

Newsline
USDA Forest Service in Alaska – April 8, 2011
Topic: Kenai-Russian River Human-Bear Interaction Forums
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The Kenai-Russian River area is extremely popular for fishing among both two--and four footed anglers. And that can lead to tragedy, when a person is killed or injured, and when a bear has to be destroyed to protect life and property.

A four day series of public forums will help develop a more effective action plan to reduce human-bear conflicts.

Bobbie Jo Skibo with the Forest Service is the Russian River Interagency Coordinator, she tells us abundant fishing for sockeye salmon and the area's rich cultural resources bring humans and bears into close proximity:

"It's really generated management challenges. The primary one that we're really trying to address now is the adverse conflicts between people who visit the area and bears that are also coming into the river system for food."

Jan Caufield is a Project Facilitator for the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution:

"We're inviting the public to attend one of four different evening collaborative discussion sessions that will be held. We're going to have two on the Kenai Peninsula on April 18th on Cooper Landing and on April 19th in Soldotna. And then there will be two in Wasilla and Anchorage- Wednesday April 20th in Wasilla and on Thursday April 21st in Anchorage. And the purpose of these public forums is to have a very interactive discussion between members of the public who are able to attend and also the agencies that are involved in managing the Kenai-Russian river use area. We're asking people to come to discuss what experiences they've had and their thoughts and ideas on how to reduce conflicts between humans and bears who are using that Kenai-Russian river area during the high use summer season."

Skibo tells us all parties with an interest in the area are invited to come to the table with their comments and suggestions:

"During the public process we're really hoping to work collaboratively with small groups of people to get them together with fellow stakeholders and consider how the past and the current management actions have worked. And we want to improve upon them. So some of these things can include how to handle harvested fish and fish carcasses and fish waste actually. Proper storage of human foods and beverages and other attractants. Some of the things that have come up have been night time closers, maybe the agency should consider shutting the river down at night, and that's something that we need to talk about and really analyze. "

More information is available online by visiting [w-w-w-dot-e-c-r-dot-gov](http://www.ecr.gov), then searching for Russian River.

In Juneau, I'm Bob Belongie for the USDA Forest Service.