



Photo Source: NBAS



March 2019

# PRINCE GEORGE BEAR SMART STATUS IMPLEMENTATION 2019 UPDATE



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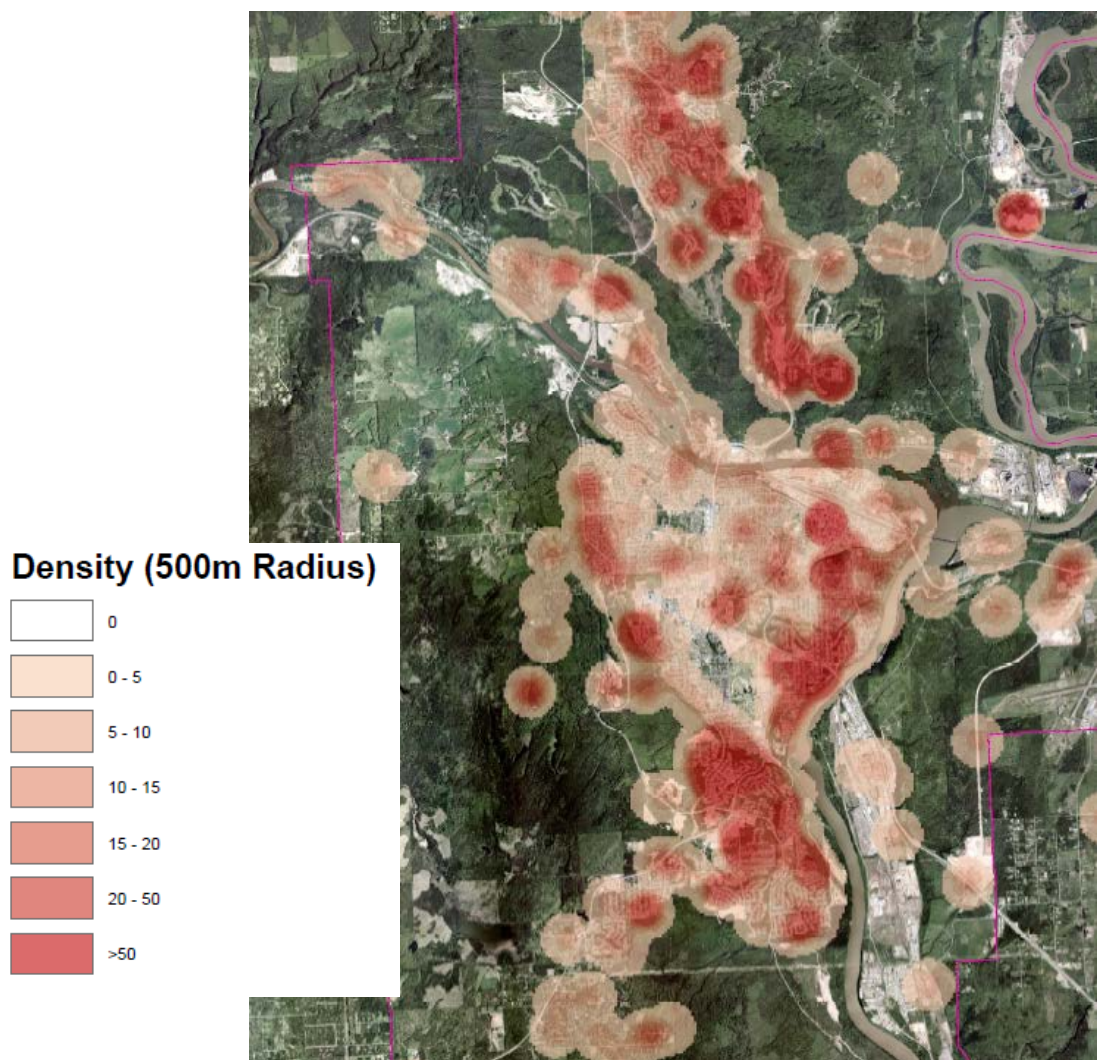
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*“Plans to protect air, water, wilderness and wildlife  
are in fact plans to protect man.”      Stewart Udall*

