

## **THE BLACKFOOT WATERSHED 2021 BEAR ACTIVITY REPORT (Completed January 2024)**

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Region 2 (R2) and the Blackfoot Challenge (BC) produce this wolf and bear activity report. These reports are typically compiled at the end of the range rider season in late fall. We were unable to complete the 2021 report in a timely manner and as a result information on wolf activity has not been included in this synopsis of bear activity for the Blackfoot watershed and elsewhere in the region.

In remembrance, we dedicate this report to the memory of Leah Davis Lokan, and in honor of her family and friends. Leah was tragically killed by a grizzly bear in 2021. We thank the community of Ovando and the Blackfoot Valley constituents for their assistance in the matter. As always, we will continue to work with ranches throughout the Blackfoot watershed to monitor predator activity, assist with monitoring livestock, communicate with local ranchers and lessees. Thank you for your support and assistance.

During 2021, FWP R2 and the BC worked with ranches throughout the area and assisted with range riding and livestock carcass removal. The BC Range Rider Program was established in 2008 and is ongoing. Sigrid Olson, Jordan Mannix and Vicki Pocha were the range riders for the Challenge in 2021. The BC Carcass Pick Up Program has been ongoing since 2004. We thank Dan Masee and Barry Gordon who pick up most of the carcasses associated with the annual carcass pickup program. Thanks again to the ranchers, landowners, partners, and funders who make these programs possible. Outside of the Blackfoot Valley, carcass pickup programs are also occurring now in the Deer Lodge and Drummond areas as well as in the Bitterroot Valley.

Most bear management, preventative management and grizzly bear research trapping are handled by the FWP R2 Grizzly Bear and Black Bear Management Team. In the Blackfoot Valley, the agency works in conjunction with Eric Graham (BC) who focuses on preventative projects and works closely with communities, homeowners and landowners in the Blackfoot and Clearwater drainages. Eli Hampson (FWP), based out of Missoula, works throughout R2 (Blackfoot Valley, Missoula Basin, Bitterroot Valley, and Lower Clark Fork Valley) and assists where needed. Rory Trimbo (FWP) is stationed in the Deer Lodge, Butte, and the Big Hole Valleys, but assists where needed. James Jonkel (FWP), based out of Missoula, also works throughout R2, and assists where needed, handles calls from the public and provides logistical support to the remainder of the team.

Wildlife Biologist Scott Eggeman (FWP) was the point person for all issues pertaining to elk, deer, and other aspects of wildlife management in the Blackfoot drainage. For any wildlife-related matters on issues needing the attention of a game warden, contact Lincoln Game Warden Ezra Schwalm.

Wolf, lion and bear depredations and livestock loss reimbursement are handled by Wildlife Services (WS). The main contact for Powell County, Granite County, Deer Lodge County and

Ravalli County is Bart Smith (WS). The main contact for Missoula County, Flathead County and Mineral County is Ted North (WS). The main contact for Lewis and Clark and Cascade Counties is John Meidke (WS). And Kraig Glazier is the District Supervisor for Western Montana. When wolf depredations are not the issue, Tyler Parks (FWP) handles all other wolf-related management, wolf research trapping and reporting. Eli Hampson (FWP) handles mountain lion-related management.

We would like to recognize all partners that provide funding and technical assistance: FWP, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Bureau of Land Management, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), The Nature Conservancy, Heart of the Rockies, the Livestock Loss Board, Northern Rockies Conservation Co-op, Defenders of Wildlife, Vital Ground, People and Carnivores, the Cross Charitable Foundation, the Stranahan Foundation, the Western Bear Foundation, and numerous individuals.

A quick reminder that all attractants on the ranch or homesite should be unavailable to bears. For example, be sure to lock up all sheds and barns where garbage, grain and other attractants are stored and if you need additional electric fence materials or energizers for containing carcasses and other bear attractants (grain, sweet licks, garbage, etc.) or if you have any questions about the BC Wildlife Committee, community-based bear management in the valley, the range rider or the carcass pickup program, call the **Wildlife Program Coordinator Eric Graham (406) 240-3132**.

