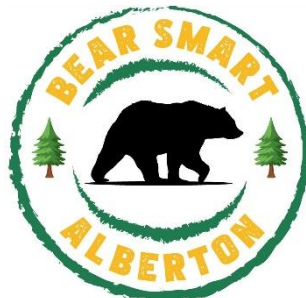


# Bear - Human Conflict Management Plan for the Alberton, Montana Area

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Final adopted by Alberton Town Council on August 5, 2025



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# Bear - Human Conflict Management Plan for the Alberton, Montana Area

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## Introduction

This document was prepared by the Bear Smart Alberton Working Group (BSAWG) to guide decisions and actions regarding bear-human conflict management in the greater Alberton, Montana community. This Plan complements the [Bear Smart Community Assessment for the Alberton, Montana Area](#) completed in June 2023. A community assessment and a conflict management plan are the first and second steps, respectively, that a community must take to proactively pursue a reduction in bear-human conflicts through the Bear Smart Community program ([www.bearsmart.com](http://www.bearsmart.com)), originally developed in British Columbia, Canada and now broadly applied in Canada and the United States. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee has adopted a [Bear Smart Communities framework](#) for application across grizzly bear habitats.



Bear Smart Community logo.

Reducing bear-human conflicts is not a new idea, and it does not require inventing new solutions. Wildlife managers have been dealing with the issue for decades. We know what causes these conflicts, and we know how to reduce or eliminate them. The conflicts arise when humans, often unwittingly, make unnatural foods that attract bears available on the human landscape. The solution is securing these attractants, so they are unavailable, or eliminating them altogether. Why, then, is solving the conflict issue so difficult? The answer is that bears cannot change their innate behavior, and changing human behavior can sometimes be difficult. We often lack the understanding, will, or financial resources necessary to make needed changes. That is where a management plan, collaboratively developed by multiple interests, can help guide decisions and actions needed to lead Alberton towards becoming a Bear Smart Community.

This Plan is the beginning, not the end. Implementing the plan will be an iterative process as, together, we find ways to make the difficult possible. We don't yet know all there is to know about modifying human attitudes and behaviors to be successful at making Alberton a Bear Smart Community, but we know enough to get started. This Plan may be revised as we learn more. We will adapt, and this Plan will change as new information, resources, and tools are gathered. Welcome to the journey!

## Area Covered by the Plan

The area covered by this Plan is the same area covered by the Community Assessment. This includes the incorporated Town of Alberton, as well as areas lying east of town to the Missoula County line and north of the Clark Fork River. Areas lying west of town a short distance past the mouth of West Mountain Creek are also included. All of these areas are in Mineral County within or adjacent to Alberton (See map below). Some people living outside

this area may consider themselves part of the Alberton community, and bear-human conflicts occur both inside and outside the area. The mapped area identifies the priority area for immediate focus, but it may be expanded in the future as public interest and resources allow.



Map of area covered by the Management Plan

## Plan Approach

The organization of this Plan follows the six defined steps, with some modifications specifically for Alberton, that a community must follow in order to become a Bear Smart Community ([www.bearsmart.com/managing-communities/overview/](http://www.bearsmart.com/managing-communities/overview/)) . For each step, the Plan describes recommended actions that can be taken to complete the step or element and the funding necessary to do so. Completing these actions will depend on the availability of funding and public and political will. The six elements identified in the original British Columbia Bear Smart program are:

1. Complete a bear hazard assessment.
2. Prepare a human-bear conflict management plan that is designed to address the bear hazards and land-use conflicts identified in the previous step.
3. Revise planning and decision-making documents to be consistent with the human-bear conflict management plan.
4. Implement an effective education program directed at all sectors of the community.
5. Develop and maintain an effective bear-proof municipal solid waste management system.
6. Implement and enforce “Bear Smart” bylaws prohibiting the provision of food to bears as a result of intent, neglect or irresponsible management of attractants.

These elements have been modified as follows to better fit the situation in the Alberton area.