## 1.0 Black Bears in PG

Prince George, British Columbia is situated in prime black bear habitat and the unnatural attractants like garbage within the urban environment can be detrimental to bears. Black bears often utilize the Nechako and Fraser Rivers as travel corridors and rely on the natural areas around Prince George for food. Black bears spend half of their year consuming as much food possible before hibernation and may seek out easy sources of calories such as garbage or fruit if available. However a bear that is food conditioned to unnatural attractants such as garbage can present a public safety issue and eventually may be destroyed. Over the past 10 years, Prince George had an average of 890 bear sighting calls and the destruction of 35 bears per year, which unfortunately represents the highest numbers of any community in B.C<sup>1</sup>.



2016 Density of Bear Sighting Areas (source: NBAS)

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Northern Bear Awareness Society Condensed Activity Report 2011-2018

## 2.0 Bear Smart Community Program

On February 21, 2011, City of Prince George Mayor and Council committed to achieving Provincial Bear Smart status. The Bear Smart program was designed by the Province of British Columbia in partnership with the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, as a voluntary and preventative conservation measure which addresses the root causes of human/bear conflict to increase public safety and reduce the number of bears that must be destroyed. A total of eight (8) communities in British Columbia such as the District of Squamish have achieved the Provincial Bear Smart status, and more than 20 other communities including Prince George are actively working towards this goal.



Photo Source: NBAS

## 3.0 Bear Smart Status Implementation to Date

The City of Prince George has been working towards achieving the Provincial Bear Smart status through an inter-agency partnership with the Conservation Office of British Columbia, Province of British Columbia, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG), and the Northern Bear Awareness Society (NBAS). The Bear Smart program is based on six (6) criteria that a community must achieve to become a designated Bear Smart community. The table on the following page outlines the Bear Smart community initiatives which have occurred in Prince George during the past decade.



Prince George Bear Smart Status Implementation – Completed to Date (2018)	
Bear-Smart Criteria	Completed to Date
1. Prepare a community bear hazard assessment	✓ PG Bear Hazard Assessment (2008) and PG Human-Bear Conflict Prevention Management Plan (2009) were received by City of PG Mayor and Council in 2009 and are being updated with 2018 data
2. Prepare a human/bear conflict management plan	
3. Align policy documents with the human/bear conflict management plan	✓ 2011 Prince George Official Community Plan (OCP) Bylaw No. 8383 includes bear smart policy direction for bylaws, education, development, and management to dissuade human/bear conflicts ✓ Neighbourhood Plans for new development areas reflect the bear smart OCP policy direction
4. Continuing education	✓ NBAS education with volunteer presentations to classrooms, special interest groups and public events (100's people annually) ✓ NBAS neighbourhood watch programs ✓ NBAS brochures distributed to residents City garbage truck bear smart decals ✓ NBAS residential solid waste cart tagging project REAPS composting education ✓ City bear resistant recommended tree lists ✓ City and NBAS social media, media outlets, and website
5. Bear-proof solid waste management system	✓ RDFFG perimeter fencing of landfill and transfer station, and RDFFG Solid Waste Management Plan (2015) ✓ Bear-Resistant garbage containers in City parks/public areas ✓ NBAS Community Fruit Exchange Program with collection of fruit at Northern Lights Estate Winery
6. Bear smart bylaws	✓ City Garbage Collection Bylaw No. 7661 & Property Maintenance Bylaw No. 8425 include bear smart regulations requiring residents to manage bear attractants



Photo Source: NBAS





## 4.0 Recommended Actions

The following remaining actions are recommended in order to achieve the Provincial Bear Smart community status.

