



Bear Education and Restoration Group of Mississippi

Annual Report

2006

Submitted by
Kevin Nelms, BEaR President
2/13/2007

Brief History

In the late 1990s, a group of interested individuals formed the Mississippi Black Bear Restoration Task Force (MBBRTF) as a committee of the Black Bear Conservation Committee (BBCC). The BBCC was formed to work with restoration of the Louisiana black bear (subspecies *luteolus*) in its historic range. After several years, it became apparent the MBBRTF needed to work with both subspecies (*luteolus* and *americanus*) having historic ranges in Mississippi. In November 2004, it was decided that MBBRTF should be dissolved and a new group formed separate from the BBCC. The Bear Education and Restoration Group of Mississippi (BEaR) was formed on November 30, 2004. BEaR received 501(c)(3) status in 2006, retroactive to August 2005.

Mission

The BEaR bylaws were developed adopted by membership vote on February 7, 2006. The mission of BEaR is to:

Support the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) in restoration and management of ecologically viable and socially acceptable black bear populations in Mississippi.

BEaR 2006 Projects

The bylaws establish a program and project based operation. All activities are managed within programs and a program is characterized by having a goal that directly addresses BEaR's mission statement. As of date, BEaR has identified four programs; administration, education, research and habitat, and human/bear conflicts. All finances are managed by projects that address specific programs. A project is characterized by having a specific objective, schedule, budget, labor, and leader. Members submit projects in standardized format for approval. Approved projects began in 2006 include:

Website – BEaR commissioned the Digital Imaging Group of Flowood to design, develop, and host the official BEaR website. The website objectives are to educate the public about black bears in Mississippi, facilitate information transfer between BEaR, MDWFP, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and serve membership in organizational needs. The website project was partially funded by a grant from Mississippi Partners for Fish and Wildlife. Visit the website at www.msbear.org to learn more about BEaR and this project. This project will remain active in 2007. Project leader: Shauna Ginger

Educational Display - BEaR determined need for a professional informational display. This display would be used by BEaR membership and MDWFP personnel to educate the public about bears in Mississippi. It would be erected at shows, festivals, extravaganzas, etc. as part of a booth space. BEaR applied for, but did not receive, a grant from Entergy to fund this display. This project will remain active in 2007. Project leader: Don Bales / Kevin Nelms

Graphics – An existing graphics committee reorganized into a graphics project in 2006. The project developed and printed official letterhead, envelopes, and note cards using the artwork of Dr. Jeanne Jones. Jeanne graciously donated her talent and time to BEaR. The project also developed and procured an official banner for BEaR. Project leader: Connie Dickard

Print – An original artwork depicting a black bear and two cubs was printed as a full-color, limited edition of 100 signed and numbered prints. This project was developed as a BEaR fundraiser and Dr. Jeanne Jones again donated her talent and time to BEaR. The print was unveiled at the Great Delta Bear Affair in Rolling Fork in October. The print is available framed or unframed and is selling well. The project will remain active in 2007. Project Leader: Connie Dickard / Sabrina Clark

Aerial Telemetry – An ongoing study of radio-collared bears by MDWFP became a partnership with BEaR. Because of bear distribution and movement, location of radio collared bears is best achieved from the air. This project assists MDWFP with the high cost associated with contracting plane services while gathering valuable information about bear movement and habitat preferences. This project will remain active in 2007. Project leader: Brad Young

Great Delta Bear Affair – Again, BEaR partnered with the community of Rolling Fork to organize and conduct the annual festival. The festival and preceding youth education day are designed to raise public awareness of black bear, highlight the south Delta's natural resources, enhance community economics, and commemorate President Roosevelt's conservation legacy. The 2006 GDBA education day was attended by over 400 students and the festival had an attendance of over 6,000 and was reported as the best festival yet! Project leader: Meg Cooper

Other 2006 Accomplishments

MDWFP Bear Management Plan – Officers and members of BEaR were solicited to review and provide comments on the draft document "Conservation and Management of Black Bears in Mississippi" developed by MDWFP. This collaboration ensured BEaR's mission in Mississippi. The final document was published by MDWFP in August.

South Delta Interpretive Center – BEaR prepared and presented a statement at the September 20 public meeting concerning location of the South Delta Interpretive Center. This statement stressed the importance of the south Delta to bears, wildlife, history, and culture. The letter supported location of the center in Rolling Fork and naming it the Holt Collier Interpretive Center in memorial to the 1902 Roosevelt hunt. The statement was also sent to Representative Bennie Thompson and Senator Thad Cochran.

CRP and bears letter – BEaR drafted a letter asking the USFWS to encourage the USDA, Farm Services Agency (FSA) to use the established USFWS bear priority zones to rank Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) offers. The CRP is a voluntary, crop retirement program administered by the FSA. This program has nearly one million acres of potential wildlife habitat in Mississippi and nearly 160,000 acres of buffer practices. Use of existing bear priority zones for CRP ranking would result in the increase of critical bear corridor habitat in Mississippi.

Meetings – BEaR held two annual meetings in 2006; one on February 7 in Vicksburg and again on September 19 in Jackson. An annual board meeting was also held on February 7 in Vicksburg.

Membership – BEaR had 33 paid memberships in 2006. This was a decrease from 45 in 2005.

2006 Officers

President – Jackie Henne-Kerr (resigned on August 1, 2006)
Vice President – Kevin Nelms
Secretary – Shauna Ginger
Treasurer – Stephanie Hodnett

2006 Board of Directors

Horace Allen, Coahoma County Landowner
Don Bales, Mississippi State Cooperative Extension Service
Brian Ballinger, Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Trey Cooke, Delta Wildlife
Meg Cooper, Lower Delta Partnership
Ricky Cox, Issaquena County Landowner
Melissa Darden, Great Delta Bear Affair
Foster Dickard, Mississippi Forestry Association
Morgan Gullede, Leflore County Landowner
Matt Mallard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Darren Miller, Weyerhaeuser
Jim Monk, Entergy
Tom Rosenblatt, Wilkinson County Landowner
Cathy Shropshire, Mississippi Wildlife Federation
Shaun Williamson, U.S. Forest Service

2006 Budget

Starting 2006	\$350.00	
2006 Deposits		\$2017.48
2006 Expenses		\$912.82
Ending 2006	\$1454.66	