- 1. Complete a community assessment of bear-human conflicts.** The community assessment reviews the history and patterns of bear-human conflicts in a community and identifies the types, relative abundance, and priority for treatment of bear attractants present.
- 2. Prepare a bear-human conflict management plan.** The plan identifies ways to reduce or eliminate bear-human conflicts by managing bear attractants.
- 3. Implement a public information, education, and outreach program.** It is important to interact with all segments of the community to inform and educate people about bear-human conflicts, why they should be reduced, and to involve them in decisions and actions to that end.
- 4. Review and revise as needed the pertinent land use planning documents, regulations, and ordinances.** These provide a legal framework for managing attractants that may lead to bear-human conflicts.
- 5. Implement actions to reduce the presence of bear attractants in the community.** Solid waste is a very important, but not the only, bear attractant. All bear attractant sources must be addressed to become a Bear Smart Community.
- 6. Monitor bear-human conflicts and enforce direction pertaining to bear attractants.** Monitoring and enforcement are necessary to determine success and ensure that efforts are successful.

## **Plan Elements, Recommended Actions, and Funding**

### **1. Complete a community assessment of bear-human conflicts.**

The Bear Smart Alberton Working Group completed a [Bear Smart Community Assessment for the Alberton, Montana Area](#) in June 2023. The Assessment is available publicly on the Internet or by request to the working group. While the Assessment is complete, it is a living document that should be updated any time new information becomes available.

#### **Recommended action**

- i. Update and revise the Community Assessment as needed.

#### **Funding**

The community assessment was completed by BSAWG volunteers at no cost. Any future revisions would be completed in the same manner.

### **2. Prepare a community-based bear-human conflict management plan.**

This document is that Plan. The plan defines goals and strategies to address bear-human conflicts within the community that were identified in the Community Assessment. It assesses potential funding needs and likely collaborators.

### Recommended actions

- i. Seek Alberton Town Council approval of this Plan through passage of a resolution showing support.
- ii. Meet with Mineral County Planner/Sanitarian and County Commission to discuss existing planning regulations related to securing bear attractants and any need for new or revised regulations.

### Funding

This Management Plan was prepared by BSAWG volunteers at no cost.

Coordination with and/or approval by local government officials would occur as a part of their normal duties at no additional cost.

### 3. Implement a public information, education, and outreach program.

A strong information and education effort is critical to gaining public support for the Bear Smart Community program. Developing a greater understanding of bear ecology and behavior, and identifying bear attractants and ways to reduce them, are keys to eliminating bears' access to non-natural foods and attractants. That is where public information and education can be most helpful. Parts of this element are currently ongoing, but more needs to be done.

#### Ongoing actions

- BSAWG initiated monthly meetings in 2023 to discuss program activities. The public is invited to these meetings, and part of each meeting is devoted to discussions about information and education work.
- BSAWG collaborated with Alberton School on producing the documentary film [Fatal Attractants](#). The film addresses long standing bear-human conflicts in Alberton and efforts to become a Bear Smart Community.
- BSAWG created a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/BearSmartAlberton/](http://www.facebook.com/BearSmartAlberton/)) to communicate with the public about the Bear Smart Alberton program. BSAWG also posts regularly on the Alberton community Facebook page.
- BSAWG created a public email list to facilitate communications with the public. Email [bearsmartalberton@gmail.com](mailto:bearsmartalberton@gmail.com) to request to be added to the list.
- BSAWG met with the Alberton Town Council and Mayor to present a slide presentation about bear activity in and near Alberton, to talk about the Bear Smart Communities program, and to recruit Council members to the working group. One Town Council member has been actively participating in the working group since March 2023.



BSAWG conducted public outreach at Alberton Railroad Day 2023.

- BSAWG and several partner groups staffed a bear information and education booth at Alberton’s Railroad Day event in July 2023. The effort was well received, and we estimate about 200 people received information about the Bear Smart program.
- BSAWG acquired materials and supplies needed for information and education work, including materials for creating an education trunk of bear display items and tabling supplies for staffing future events. This included acquisition of a grizzly bear hide and skull for educational purposes.
- In early 2024, BSAWG brought on three part time volunteers to perform information and education activities in and around Alberton. We expect this part of the program to be very active as the year progresses.

