

Assistance available to prevent bear conflicts

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A large black bear is just this week's latest bruin to feast at the St. Ignatius home garbage smorgasbord.

Many Mission Valley residents are accustomed to sharing their space with both black and grizzly bears seeking calories to fatten them up for winter. Gardens, orchards, and crops are frequent bear attractions, as are garbage cans. This can cause significant property and crop damage, but also can put people, their pets and livestock, and the bears at risk. Many bears are trapped and moved, or even euthanized when they become habituated to humans as a source of food.

Landowners and homeowners have a lot of options to reduce the attractiveness of their properties to bears. A call to the new CSKT bear conflict line will alert wildlife managers to bear problems, and they can help residents find resources to help reduce or prevent future problems.

CSKT works together with other agencies, community groups, businesses, and non-profits such as People and Carnivores, to keep people and wildlife such as bears, wolves, and cougars safe from each other. These organizations can provide information and assistance installing electric fencing, finding bear-resistant garbage containers, and even employing livestock-guarding dogs or other animals. Financial assistance may sometimes be available, depending on funding, to help implement certain options.

Republic Services, a waste-management company that collects residential and business waste in the valley, offers bear-resistant garbage containers to their customers. Because it costs them extra to purchase and maintain these containers, says Joelle Conklin, Operations Clerk in the Ronan office, they rent for an average of approximately \$16 more per quarter, but they are becoming very popular throughout the area as residents get tired of

picking up their strewn garbage. The last two months have been a “busy delivery season” of the bear-resistant containers, she says, and residents who keep them year-round avoid delivery fees, since the first delivery is free.

For more information on preventing wildlife conflicts on your property, contact the CSKT bear conflict line at 275-2774, peopleandcarnivores.org, or Republic Services at 676-4330.