**CONTACT INFORMATION FOR REPORTING WOLF AND/OR WOLF, BEAR AND LION ACTIVITY:**

**James Jonkel – FWP Bear Management Specialist (406) 544-1447**

**Eli Hampson---FWP Bear/Lion Management Technician (406) 210-3213**

**Rory Trimbo —FWP Deer Lodge Bear Management Technician (left for another position)**

**Scott Eggeman – FWP Blackfoot Area Wildlife Biologist (left for another position)**

**Tyler Parks – FWP Wolf Management Specialist (406) 531-4454**

Again, if you have a suspected livestock predation, please notify USDA WS as soon as possible to determine the cause of death. Regarding reimbursement for losses through the **Livestock Loss Board**: If you suspect a livestock loss due to mountain lion/wolf/grizzly bear predation, you can request an investigation to see if the losses were due to a confirmed or probable depredation. The Livestock Loss Board can pay only for confirmed or probable losses as determined by USDA WS. For more information go to this link: [Livestock Loss Board \(mt.gov\)](http://Livestock Loss Board (mt.gov)).

**WS Powell County - Bart Smith (406) 660-0368**

**WS Missoula County - Ted North (406) 274-4856**

**WS Lewis & Clark County - John Meidtke (406) 855-8429**

**Western Montana District Supervisor- Kraig Glazier (406) 458-0106**

**Department of Livestock - Livestock Loss Board (406) 444-5609**

And for any other wildlife-related matters needing the attention of a game warden contact:  
**Ezra Schwalm– MFWP Lincoln Game Warden (406) 438-3666**

## **IMPORTANT UPDATES REGARDING 2021 GRIZZLY BEAR ACTIVITY IN THE BLACKFOOT VALLEY**

### 2021 Human Fatality Involving a Grizzly Bear in Ovando

On July 6, 2021, Leah Davis Lokan, a 65-year-old woman from Chico, California, was tragically killed by a grizzly bear at a community campground in Ovando. Ms. Lokan had been on a multi-day bicycle trip through Montana with her sister and friends. The event was a shock to the community, agency, and the BC. We offer the family our condolences. The Volunteer Fire Department's quick response the night of the incident should be commended. First responders did everything in their means to assist the victim, but sadly she was already deceased. This unfortunate incident was determined to be a predatory attack by a habituated and food-conditioned bear. That same night the bear also broke into a chicken coop. On July 8, 2021, through a coordinated community effort, a bear matching the description of the bear was located at a nearby ranch. Traps were set by the bear management team and that evening WS personnel agreed to sit up all night with rifles and night vision gear. At approximately 12:00 a.m. on July 9<sup>th</sup> an adult male bear was shot and killed while actively destroying another chicken coop. The grizzly weighed 417 pounds and was in good condition. The bear showed no evidence of ever being previously trapped or handled. Buccal swabs, tissue, blood, and hair samples were taken from the bear for DNA analysis. The claws were scraped for any evidence of human DNA. The bear was estimated to be four to seven years of age based on tooth wear. Hair and tissue samples were later compared to DNA collected at the scene of the mauling and it was determined that the DNA was a match. For detailed information on the incident see the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Board of Review Report at:

[20220628\\_FINAL-BOR-Ovando.pdf \(igbconline.org\)](#).

### 2021 Grizzly Bear Conflicts and Depredations in the Blackfoot Watershed

In 2021, in addition to the human fatality, there were a handful of conflicts and multiple reports of grizzly bears. The first tracks were observed on March 10<sup>th</sup> southeast of Helmsville, where a grizzly was feeding on a road-killed elk carcass along Highway 141. After the 10<sup>th</sup> and through the rest of the month, multiple different tracks were reported in the drainage. The first report of female with young was on March 27<sup>th</sup> near Placid Lake. The first collared grizzly in the Blackfoot Valley to emerge from his den, a male known as "Lingenpolter," was on March 27<sup>th</sup>. Throughout the year, grizzly activity in the drainage was constant with abundant reports of grizzlies feeding in crops, traveling near homesites and towns, and feeding on natural foods on private lands. Compared to years past, however, there was a reduction in the number of conflicts in the Blackfoot basin:

- On 5/14/2021, a calf was killed on a ranch near Helmsville. Traps were set by WS but no grizzlies were captured.
- On 5/28/2021, two grizzlies accessed a chicken coop north of Ovando. BC supplied the ranch with electric fencing materials and the bears moved on.
- On 6/1/2021, WS set traps for a grizzly that killed several calves at a ranch SW of Helmsville. No bear was captured.

