



The voice of fish and wildlife agencies

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For Immediate Release

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Innovative BearWise Initiative Expands Across America

Washington D.C. (May 24, 2023)- The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies is excited to announce that BearWise has now been adopted by 39 states and is being utilized by people nationwide. BearWise meets the growing need for consistent information on living responsibly with black bears. This innovative program provides information supported by sound science and useful resources that give people, neighborhoods, communities, and businesses practical ways to prevent human-bear conflicts and help keep bears wild.

“BearWise offers a wealth of useful information and smart solutions that help homeowners, businesses and communities coexist with bears,” said Curt Melcher, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and President of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. “This program delivers information people can understand and trust, and resources and tools people can use with confidence. The Association is proud to be part of such an impressive program.”

Black bears were once found over all of America’s forested lands, but as the country was settled, bear populations fell. Today, thanks to new attitudes and decades of enlightened conservation and management efforts, black bears have made a dramatic comeback over much of their historic range and are returning to many places where they haven’t been seen in decades. There are once again established bear populations in at least 40 states and frequent sightings in several more. More people than ever before are living in, visiting, and spending time outdoors in bear country. The combination of more people in bear country and more bears living in closer proximity to people creates more potential for human-bear interactions and conflicts. The need for a trusted nationwide resource that provides scientifically sound information about how to live responsibly with bears and avoid causing conflicts has never been greater.

“It’s not enough for a state wildlife agency to just educate people about bears. We need them to take action. BearWise provides many resources that help people prevent conflicts around their homes and communities as well as when they’re spending time outdoors in bear country. Agencies also benefit when visitors from BearWise states travel and bring their knowledge with them. Being BearWise is a way of life,” said Dan Gibbs, Black Bear Program Leader for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and the Committee Chair for the BearWise program.

BearWise was developed by state agency bear biologists who wanted to make sure that no matter where people lived, played, or traveled, they got the same consistent message about coexisting with bears. Today the BearWise program is managed by a team of North American bear biologists and communications professionals and supported by the Association and the [BearWise member state wildlife agencies](#).

Visit bearwise.org and discover why people all over North America rely on BearWise for information they can trust and resources they can use.

[Read this featured article on the BearWise Program](#) to learn more about everything BearWise has to offer.

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For more information and materials and to sign up for email alerts, visit www.bearwise.org

BearWise® Created by bear biologists. Supported by State Wildlife Agencies.
Dedicated to helping people live responsibly with black bears.

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The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance sound, science-based management and conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest. The Association represents its state agency members on Capitol Hill and before the Administration to advance favorable fish and wildlife conservation policy and funding and works to ensure that all entities work collaboratively on the most important issues. The Association also provides member agencies with coordination services on cross-cutting as well as species-based programs that range from birds, fish habitat and energy development to climate change, wildlife action plans, conservation education, leadership training and international relations. Working together, the Association's member agencies are ensuring that North American fish and wildlife management has a clear and collective voice.

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