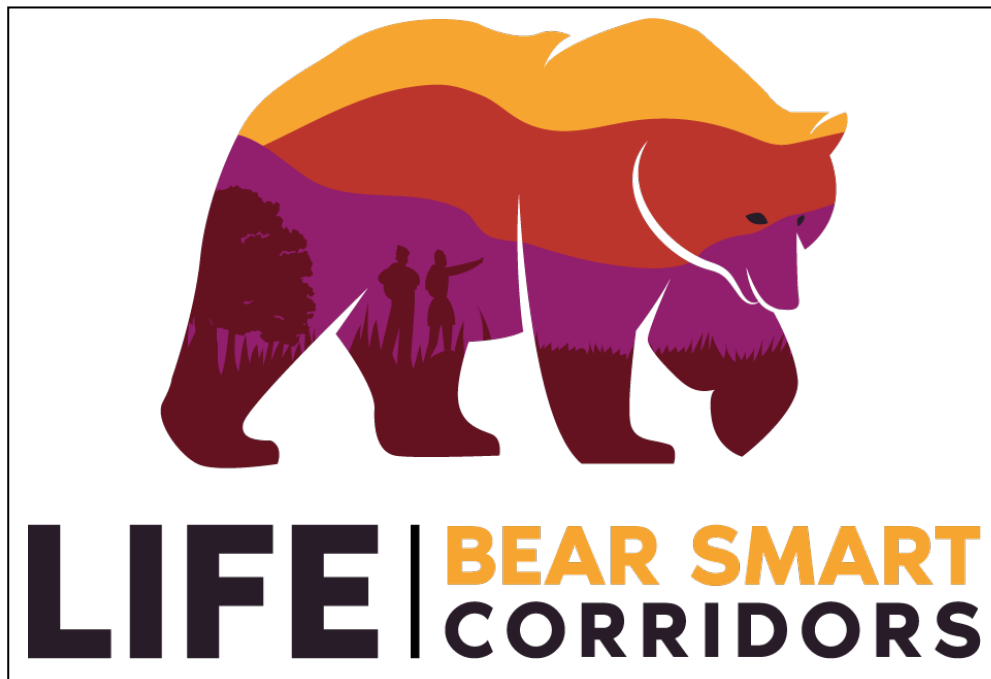




LIFE20 NAT/NL/001107 LIFE Bear-Smart Corridors

GUIDELINES FOR A BEAR-SMART COMMUNITY

C1 – Development and operation of Bear Smart Communities



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Introduction

The Bear Smart Community (BSC) initiative is a new conservation approach which was introduced in British Columbia (Canada) where, every year, hundreds of bears are put down, as a solution to human-bear conflicts. The Bear Smart Community programme was created, at the provincial level, as a voluntary programme for municipalities in Canada. It followed the efforts and dedicated work of people who understood that conflicts – and therefore the destruction of bears – can be avoided by changing the way humans behave. The BSC programme was designed by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the Union of the British Columbia Municipalities. It is a “voluntary, preventive conservation measure that encourages communities, businesses and individuals to work together”.

The main aim of this new paradigm is to prevent human-bear conflicts by removing potential human related food resources, to promote simple but effective measures to mitigate human-bear conflicts, to improve bear habitat suitability/accessibility and to increase public awareness regarding the ecological importance of the bear as an umbrella species to preserve within the wider framework of biodiversity conservation; all this, while promoting a sense of ownership and pride in being part of a community that is capable of coexisting with such an iconic species.

Bears in Italy and Greece live primarily in areas that, although potentially suitable and often legally protected, are mainly dominated by humans. At the same time, range recoveries of the species in both countries often result in new conflicts with humans. Because humans in these areas are not familiar with living with bears urgent conservation measures are required.

Prevention of human-bear conflicts is essential to foster both distribution and demographic growth and thus save these brown bear populations from extinction, considering that even today anthropogenic mortality, due to direct and indirect causes, represents the most consistent threat to the long-term survival of the species.

The success of a BSC requires increased public awareness, participatory processes and therefore the systematic dissemination of accurate information on the biology and ethology of the brown bear. This can be achieved through the communication among various stakeholders, and the direct involvement of local communities in the implementation of Bear Smart actions.

1. OBJECTIVES

1.a. General objectives

This initiative aims to improve environmental conditions for bears in the main bear dispersal corridors in both central Italy and Greece through the development of 18 Bear Smart Communities which will facilitate coexistence between bears and local stakeholders and increase support of the resident community towards conservation actions of the species. This will allow for the expansion and growth of the bear population.

1.b Specific objectives

- Reduction in bear damage to agricultural and livestock activities and bears being killed in retaliation for damage to livestock.
- Reduction in bears being conditioned by easy access to anthropogenic food resources.

- Improvement of collaboration and mutual understanding between stakeholders, awareness about the complexity of bear management.
- Improvement of the functional connectivity of the corridors for bear movements.

2. Reference literature and/or legislation

These Guidelines consider current laws and regulations on bear conservation at European, national and local levels:

- Italian Red List of IUCN
http://www.iucn.it/pdf/Comitato_IUCN_Lista_Rossa_dei_vertibrati_italiani.pdf
- Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/home>
- Action Plan for the Protection of the Marsican Bear (PATOM)
<http://www.minambiente.it/pagina/piano-dazione-la-tutela-dellorso-marsicano-patom>
- Italian Law 11 February 1992, no.157 “Rules for the protection of warm-blooded wildlife and for hunting”
<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1992/02/25/092G0211/sg>
- Common Ministerial Decision of the Ministers of Environment and Rural Development Nr. 104180/433, which was published in the Government Gazette B/272/07.02.2014
- Greek Law 4685/20.