- On 6/8/2021, WS verified that a grizzly killed a yearling on a ranch SE of Helmville in the Nevada Creek area. Traps were set, and a black bear was captured on the third day. The black bear was released at site.
- On 6/10/2021, two grizzlies were able to access a grain shed north of Ovando. Although the site was protected by electric fence and electrified cattle guard, the bears were able to gain access. The electrified cattle guard, due to accumulation of dirt, had grounded out and the bears were able to cross over without receiving a shock. After cleaning the cattle guard worked properly.
- On 6/12/2021, a grizzly bear was observed investigating dumpsters and grease bins at two restaurants in Seeley Lake. The bear did not gain access. FWP worked with both businesses to contain the sites.
- On 6/27/2021, a calf was injured on a ranch near Helmville. Due to the length of time before reporting, WS did not set traps. The calf later died from its wounds.
- On 7/7/2021, in the Mission Mountain Wilderness near Gray Wolf Peak, a backpacker had an encounter in camp with a female grizzly with cubs. The bear retreated after being sprayed with bear spray.
- On 7/8/2021, a camper was broken into near Ovando. The incident was unrelated to the mauling and was discovered after the fact. Grizzly bear hair was found at site that was determined to belong (DNA analysis) to a bear known as "Icel."
- On 7/13/2021, a calf was injured near Helmville. Due to the length of time before reporting, WS did not set traps.
- On 7/15/2021, a grizzly broke into a grain shed NE of Ovando. Due to the length of time before reporting FWP did not set traps.
- On 7/18 and 7/23/2021, a grizzly pulled down a bird feeder and got into uncontained grain at two residences near Clearwater Junction. FWP asked the residents to remove their birdfeeders and to contain their grain.
- On 7/28/2021, a grizzly was photographed accessing a shed for garbage near Summit Lake in the headwaters of the Clearwater River.
- On 8/18/2021, a ranch near Helmville had two incidents on the same day. A calf was killed by one grizzly in a mountain pasture and a second grizzly got into uncontained garbage at the ranch. Traps were not set at the depredation site since the calf had been consumed. The garbage was secured, and cameras were placed at site. The bears did not return.
- On 8/30/2021, a female grizzly with two yearlings accessed garbage at a dumpster in the Potomac Valley. A bear-resistant dumpster was delivered to the site.
- On 9/1/2021, an unmarked adult female grizzly was trapped, collared, and relocated after it was discovered feeding on old horse pellets and rotten grain in an abandoned



*This sow and her cubs were seen regularly on a Helmville-area ranch in 2021. Photo by Glen Phillips.*

open shed west of Ovando. The trapped bear, named “Boyd,” was relocated to the headwaters of Boles Creek near the Rattlesnake Wilderness.

- On 9/2/2021, a grizzly cub was discovered in a leghold trap set by a citizen near Rogers Pass. The cub was ear tagged and released. The bear was too young to collar.
- On 9/3/2021, a grizzly accessed uncontained garbage in a pull-behind trailer north of Ovando. The garbage site was secured with electric fence.
- On 9/14/2021 and 9/30/2021, a grizzly bear family took over a bowhunter’s elk near the Aunt Molly Wildlife Management Area.
- On 9/17/2021, an unprotected apiary was damaged by a grizzly in the Seeley Lake area. FWP assisted the beekeeper with electric fence.
- On 9/20/2021, an unprotected backcountry hunting camp was damaged by a grizzly near Limestone Pass in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. FWP encourages hunters to contain hunting camps with electric fence. The USFS issued a warning.
- On 9/21/2021, a grizzly got into garbage at a residence in Seeley Lake. The same bear went over to an adjacent private campground and accessed uncontained food stored in a tent. Awoken by the bear, the camper sought sanctuary in their vehicle and watched the bear pull out the cooler and groceries. FWP suggested the campground require all campers to store food and garbage in a hard-sided vehicle.
- On 9/27/2021, a hunting camp was damaged on the south end of the Mission Mountain Wilderness west of Seeley Lake. The unoccupied camp had food stored in the wall tent. The USFS issued a warning.
- In October 2021, a family group of grizzlies visited multiple homesites and ranches in the Helmville area to feed on apples and pears.
- On 11/18/2021, a grizzly bear damaged a parking garage in the Lake Inez area. The bear was attempting to access garbage that was stored inside. FWP assisted the homeowner with a temporary electric fence and set up cameras. The bear did not come back.
- On 11/22/2021, a grizzly in Lincoln took a hunter’s harvested deer that was stored in a tractor bucket.