### Education and Partnerships

- ☐ Install bear smart signage and/or decals on solid waste management containers, at solid waste landfills and transfer stations, and along trail heads in high frequency bear areas.
- ☐ Continue to include bear smart promotional materials through outlets such as the annual residential garbage calendar distribution notice.
- ☐ Provide current bear smart information to residents through the City website and communication outlets with links to resources such as the NBAS website.

### Solid Waste Management

- ☐ Develop and implement a City of Prince George Bear Smart Solid Waste Management Strategy to address priorities for the collection, transfer, disposal, recycling, and composting of solid waste in the City.
- ☐ Audit parks and public spaces for safety issues.

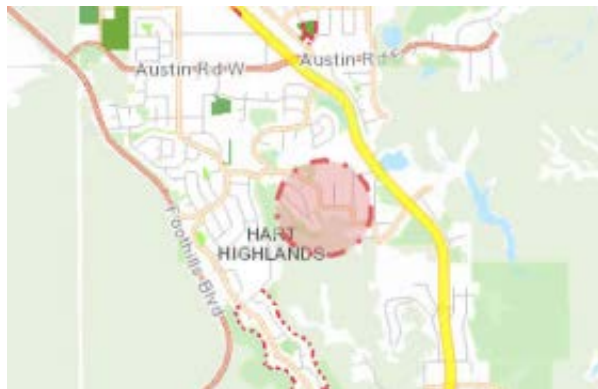
### Bylaws and Policy

- ☐ Ensure that all bylaws and policy direction supports the planning, design, development, and maintenance of new residential development areas and public spaces such as riverfronts to minimize human/bear conflicts.
- ☐ Develop and implement a compliance strategy for bear smart bylaw regulations.
- ☐ Support the collection of bear data and analysis to inform targeted bear smart solutions.



## 5.0 2019 Bear Resistant Cart Pilot Project

The City of Prince George will be introducing 300 bear-resistant residential solid waste carts to a high frequency bear area in the Hart Highlands Croft neighbourhood. The bear-resistant cart is similar in appearance to a standard large-sized residential solid waste cart, however the cart is easy to unlock with one hand for garbage disposal and will open when inverted upside down by a garbage collection truck. The bear-resistant carts are being tested in Prince George as a pilot project given the cost of each cart (over five (5) times the price of a regular residential solid waste cart). Residents in the pilot project will receive the carts free of charge along with notifications about the project prior to the swapping of carts on the collection day of April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The pilot project will be monitored by the City in partnership with the inter-agency bear smart group for consideration in future year expansion within the Croft neighbourhood area and other high frequency bear residential areas.



## 6.0 Conclusion

The City of Prince George and its interagency partners are working proactively to become a Bear Smart community, however a number of challenges still remain and the high frequency of bear sightings and destruction is ongoing. Ongoing education efforts are needed to help residents understand the bear smart regulations and the outcomes associated with non-compliance. The development of a City bear smart solid waste management system, as well as expanded bear smart bylaws and policy, are also required by the City of Prince George to achieve the Provincial Bear Smart status. The implementation of these items along with compliance to the regulations will ultimately reduce bear activity and help increase public safety.