**Future actions** – Some of the items below are planned to occur in 2024, and others are simply ideas that need further development and may or may not occur.

- Seek more community involvement in the Bear Smart Alberton program, including additional membership on the BSAWG.
- Staff an information and education booth at Railroad Day each year
- Staff a booth at the weekly Alberton Farmer’s Market
- Using grant funds, hire a program assistant whose duties will include public information and education.
- Increase collaboration with Alberton School, including bear education presentations, cooperation on bear-related school projects, and inclusion of students and administrators in BSAWG.
- Develop an informational display in the town community center or library
- Participate in Alberton’s clean up event scheduled for the week of Earth Day.
- Provide a yearly update presentation to the Alberton Town Council
- Enhance our efforts to communicate on social media
- Develop an Alberton page on the existing Missoula Bears website
- Erect informational signs about the Bear Smart Community program at each end of town.
- Create a newsletter to be mailed out to area residents
- Hold a bear information and education workshop for the public
- Distribute “welcome wagon” bear informational packets to new residents moving to the area
- Participate in other public events throughout Mineral County



Alberton school kids learn about bears at Brovold Community Orchard.

### **Recommended actions**

- i. Continue outreach, information, and education efforts indefinitely into the future to reach the existing population and new people moving into the community.
- ii. Use a variety of outreach methods to ensure that every individual in the community is informed about Bear Smart principles. This includes children as well as adults.
- iii. Increase community participation in the BSAWG.
- iv. Participate in as many community events as possible with Bear Smart messaging.
- v. Collaborate with local and state government, bear-related NGOs, schools, and other community organizations on community outreach.
- vi. Collaborate with Bear Smart groups in other communities to share information and ideas.

### **Funding**

Costs associated with an Information, Education, and Outreach program include purchase of long-term materials for one or more educational trunks (bear skulls, hides, tracks, etc.), purchase of items to support a presence at events (tables, chairs, canopy, etc.), purchase of disposable brochures, stickers, and other handouts, community signage, and vehicle mileage reimbursement for volunteers. After initial startup costs, some of which were incurred in 2023, a sustained annual budget of around \$2,500 would be adequate. Volunteer work time is a significant contribution to this program. It does not appear in the cost figures, but it is useful as matching funds when applying for grants. The bulk of this funding would likely come through grants from non-government conservation organizations. Some handout materials or stickers may be available through Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP). A small amount of funding may come from public donations.

### **4. Review and revise as needed the pertinent land use planning documents, regulations, and ordinances.**

Land use planning and regulatory documents need to be reviewed in collaboration with applicable government officials to determine their effectiveness in preventing bear-human conflicts, both now and in the future. It is important to plan for future growth and development in Alberton with reducing the risk of bear-human conflicts in mind. Officials who should be involved in this process include the Alberton Town Council and Mayor, the Mineral County Commissioners, and the Mineral County Planner/Sanitarian. Pertinent documents that should be assessed during the review include:

- [Subdivision Regulations for Mineral County and the Towns of Alberton and Superior Montana](#)
- [Mineral County, Alberton and Superior Growth Policy Update 2016](#)
- [Zoning Ordinance, Town of Alberton, Montana](#)
- [Town of Alberton Ordinances](#)

The preferred approach to managing bear attractants in a community is voluntary adherence to best management practices as developed over the years by wildlife management agencies. Information and education programs can help tremendously in securing voluntary compliance because most people want to do the right thing when they understand what they should be doing. However, experience has shown that a segment of the population will refuse to secure their bear attractants due to cost, indifference, or resistance to government direction. Those who do so become a “weak link” in a community’s efforts to become Bear Smart because bears continue to be attracted into the community. For this reason, ordinances and other legal direction may be needed to effectively reduce bear attractants and resultant bear-human conflicts. This is no different than laws establishing speed limits or seat belt usage.