*After a bear damaged this Lake Inez garage, temporary electric fence was installed to deter future attempts. Cameras placed at the site showed that the bear did not return.*

## IMPORTANT UPDATES REGARDING 2021 GRIZZLY BEAR ACTIVITY ELSEWHERE IN REGION 2:

### 2021 Grizzly Bear Conflicts and Depredations Outside of the Blackfoot Watershed

There was an increase in grizzly activity south in the Deer Lodge and Flint Creek Valleys and west in the Missoula basin.

- The first grizzly conflict outside of the Blackfoot Valley occurred on 4/8/2021, with WS confirming that a grizzly had killed a yearling cow NE of Avon. The next day it was discovered that the same bear accessed dog food at an adjacent ranch. Traps were set but no bear was captured. Multiple grizzlies were documented using adjacent habitat.
- On 4/19/2021, the radio-collared grizzly bear known as “Lingenpolter” accessed two chicken coops on the outskirts of Drummond. Traps were set but no bears were captured. FWP approached the owners of the chickens to see if they might be interested in participating in the electric fence incentive program. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> “Lingenpolter” crossed Interstate 90 near Bear Mouth Hot Springs and moved south into the Flint Range, John Long Range and spent time in the East Fork of the Bitterroot River in the Sapphire Range. During that time, he was photographed with a second grizzly and throughout the summer there were multiple reports of two bears traveling together. Both bears were involved in several garbage and bird feeder conflicts at Moose Lake in upper Rock Creek. Later that summer “Lingenpolter” may have gotten into a bird feeder, garbage, and chicken coop at different residences near the town of Gold Creek. He denned in the Flint Creek Range and dropped his collar the following spring.
- On 5/6/2021, after a series of observations of a grizzly in a bone yard within a calving ground near Avon, an adult grizzly was pre-emptively captured. The USFWS agreed to allow the grizzly, named “Ophir,” to be trapped and relocated because of the bear’s proximity to the ranch calving ground. The ranch agreed to remove all the carcasses from the dead pit and became involved with the Challenge’s Carcass Pick Up Program. The 400-pound male was relocated to Huckleberry Pass NW of Lincoln. The bear moved north into the Bob Marshall Wilderness and later dropped his collar in the Sun River.
- On 5/22/2021, two additional yearling steers were killed by a grizzly near Avon. WS set traps and an adult male grizzly was captured on the 24th. This grizzly was suspected to be involved with calf and yearling depredations in April. After consultation with the USFWS, the 500-pound male was destroyed. The hide and skull were donated for an educational display at the Lolo Pass Visitor’s Center.
- On 7/13/2021, a steer was killed east of Drummond. Due to the length of time before reporting WS did not set traps.



*This grizzly bear named “Ophir” was trapped and relocated after being seen regularly hanging around a ranch calving ground.*

- On 9/11/2021, a guard dog was killed by a grizzly near Avon. A pack of livestock guardian dogs cornered a grizzly that was trying to access uncontained dog food at a remote feeding station. WS responded and set a trap, but it was difficult to keep the trap set because of the free-ranging dogs. For more information on all this incident and additional information check out this article: [Connectivity, livestock hang in the balance as grizzlies show up in ranching town \(missoulia.com\)](https://www.missoulia.com/connectivity-livestock-hang-in-the-balance-as-grizzlies-show-up-in-ranching-town/)
- On 10/28/2021, a calf was killed by a grizzly north of Avon. Due to the length of time before reporting WS did not set traps.
- Between 10/28/2021 and mid-November, a grizzly bear family group broke into a chicken coop, several garages for garbage and damaged a cabin and homesite in Missoula's North Hills. Traps were set but no bears were captured. For more information on these incidents check out this article: [Missoula's first resident grizzly family gets in trouble quick \(missoulia.com\)](https://www.missoulia.com/missoula-s-first-resident-grizzly-family-gets-in-trouble-quick/)
- On 12/13/2021, a grizzly killed a calf on the edge of Drummond. WS responded and monitored the carcass, but the bear did not return.

