

News Release



USDA Forest Service
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS-OH MY!

Delta, CO., (August 29, 2007) – Increasingly the number of public encounters and complaints about bears in national forest campgrounds and at other recreation facilities across the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) and on other public and private lands have been heard. It has been a long, dry summer in many places and the bears are hungry and reaching into areas for food that they haven't previously been active in.

According to Patt Dorsey, Area Wildlife Manager in Durango for the CDOW, "Bears are walking noses. Fish, bait and trash produce strong odors. When bears smell food they will travel for miles to find it. And when they arrive at campgrounds or public fishing areas conflicts with humans can occur."

Even with the use of "bear-proof" trash containers, campgrounds and dispersed camping areas are a natural attractant for bears because they are filled with the aroma of food during the summer months and fall hunting seasons. Campground rules require sites to be kept clean and it is strongly recommended that all food is stored in locked vehicles when not being prepared or eaten. Even the smallest amount of food, even an onion, can attract bears when left out.

"The GMUG National Forest has been working with our recreation staffs and campground concessionaires to educate campers on preventing bear encounters and to install additional 'bear-proof' trash containers in campgrounds and at other trash sites this summer and we will continue to do so" explained Charlie Richmond, Forest Supervisor of the GMUG National Forest. "In the meantime, it is important to remind campers, anglers, hunters and other recreation enthusiasts to take precautions to help prevent unwanted encounters with bears on national forest lands.

The following are some suggested practices to use in bear country:

- Do not keep food inside tents or sleep in clothes that were worn while cooking.
- Allow barbecue grills to run for a few minutes after the food is cooked to burn off fat and food remnants.
- Pet food and dishes should be put away immediately after your pet has eaten.
- In the back-country, hang food well away from camp sites and suspend it above the ground at a level that prevents bear access.
- Do not clean fish at water facilities in the campgrounds and do not leave fish entrails in the forest or at cleaning facilities. Anglers should carry plastic bags and dispose of fish entrails in bags and in proper enclosed containers.
- In the back-country, fish entrails should be buried at least 200 feet from any stream, lake or campsite.
- Never approach bears to take pictures or “see them up-close.” Bears are wild animals and no matter how tame they may seem, they can be provoked at a moments notice.
- If you encounter a bear on a trail or in a campground, never run or turn your back on it. Make yourself “big” by raising your hands and/or waving them above your head and making noise and back away slowly.

In residential areas:

- Store garbage inside and put it out only on the morning of pick-up;
- Take in bird feeders at night, and during the day when bears are known to be in the area;
- Pick up fruit that has fallen on the ground;
- If your neighborhood uses a dumpster, talk to the trash company or your homeowner's association about obtaining a bear-proof container;
- Keep garage doors closed;
- Talk to neighbors who might not know about bear behavior.
- If you live in bear habitat and want to compost, use an indoor worm bin.

Please have fun and enjoy yourself on the national forest, but be careful about bear encounters and use practical prevention methods like those recommended above to reduce the likelihood of your encounter with a bear. Have fun....AND be safe in the great outdoors!

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