Reviewing regulatory documents can be a collaborative effort involving local governments, MFWP, advisory groups like BSAWG and other advisory groups. If it is found that changes need to be made, those changes will need to go through the prescribed legal processes at each government level, likely to include public involvement.

#### **Recommended actions**

- i. BSAWG can serve as a facilitator to initiate discussions with local government officials on the topic of regulatory guidance for securing bear attractants and reducing bear-human conflicts.
- ii. Government officials, BSAWG, and others should review regulatory guidance for sufficiency and any needed changes.
- iii. Government officials should initiate the legal processes for any changes determined to be necessary.
- iv. Regulatory guidance established in other communities should be reviewed as possible templates for any changes needed in the Alberton area.

#### **Funding**

This element would be completed by BSAWG volunteers at no cost, local and state government officials within the scope of their normal duties at no additional cost, and possibly by other collaborators at no additional cost.

### **5. Implement actions to reduce the presence of bear attractants in the community.**

As described in the [Bear Smart Community Assessment for the Alberton, Montana Area](#), a wide spectrum of bear attractants exists in Alberton. Each will be addressed below.

**A. Natural attractants** – These include serviceberries, chokecherries, elderberries, hawthorn, rose hips, grasses and herbs, and other natural vegetation that is attractive to bears as food sources. These attractants generally do not lead to bear-human conflicts unless they are in close proximity to human habitation. This, unfortunately, is the case in Alberton, as these plants are scattered throughout the community.

Some Bear Smart communities, like Virginia City, MT have implemented fruit gleaning programs to pick chokecherries in late summer, eliminating them as a bear attractant. The management recommendation for Alberton is to educate the public about these plants and their attractiveness to bears, and then monitor for significant bear use. Individual landowners, at their discretion, may choose to remove the plants from their property to reduce the attraction to bears.



Bear eating chokecherries.

#### **Recommended actions**

- i. Provide educational resources to homeowners so they can identify potential bear foods on their property.
- ii. Monitor bear activity at locations in town with concentrations of natural foods.
- iii. Consider establishing a fruit gleaning program to pick natural foods like chokecherries before bears begin using them, or replace fruit-producing shrubs with plants that do not attract bears.
- iv. Report bear sightings in town to MFWP.

#### **Funding**

The cost of educational materials is included in element #3 above. Monitoring and reporting would be done by citizens and/or BSAWG members at no cost. Any picking of chokecherries or other bear foods would be done by homeowners or volunteers at no cost. Grant funding could be pursued for replacing fruit-producing shrubs, but the amount needed is undetermined at this time.

**B. Garbage** – Garbage, as is the case in most communities that bears inhabit, is the number one bear attractant in Alberton. It is a strong attractant because, for bears, it is a quick and easy source of calorie-dense food. This includes both commercial and residential garbage.

Alberton has no central garbage disposal point like a dump or transfer station. All garbage originating in Alberton is removed from the community either by pickup from individual homes and business by Republic Services or is hauled away by the property owners themselves.



**Garbage strewn on an Alberton street by bears. Note the bin on the left is bear resistant. Bears tipped it over but were unable to get inside.**

At all these sites, garbage should be secured to be unavailable to bears. For some of the smaller commercial outlets, one or more standard bear resistant 96-gallon garbage bins may be adequate. For larger outlets requiring dumpster sized containers, the containers should be stored in an electrified, fenced enclosure or a containment structure with a roof and stout doors. These enclosures typically include a concrete floor to prevent

digging by bears, chain link wire sides, and a strand of electrified wire around the top. A good example of this type of enclosure is the River Edge Resort and Restaurant which has been successfully using such an enclosure for the past few years.