## **COLLARED AND RELOCATED GRIZZLY BEARS 2021**

Here is a quick summary of relocated and radio collared grizzlies in R2:

- On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, during a spring radio-tracking flight, it was discovered that the research female grizzly bear "Silver Queen" had dropped her collar northwest of Silver King Mountain. She had been collared since July 2018 and was captured northeast of Lincoln. In the fall of 2020, she was observed with her yearling in the headwaters of the Landers Fork of the Blackfoot. This bear spends most of her time ranging the south end of the Scapegoat Wilderness between the Landers Fork and McDonald Pass. "Silver Queen" is an older 245-pound adult female.
- On 6/7/2020, the Flathead Indian Reservation agreed to take a Blackfoot Reservation grizzly. The collared female grizzly, known as "Sue," was relocated to the upper Jocko Valley. Through the summer she traveled through the Blackfoot drainage, the Swan-Clearwater Divide, Bob Marshall Wilderness and Scapegoat Wilderness. She dened in the headwaters of Cabin Creek on the Scapegoat Plateau. "Sue" had no management history and was captured and relocated to get her away from some homesites near East Glacier where her chances of survival were limited. In mid-April 2021, she emerged from her den and made a quick trip back to the Choteau area, but returned to the Blackfoot Valley in early June and back to the Rocky Mountain Front in August where she dropped her collar.
- "Walking Bear," a 535-pound adult male, recaptured in July 2018, dropped his collar on 5/5/2021 NE of Lincoln in the headwaters of Keep Cool Creek. Over the years he spent most of his time ranging the river bottoms around the Aunt Molly Wildlife Management Area, the Blackfoot Canyon, and the mountains north and south of Lincoln, MT. This male made two tremendous/fast paced trips from the Blackfoot Valley over the top of the Mission Mountains to visit the corn fields around Ronan.

- On June 10, 2021, the female grizzly bear “Ursa,” and her two yearlings, were in Alice Creek in the headwaters of the Blackfoot River near the Continental Divide. “Ursa” was captured in 2019 on August 26<sup>th</sup> northeast of Lincoln in the Landers Fork. She spent most of her time ranging the south end of the Scapegoat Wilderness between the Landers Fork and McDonald Pass and denned in the headwaters of Falls Creek Northeast of Lincoln. “Ursa” was last located and observed with her two sub adults on 5/5/21 in the headwaters of the Landers Fork.
- On 9/4/2020, young adult male grizzly “Tipper-not” was captured at a private resort north of Seeley Lake. At the time of capture there was no way to verify if he was involved in a series of conflicts involving uncontained garbage. Multiple grizzlies were in the area. As a result, he was relocated to the Whitefish Range northwest of Eureka. The bear denned in Canada just north of Frozen Lake and emerged in mid-April 2021. On June 11<sup>th</sup> he was recaptured in Trego, Mont., after traps were set for a grizzly accessing uncontained garbage in a residential area. It appeared “Tipper-not” was one of several bears in the area and he was relocated to the Spotted Bear River on the south end of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. He denned in the Swan Range and dropped his collar the next spring.
- On October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, young adult male grizzly “Lingenpolter” was captured west of Garrison Junction and relocated near Huckleberry Pass northwest of Lincoln. He denned north of Seeley Lake, and, in the spring of 2021, he emerged from his den and returned to the Drummond area where he did get into several chicken coops. He eventually crossed Interstate 90 and moved slowly south into the Deer Lodge and Bitterroot Valleys. He denned in the Flint Range and dropped his collar the next spring in the headwaters of Gold Creek.
- As mentioned above, on 5/6/2021 after a series of observations of a grizzly feeding in a bone yard within a calving ground, an adult grizzly named “Ophir” was pre-emptively trapped near Avon. After consultation with the USFWS, the bear was relocated northwest of Lincoln. The 400-pound male moved north into the Bob Marshall Wilderness and dropped his collar in the Sun River on 7/14/2021.
- On 9/1/2021, a female grizzly, known as “Boyd” was captured west of Ovando. The bear was radio collared and relocated to the headwaters of Boles Creek southwest of Placid Lake. Sadly, the collar malfunctioned after the release and the bear’s whereabouts is unknown. [Grizzly relocated from Ovando area - Seeley Swan Pathfinder \(seeleylake.com\)](#)

## **GRIZZLY BEAR MORTALITIES 2021**

In 2021 there were five confirmed grizzly bear mortalities:

- As mentioned above, on 5/24/2021 WS captured an unmarked adult male grizzly north of Avon. After consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in accordance with Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee guidelines, it was decided, that because multiple calves had been killed by this individual bear, it would be euthanized.