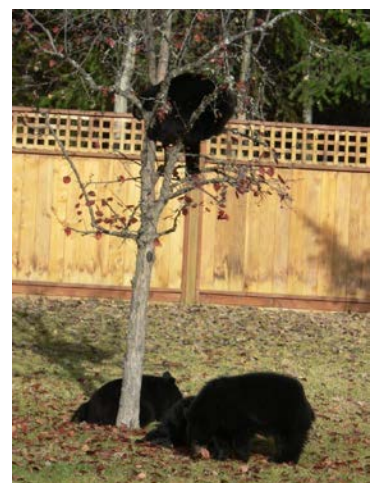


Photo Source: NBAS

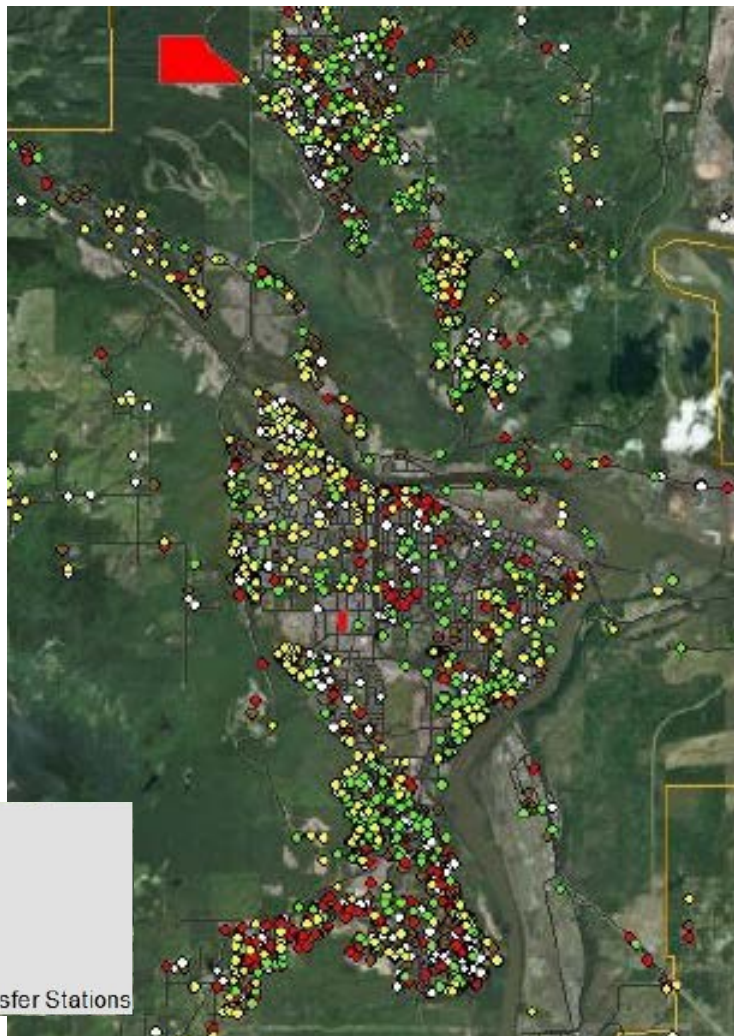
## Appendix 1 – Prince George Bear Data

A report was recently produced by Aklak Wildlife Consulting which provides an analysis of the 4,446 provincial bear occurrence calls and 218 bear mortalities in Prince George between 2011 to 2017<sup>2</sup>. A bear occurrence call is recorded when a resident contacts the BC Conservation Officer Service to report any form of a bear sighting which may or may not be problematic in nature. A similar bear data set from 2004 to 2007 was previously analyzed in the 2008 PG Bear Hazard Assessment report. The 2011 to 2017 report provides a follow-up and comparison of these data sets for further consideration. The following is a summary of the report findings.

### Bear Activity is increasing ...

Over the years the number of bear occurrence calls has increased with clusters of bear activity around the outskirts of the City and an expanding area within College Heights. Since 2004, the high frequency bear activity areas continue to be concentrated in the following areas listed from the north to south end of the City:

- Hart Highlands to Aberdeen
- Stirling/Moore's Meadow
- Lansdowne/Charella/Peden Hill/College Heights



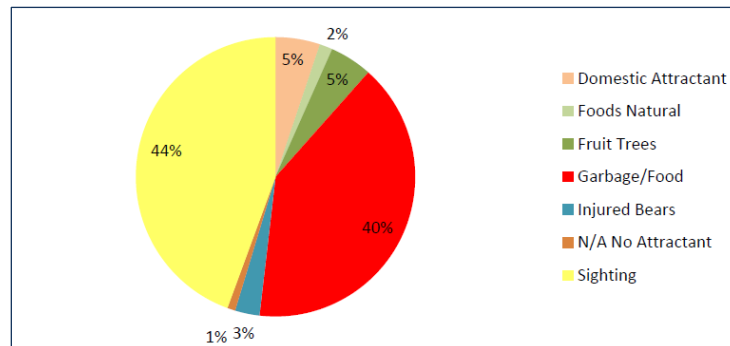
Location of bear occurrence reports in Prince George from 2014-2017