Most homeowners in Alberton and nearby areas use Republic Services as their garbage pickup service. Some residents have voluntarily acquired bear resistant garbage bins from Republic Services to secure their household garbage, but this number is a minority. Most residents are still using non-bear resistant containers that can be easily tipped over and rummaged through by bears. Evidence



*Chain link garbage enclosure at River Edge Resort in Alberton.*

of this is readily visible on Alberton's streets during periods when bears are actively seeking food in the town. There is resistance by some residents to using bear-resistant bins due to cost, convenience, or indifference. It is strongly recommended that all residents of Alberton and nearby communities acquire and use bear-resistant garbage containers. Ideally, this change would occur voluntarily. Information and education efforts may help to make this change. If residents understand the importance of securing their garbage, then they will be more likely to do so. Ultimately, however, it may be necessary to strengthen existing refuse ordinances to secure garbage. This will be discussed more in a later section.

A drive through Alberton and just outside the town limits reveals a good deal of construction underway. As Missoula expands westward and Alberton becomes even more of a bedroom community than it currently is, population growth in Alberton seems inevitable. Along with this human growth comes the likelihood of increasing bear-human conflicts unless significant steps are taken to secure bear attractants. This is a lesson we can learn from observing other communities in Montana and throughout the West where population growth has occurred in proximity to wildlands. As Alberton grows, the current garbage disposal system based on hauling garbage out

of the community bin by bin will become increasingly inefficient in the future. Alberton will need other options, like a transfer station. County and Town government officials and garbage hauling services would be wise to begin planning for that time.

#### **Recommended actions**

- i. Revise Town of Alberton Ordinance [Title 7-1 Accumulations of Premises](#) to include language specific to securing garbage from bears. This should include a requirement for the use of bear resistant garbage containers at residential and commercial sites or storing garbage inside electrified fenced enclosures or inside secure buildings until the morning of pickup. See Appendix A for a suggested draft ordinance.
- ii. Request that Republic Services only provide bear resistant garbage containers to residents in the Town of Alberton to comply with the revised ordinance.
- iii. Meet with the Mineral County Planner/Sanitarian and County Commissioners to discuss a subdivision regulation requiring bear resistant containers.
- iv. Consider a partnership with bear advocacy groups to subsidize homeowners for any additional costs of using bear-resistant containers.
- v. Continue to provide information and education resources to area residents on the importance of securing garbage from bears.

#### **Funding**

Dealing with garbage as a bear attractant will likely be the costliest part of making Alberton a Bear Smart Community. The cost, however, will depend on what solution is ultimately selected through discussions and negotiations between local government, citizens, non-government conservation organizations, and garbage hauling business(es). One potential solution is to require everyone in Alberton to use bear-resistant garbage bins and to pay for it themselves. The added cost above non-bear-resistant bins is likely to be in the range of \$10-\$15 per month, but the cost could be negotiated with hauling companies based on volume of customers. Another potential solution would be to subsidize homeowners, either by garbage hauling companies absorbing the additional monthly cost, or by non-government conservation groups reimbursing homeowners for the added costs. In the long term, as Alberton continues to grow, a garbage transfer station could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more. For now, it is impossible to place a precise cost on solving the garbage issue because a great deal of discussion, negotiation, and collaboration needs to occur before progress is made. The major contribution garbage makes to bear-human conflicts in Alberton suggests these efforts should begin soon.

**C. Fruit Trees** – Fruit trees, including apples, pears, plums, cherries, domestic berry bushes, and other fruits, are the second most important bear attractant in Alberton. These trees occur in people’s yards throughout the community. Depending on the individual owners, the fruit may or may not be used as a human food source. The largest occurrence of fruit trees in Alberton is Brovold Community Orchard. The orchard was historically a major bear attractant, but electric fence was installed in

2023 to exclude bears. It is no longer a significant attractant that brings bears into the community.

Electric fencing is the best way to eliminate fruit as a bear attractant. Fences can be either permanent or set up temporarily each year. MFWP has prepared a [manual on constructing electrified bear fencing](#). With the help of the manual, building an effective electric fence is not beyond the capability of most homeowners. Another approach to eliminating fruit as a bear attractant is harvesting the fruit before it becomes ripe enough to attract bears. This is a good option for homeowners who do not plan to use the fruit themselves. In some communities, gleaning programs have been established for this purpose. Volunteers remove the fruit each year with the homeowners' permission. This could be a worthwhile effort in Alberton.