- On July 9, 2021, the adult male bear involved in the human fatality in Ovando was shot and killed. The unmarked grizzly bear was estimated to be four to seven years of age.
- On 9/8/2021, the female grizzly known as “Icel,” previously captured for research, was found poached on the Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area near Woodworth. The incident is under investigation.
- On 10/8/21, an unmarked adult male grizzly was struck by a vehicle along Highway 83. The bear was first reported to FWP as a bear swimming in Salmon Lake, but it quickly became apparent that the bear had a broken back. The bear was located the next day along the west shore of the lake and was put down. The hide and skull were donated to the BC for education events.
- On 10/19/21, a second adult male grizzly was struck and killed by a vehicle along Highway 200 east of Lincoln.



*A vehicle collision killed this male grizzly along Highway 200 east of Lincoln in October 2021.*

## **GRIZZLY BEAR AND BLACK BEAR NATURAL FOODS SUMMARY 2021**

In 2021 berry production was fair in the Blackfoot Valley and elsewhere in the region. Huckleberries, service berry, chokecherry and hawthorn production varied regionally and in certain areas there were localized berry crop failures. As a result, grizzlies and black bears shifted to other natural and unnatural food sources. In the Blackfoot and Clearwater drainages, conflicts involving unnatural foods, such as garbage and bird feeders, were minimal. But elsewhere, for example in the Missoula and Bitterroot Valleys, the number of bear conflicts were exceptionally high. The chokecherry and hawthorn crops around Missoula in the foothill regions, along stream bottoms and in the riparian zones were especially prolific in 2021. And during July and August more black bears than normal migrated to the area. In addition, for the first time, the Missoula area started experiencing an upsurge of grizzly bear activity. The intense heat in the late summer of both years, however, caused the berries to become over ripe and drop. As a result, the bears shifted their attention to domestic fruit, garbage, and other unnatural attractants.

### **2021 BLACK BEAR AND MOUNTAIN LION ACTIVITY:**

In 2021, black bear activity was constant. There were a handful of conflicts in the Blackfoot and Clearwater drainages, but throughout the Missoula Basin, Bitterroot Valley, and Clark Fork drainages conflicts occurred on a regular basis.

In January, February, and March of 2021, FWP fielded reports of lion activity throughout the Blackfoot, Clearwater, Clark Fork, and Bitterroot drainages. There were a handful of livestock

depredations and incidents where lions were in proximity to home sites. FWP was called out on multiple occasions to assist trappers with freeing trapped mountain lions from wolf and furbearer traps. FWP also responded to several moose and black bears in traps. Report black bear and mountain lion activity and incidents as quickly as possible and for detailed information on black bear and lion activity in and around R2 check out these two sites:

<http://missoulabears.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/missoulabears/>

### **BEAR SMART COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN THE BLACKFOOT AND ELSEWHERE IN REGION 2**

The Blackfoot region is well known for a community-driven approach to managing and mitigating for bear conflicts, and the Blackfoot Valley has been recognized internationally for cooperative effort and having some of the lowest numbers of grizzly conflicts in the state. But, as mentioned above, there are a few grizzlies in the Blackfoot watershed that have developed bad habits the last few years.

Therefore, it is always best to lock up all sheds and barns where garbage, grain and other attractants are stored. In the Blackfoot Valley, if citizens need additional alarm devices, bear spray, electric fence materials or energizers for containing carcasses or other bear attractants (grain, sweet licks, garbage, etc.), call Eric Graham. If you are having an actual conflict with a black bear or grizzly, or if you need alarm devices, bear spray, electric fence materials or energizers for containing carcasses or other bear attractants and live outside of the Blackfoot drainage, call James Jonkel, Eli Hampson, or Rory Trimbo. Wildlife Services handles all predation incidents.

Collaborative community-led approaches for mitigating bear conflicts can benefit both people and bears. For many years the BC has been practicing this approach effectively and recently other communities around R2 have been developing similar programs for addressing bear-human conflicts. For example, the City of Missoula, the town of Seeley Lake, the town of Alberton and the community of Potomac Valley have organized and are working diligently on addressing garbage and other attractant issues that are the driving force for bear-related conflicts. A similar endeavor is occurring in the Bitterroot Valley.