<sup>2</sup> Report available on <https://www.northernbearawareness.com> and entitled 'Bear Occurrence Reports and Mortalities for Prince George, BC, 2011-2017' as prepared by Lana M. Ciarniello, Ph.D., RPBio of Aklak Wildlife Consulting.



## Garbage is the #1 attractant ...

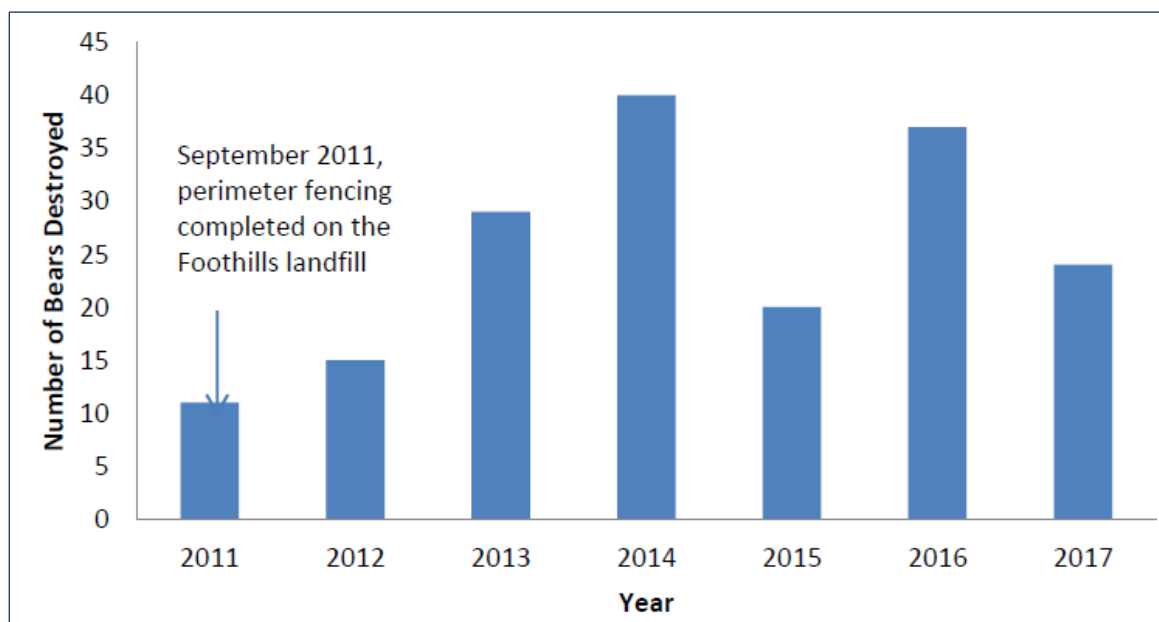
While a large percentage of the total bear occurrence calls within the City of Prince George are typically related to observed bear sightings (44%), around 40% of the bear occurrence calls were directly related to bears actively knocking down garbage cans in search of food. The report identifies that garbage is a primary reason why bears are observed within City limits and human/bear conflicts are anticipated to increase with ongoing access to garbage and expanding residential developments.



Bear occurrence reports in Prince George from 2011-2017 by category

## Bear mortality is not decreasing ...

The BC Conservation Officer Service destroyed an average of 35 bears in the City of Prince George over the past 10 years. However this number has grown to an average of 41 bears in the last three (3) years between 2015 and 2017 and is showing little sign of decreasing.



Number of bears destroyed in Prince George by year from 2011-2017