Electric fencing at Brovold Community Orchard.

Information and education is an important component of managing fruit as a bear attractant. Teaching people why it is important to keep their fruit away from bears, and how to do it, is the first step in solving the issue. Not only does it prevent bears from becoming conditioned to a non-natural food source, it also prevents the sometimes catastrophic damage bears can do to fruit trees.

#### **Recommended actions**

- I. With the aid of volunteers, inventory and map fruit trees within Alberton.
- II. Conduct an educational campaign with homeowners to explain why it is important to secure fruit from bears.
- III. Assist homeowners with electric fencing around fruit trees, including possible subsidization of cost.
- IV. Implement a gleaning program for homeowners who do not care to utilize their fruit.
- V. Include fruit trees in a new town ordinance about securing various types of bear attractants (see Appendix A).
- VI. Replace fruit trees that are no longer being used with plant species that are not bear attractants.
- VII. Consider replacing any unwanted/unused fruit trees with other attractive landscaping plants.

#### **Funding**

The information and gleaning programs can be completed by volunteers at little to no additional cost. Erecting temporary electric fencing around a single fruit tree costs a few hundred dollars. Kits are available from commercial vendors for under \$300. The cost of erecting permanent fencing around multiple trees will, of course, vary depending on the number of trees and area fenced. Typically, however, this

work could be done for a few thousand dollars. The entire Brovold Community Orchard (about 3 acres) was fenced with volunteer labor in 2023 for under \$6,000. Funds for replacing unwanted fruit trees with other landscaping plants may be available as grants from bear conservation organizations.

**D. Bird feeders** – Though they may seem innocuous, birdfeeders can be a significant attractant for bears. They can also serve as an entry point that leads to pursuing other attractants. Homeowners who feed birds can be very protective of their hobby, requiring sensitivity and tact in dealing with the issue. Education should be the first approach, but if unsuccessful, then an ordinance may be necessary. Fortunately, eliminating bird feeders as bear attractants is not too difficult. Seasonal timing of when feeders are placed out, and electrification of feeders, can both be effective.

It should be noted here that feeding of most wildlife species is illegal under Montana state law, and there has been at least one past incident of intentional feeding of bears in the Alberton area. Intentionally feeding bears, or taking other actions that indirectly but routinely make food available to bears, are citable offenses under the law.



Bear raiding a bird feeder.

#### **Recommended actions**

- i. Conduct an educational campaign with homeowners to explain why it is important to secure bird feeders from bears.
- ii. Assist homeowners with electric fencing around bird feeders where appropriate, including possible subsidization of cost.
- iii. Consider a program to replace bird feeders with bird baths.
- iv. Include bird feeders in a new town ordinance about securing various types of bear attractants (see Appendix A).

#### **Funding**

Information and education and revising ordinances are covered under other elements and require no additional cost here. Seasonally taking down bird feeders requires no cost. Electric fencing a bird feeder would likely cost under \$200, and replacing feeders with bird baths would cost even less.

**E. Small Livestock** - This includes chickens, other fowl, goats, sheep, pigs, and possibly other animals. There are many examples of small livestock keeping in Alberton, and these penned animals are easy prey and a strong attractant for bears. The best solution is electrifying the pens. The [manual on constructing electrified bear fencing](#) makes this feasible for most homeowners. BSAWG, Defenders of Wildlife, and possibly other non-government organizations have programs in place for subsidizing the cost of building electric fences.

### Recommended actions

- i. Conduct an educational campaign with homeowners to explain why it is important to secure small livestock from bears.
- ii. Assist homeowners with electric fencing around livestock enclosures, including possible subsidization of cost.
- iii. Include small livestock in a new town ordinance about securing various types of bear attractants (see Appendix A).