Resources are available for any communities interested in pursuing similar efforts. For example, the Bear Smart Community Resource Fund, is available through nonprofit group People and Carnivores: [Nonprofit offers money for communities to go Bear Smart \(missoulain.com\)](http://missoulain.com). In addition, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee has a whole website devoted to assisting



*Garbage containment – like this set up outside a Seeley Lake business – is critical for preventing bears from becoming habituated to human food sources and for reducing bear-human conflicts.*

communities with bear smart community efforts. For more information, contact Eric Graham or any of the R2 Bear Management Team. Check out these links to learn about various community activities:

[Bear Smart Communities - Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee \(igbconline.org\)](http://igbconline.org).

[The Ice Cream Place electrifies dumpster fence - Seeley Swan Pathfinder \(seelelake.com\)](http://seelelake.com)

[Stopping scavengers with electricity - Seeley Swan Pathfinder \(seelelake.com\)](http://seelelake.com)

[FWP taking harder stance on improperly stored attractants - Seeley Swan Pathfinder \(seelelake.com\)](http://seelelake.com)

[Students learn about bear ecology, safety at Bear Academy - Seeley Swan Pathfinder \(seelelake.com\)](http://seelelake.com)

### **RANGE RIDER AND LIVESTOCK CARCASS PICKUP PROGRAMS:**

The Blackfoot Challenge is happy to report that a good portion of the livestock producers in the Blackfoot Valley are participating in both programs. Currently during the spring, summer and fall there is a range rider covering the central portion of the Blackfoot Valley and a range rider covering the Potomac Valley. If you are interested in the range rider program, contact Eric Graham for more information. If you are interested in starting up similar programs in other areas, contact James Jonkel.

The Blackfoot Challenge's Livestock Carcass Pick Up and Removal Program runs during calving season from mid-February through mid-May. Thereafter, carcasses in the Blackfoot Valley are picked up by FWP or BC employees. In the last few years there have been incidents of grizzly bears venturing into ranch compounds to retrieve carcasses left out for the carcass pickup program. Dead calves were either left on the ground or placed on hay bales within high activity areas on the ranch and bears were lured in to feed on the carcasses. As a result, the pickup protocol was re-evaluated, and it is now recommending that after March all carcasses set aside for pickup be stored away from ranch premises. **For carcass pick up service in the Blackfoot Valley, call Dan Massey at 406-793-5639 (winter and spring) and Barry Gordon at 406-541-1078 (summer and fall).** If you are unable to make contact at these numbers or need carcass pickup service elsewhere in R2, call James Jonkel with FWP at 406- 544-1447. The carcasses are either taken to the compost site at Clearwater Junction or the Missoula and Deer Lodge landfill sites. To learn more about this program, watch "Living with Carnivores: Boneyards, Bear & Wolves." Click here: <https://vimeo.com/131528982>.

### **ELECTRIC FENCE AND ELECTRIFIED CATTLE GUARD COST SHARE PROJECTS:**

Multiple fencing projects have occurred at various ranches and residential sites across the Blackfoot Valley. Over the last summer, the BC has assisted multiple families with electrified residential containment fences and larger scale NRCS electric fence projects. NRCS EQIP funds have provided participants with financial assistance through the Grizzly Bear Mitigation Targeted Implementation Plan. This funding has allowed for installation of electric fences and

electrified drive-over mats to deter grizzlies from entering ranch headquarters throughout the Blackfoot area. For more information on how to access NRCS EQIP funding in the Blackfoot or elsewhere, check out the link below.

Electric fencing is an excellent way to protect livestock, fowl and contain residential attractants. Electric fence is a method of ensuring that bears or other predators that check out yard areas will not come back again. A good shock is the best way to teach bears to keep away. Contact Jamie Jonkel (544-1447) or Eric Graham (240-3132) if you would like to talk about cost-share programs to install electric fence around home sites, livestock holding pens, chickens, cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, bee yards, fruit orchards, gardens and other sites that might attract bears or other wildlife. For information on electric fence and another option for cost sharing on electric fence check out these sites:



*Across the Blackfoot, electric fencing is protecting livestock, bee yards, chicken coops and this goat pen – helping discourage bears from areas where they might get into trouble.*

<https://defenders.org/got-grizzlies>

[USDA APHIS | Wildlife Services' Nonlethal Initiative](#)

[Grizzly Conflict Mitigation Targeted Implementation Plan \(usda.gov\)](#)