smart and designate a group or person to monitor and oversee plan updates. The community may return to prior phases depending on how bear movements, solutions, and the community evolve.



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