Additionally, there is list of annexes on the best practices for human-bear coexistence we can refer to for technical details:

- Bear smart conservation actions for the mitigation of human-bear conflicts
 - Bear Intervention Units
 - Guidelines for the setup of a Bear Smart Community Information Point
 - Bear damage preventative devices
 - Guidelines for the management of forest vegetation of interest in the diet of the Marsican brown bear from a rewilding perspective
 - Technical and economic feasibility study for security works of wells and water collection tanks located in high mountain areas
 - Business development strategies in BSCs.

3. Bear Smart Community establishment and governance

A holistic approach is instrumental in the successful establishment and operation of a BSC as it guarantees that measures/actions taken/implemented have been adapted to the specific context of each respective community. The basic requirements for the establishment of a BSC are:

1. Complete an investigation of the threats to the bear and/or a monitoring of the critical areas for human-bear interactions and the risks for the species.
2. Based on the results of the previous analysis, implement a Coexistence Plan received from the Bear Stewardship Committee. This Plan should highlight the main areas of human – bear

- conflicts and recognize the importance of a Bear Intervention Unit (BIU) as a tool to mitigate conflicts. Priorities for the operation of the BIU should be defined.
3. Establish the local BSC Committee which will operate during the project under the continuous monitoring and support of the BSC Stewardship Committee. In Greece, in the mid-to long-term, the BSC Stewardship Committee should examine the possibility of integrating the local BSC Committee to the Local Advisory Committees foreseen in Greek Law 4685/20. Such a provision should be addressed in the after-LIFE plan.
 4. Identify at the local level the key stakeholders (e.g., Municipal authorities, State Conservation Agencies, NGOs etc.) that should be involved in the Coexistence Plan and actively participate in the process of establishing, implementing and achieving the expected results of the BSC initiative to take up the management of the programme in the future.
 5. Define and implement within the framework of the Coexistence Plan an effective long-term stakeholder engagement strategy that includes all sectors of the community.
 6. Make long-term planning and decision-making documents at the local level consistent with the Coexistence Plan.
 7. Set up a local Technical Committee that will oversee the implementation of the BSC / Coexistence Plan.
 8. Regularly evaluate and update the Coexistence Plan (e.g., every five years).

The BSC governance approach is deliberately adaptive with a timely verification of the effectiveness of the actions that aims to self-improve and ultimately improve human – bear coexistence in the area through evaluation clauses.

4. The BSC Stewardship Committee

A BSC Stewardship Committee should be established in each project country. BSC Stewardship Committees should consist of at least one (technical/scientific) representative from each LBSC beneficiary.

The objectives of a BSC Stewardship Committee are:

- Launch and support the development of the BSC initiative.
- Adopt these guidelines and align them with the national management and conservation priorities for the species (i.e., National Action Plan), define a monitoring protocol and sign data sharing agreements.
- Plan a BSC Stewardship Committee annual work plan.
- These guidelines and their implementation strategies need to be evaluated and if necessary updated.
- Evaluate and accept a coexistence plan from the local Technical Committees that will implement threat analysis recommendations in preparatory investigations.
- Evaluate and accept the protocol for the Bear Intervention Units to implement conflict management actions received from the Technical Committees.
- Monitor the progress of the local BSC workplans, evaluate results obtained and highlight critical issues.

- Produce annual reports that evaluate the progress of the programme and identify priority actions for the following year.
- Explore, in collaboration with the local BSC Committees opportunities to make BSC economically sustainable over time.

5. Bear Smart Community Technical Committees

Each local BSC should establish a local BSC Technical Committee that should include all locally important stakeholders that have been identified in the Coexistence plan.

The local BSC Technical Committees should choose the most appropriate name for their BSC initiatives and increase awareness for the initiative, for example, through a dedicated “BSC Office”. Establish a coexistence plan that will implement threat analysis recommendations which have been identified in the LBSC preparatory surveys and submit it to the BSC Stewardship Committee.

- Establish Bear Intervention Units to implement conflict management actions according to an agreed protocol to be evaluated and accepted by the BSC Stewardship Committee.

These guidelines aim to best fit the necessities of both countries. Based on this doc, each country will produce/amend as it sees fit to address local needs and expectations. Thus, specific implementation plans will follow for each geographical context.

The Guidelines for the Bear Smart Community (BSC) are addressed to the communities involved to manage HUMAN-BEAR coexistence.

The main communities’ stakeholders are the following:

- governmental institutions (Municipality, Regional government, Protected Areas, Foresters)
- Socio-economics sector (Stockbreeders, beekeepers, farmers, touristic operators, citizens)
- Volunteers
- NGOs.

All these actors are recognised as having complementary, roles and tasks, all equally fundamental to improving the functioning of BSCs.

6. Bear Smart Data collection and sharing

BSC Technical Committees will collect relevant data according to the list below in their own territories from BIUs and citizens through a common remote sensing app or in person at the BSC information points. These data will inform an annual report from each BSC to share with the Bear Stewardship Committee and contribute to the databases of the local Bear Monitoring Networks:

- Threats to the bear and other wildlife (e.g., poaching and poisoning events, direct disturbance, dangerous infrastructures, road kills and wildlife crossing the road, dead animals and stray dogs).
- Accessible anthropogenic food resources (e.g., rubbish bins turned over, damages to livestock or in vegetable and fruit gardens, damage events which are not officially reported to the compensation system).
- Report possible awareness events organized.