### Funding

Small livestock fencing costs can be quite variable depending on the type of livestock and the condition of current facilities. Attaching electric fencing to a well-made existing pen or coop may only cost a few hundred dollars. Building an entirely new pen or coop may cost a few thousand dollars. The costs will be less, obviously, if homeowners do the work themselves as opposed to hiring someone to do it. In early 2024, BSAWG completed two demonstration fencing projects in Alberton using contracted labor. One was a completely new chicken coop and pen, whereas the other was installing electric wire around an existing pen. The total cost of both projects was just over \$5,000. Some conservation groups, such as Defenders of Wildlife, will reimburse homeowners for part of the cost of erecting electric fences. BSAWG funding for demonstration projects comes through grants from some of these conservation groups.



Chicken coop completed in Alberton by BSAWG.

**F. Bees** – Bears are highly attracted to bee hives. Electric fencing is an effective way to protect hives from bears. Hives are not abundant in the Alberton area, but there are a few. Electric fencing should be constructed around any hives that are not already protected.

### Recommended actions

- i. Assist homeowners with electric fencing around bee yards, including possible subsidization of cost.
- ii. Include bee hives in a new town ordinance about securing various types of bear attractants (see Appendix A).

### Funding

Funding for bee hives and apiaries would be similar to funding for small livestock discussed above.

**G. Pet and livestock food** - Feeding pets outdoors produces a bear attractant. Storage of grain and other livestock feed in open sheds or closed outbuildings is another bear attractant. Bears will not hesitate to break into buildings for food, sometimes even breaking through the windows of homes. Pet and livestock food must be stored inside a sturdy building or protected with electric fencing.

**Recommended actions**

- i. Conduct an educational campaign with homeowners to explain why it is important to secure pet and livestock food from bears.
- ii. Assist homeowners with electric fencing around food storage facilities where appropriate, including possible subsidization of cost.
- iii. Include pet and livestock food in a new town ordinance about securing various types of bear attractants (see Appendix A).

**Funding**

Removing pet food off the porch and into the house or moving livestock feed from an open area into a secure building does not incur a cost. In some cases, outbuildings need to be electrified to keep bears out. The cost would be similar to fencing a small livestock pen as described above.

**H. Other food sources** – There are many other types of potential bear attractants, including some that may not commonly be thought of. Outdoor barbeque grills, back porch freezers, compost piles, and gardens are a few. Any place a bear can be rewarded by finding food is a potential attractant and should be secured.

**Recommended actions**

- i. Conduct an educational campaign with homeowners to explain why it is important to secure all bear attractants.
- ii. Assist homeowners with securing bear attractants where appropriate, including possible subsidization of cost.
- iii. Include “all other food sources” in a new town ordinance about securing various types of bear attractants (see Appendix A).

**Funding**

Eliminating these bear attractants normally involves either moving them into a secure location, or electrifying them. There is either no cost, or costs similar to electrifying other small areas or facilities.

**6. Monitor bear-human conflicts and enforce direction pertaining to bear attractants.**

To know if our efforts to reduce bear-human conflicts are being successful, it is important to monitor the number, location, and types of conflicts reported over time. Fortunately, MFWP has had a system in place to do this for years. The website <https://missoulabears.org/report/> has an easy to complete form for reporting bear sightings as well as conflicts. Alternatively, conflicts can be reported to MFWP by phone.

Success in managing conflicts would manifest as a decrease in reported conflicts from year to year.

Regulations and ordinances intended to reduce bear-human conflicts should be enforced just as fish and game regulations or any other laws. Enforcement of both Mineral County planning regulations and Alberton town ordinances are under the jurisdiction of Mineral County. Local government budgets can make fully enforcing regulations and ordinances a challenge. There are, however, things that can be done even in the absence of enforcement. For example, an ordinance that requires use of bear-resistance garbage bins should mean that Republic Services can only provide bear-resistant bins to its customers in Alberton. In essence, this would be a self-enforcing ordinance.

**Recommended actions**

- i. Report bear sightings in Alberton, particularly those that involve any form of bear-human conflict such as dumping over garbage cans.
- ii. Request MFWP to provide an annual update on bear activity in Alberton to the Alberton Town Council.
- iii. Encourage Mineral County to actively enforce regulations and ordinances pertaining to bear attractants in Alberton.
- iv. When revising regulations and ordinances, seek to make them as self-enforcing as possible.

