

Tim Kroeker  
CDFW Wildlife Biologist  
559-641-7592  
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To: Ted Williams, President  
Yosemite West Property and Homeowners INC.

Good afternoon, Yosemite West homeowners. I am happy to “speak” to you through this message regarding the bear conflicts you have been having recently. Since attendance may be low at this meeting due to Covid-19 concerns, please feel free to send this message to your group via email.

I am the local Wildlife Biologist for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Although Yosemite West is surrounded by the National Park, it is private property and therefore under our jurisdiction. Sometimes there is confusion over who to call and over what may be done with bears because of that situation. Sometimes Park staff may respond to haze bears or provide educational material because they are closer. When that happens, they are working cooperatively with us. Their advice is sound but there are policy differences between the two agencies regarding how bears are handled. One of those policy differences pertain to relocation of bears.

Most people have heard stories or seen video footage of bears being captured and relocated. Typically, these bears are in a category we describe as no harm, no foul bears. These are bears outside bear habitat or in situations from which they cannot extract themselves and have not caused property damage. Such a bear would be captured and moved back to nearby bear habitat, usually within a few miles. Once bears become habituated to human food sources or have caused property damage they are not good candidates for relocation. Years of experience have taught us that habituated bears cause problems wherever we take them or simply go back to where they were initially removed from.

As many of you know, bear activity at Yosemite West has been high this summer. Bears have attempted to enter cabins or have entered them, including when people were present.

Early this summer people reported bears walking on porches, damaging BBQs, approaching people, and being deliberately fed; nobody wants this situation. Some human interaction with bears is inevitable where high density homes and recreational cabins are located adjacent to prime bear habitat. However, conflicts can be minimized through education and willing participants. It is possible that if visitors to Yosemite West had been aware of the problem and had acted with knowledge, much of the problems that occurred later could have been avoided.

Problems with habituated bears can sometimes be averted by eliminating access to food. Access to food must be completely and permanently removed or these bears will seize the opportunity and take it. Bears which have learned to cause property damage while taking food are even more difficult to deal with. Sometimes the only solution is lethal for the bear. Current regulations provide a property owner who experiences damage with the option to eliminate the problem bear through a depredation permit. The permit is issued by California Department of Fish and Wildlife upon verification of damage. Usually, a Wildlife Services trapper is stuck with the job of catching and putting such a bear down.

Happily securing garbage and other food sources are often effective with early implementation. We have some great literature to inform people how to reduce conflicts with bears at our website. <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Bear> Including a PDF pamphlet with specific tips for homeowners. <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=57522&inline> The second page of that PDF is particularly valuable and includes a check list for visitors to act on. The second page could be printed and displayed as a sign or poster in a prominent place inside rental properties. Following these guidelines will help keep your guests and your property safe. We are also evaluating how other educational items might be used to increase awareness.

It would be great to start a conversation about bears next spring to raise awareness early. I wish I could talk to you all in person and be available to answer your questions. Feel free to share my contact information with other homeowners who have questions.

Thank You  
Tim Kroeker  
CDFW Wildlife Biologist  
559-641-7592

Tim Kroeker  
Wildlife Biologist-Madera Unit  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

559-641-7592  
[Tim.Kroeker@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Tim.Kroeker@wildlife.ca.gov)