**Funding**

Reporting bear-human conflicts is cost-free; it simply requires the effort to consistently do it. Adequate enforcement of regulations and ordinances may require an increase in county funds for this purpose. County officials should be reminded of the importance of enforcement and encouraged to seek sufficient funding.

**Summary of Actions, Costs, and Responsibilities**

The actions, costs, and responsibilities needed to reduce bear-human conflicts in the Alberton area are summarized in the table below.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Complete community assessment	\$0 - completed	BSAWG, MFWP
Complete management plan	\$0 - completed	BSAWG, MFWP
Adopt management plan	\$0	Alberton Town Council, Mineral County Commission
Implement information/education	\$2,500 annually	BSAWG and partners
Review/revise regulations/ordinances	\$0	Mineral County government Alberton Town Council

Reduce bear attractants in Alberton	Unknown at this time; additional collaboration needed.	Mineral County government Alberton Town Council BSAWG Non-government organizations Homeowners and Citizens
Monitor bear-human conflicts	\$0	MFWP, BSAWG, citizens and homeowners
Enforce regulations and ordinances	unknown	Mineral County

## Collaboration

Reducing or eliminating bear-human conflicts in the Alberton area will take the collaboration of many entities. Each of these entities brings to the table their own expertise, resources, and jurisdictions. Just as every link in a chain must be strong for the chain to serve its useful purpose, so must every party in this collaborative effort play their own important role. The following is a list of known or potential collaborators at this time. More may be added as this process continues.

### **Town Government**

- Alberton Town Council
- Alberton Mayor

### **Mineral County Government**

- Board of Commissioners
- Planner/Sanitarian

### **State Government**

- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

### **Multi-Government**

- Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee

### **Solid Waste Industry**

- Republic Services

### **Non-government organizations**

- Bear Smart Alberton Working Group
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Great Burn Conservation Alliance
- Heart of the Rockies Initiative
- People and Carnivores
- Vital Ground Foundation
- Wind River Bear Institute

## Next Steps

To complete the finalization of this Management Plan and its subsequent implementation, the following steps need to occur:

1. The Plan should be presented to the Alberton Town Council and Mineral County Commissioners.
2. Both of the above local government entities should sign a resolution committing to the approval and support of the Plan. See Appendix A for a draft Resolution.
3. BSAWG should proceed with implementing the Plan in collaboration with local governments, MFWP, and non-government organization partners.

## **APPENDICIES**

- A. Draft Town of Alberton ordinance for reducing bear attractants – to be developed. The Bear Smart Alberton Working Group can assist with developing an appropriate garbage ordinance if requested by the Alberton Town Council.
  
- B. Resolution adopting this Management Plan by the Town Council of the Town of Alberto

Resolution of Intent  
No. 345  
Town: Alberton State: Montana

**Resolution Adopting the Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan  
for the Town of Alberton, Montana**

WHEREAS, the Town of Alberton approved resolution No. 337 on November 12, 2024 stating its intention for the Town to become a Bear Smart Community; and

WHEREAS, adopting a management plan for reducing bear-human conflicts is an essential step towards becoming a Bear Smart Community; and

WHEREAS, the Alberton Town Council and the Bear Smart Alberton Working Group have jointly prepared a management plan titled Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan for the Alberton, Montana Area; and

WHEREAS, this management plan is an educational guideline for Town residents and can be modified and updated by Alberton Town Council as needed, as conditions change, or we learn more about reducing bear-human conflicts,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT:

RESOLVED, that the Town of Alberton adopts the Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan for the Town of Alberton, Montana Area as an educational guideline and implementing Bear Smart Communities program in the Alberton town limits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Alberton commits to implementing this management plan in cooperation with non-government, and industry partners subject to available funding and personnel.

PASSED AND ADOPTED as a resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Alberton, State of Montana at its regularly scheduled meeting held on August 5, 2025.

Attested:



Nancy Tome  
Clerk, Town of Alberton

Approved:



Anna LeDuc  
Mayor, Town of Alberton