

## Bear Management Program Efforts to Increase Availability of Bear-Resistant Trashcans in Florida

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) mission is to 'manage fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people'. FWC strives to manage wildlife in a responsible manner, and reduce or eliminate conflicts between people and wildlife. With growing human and bear populations in Florida, human-bear conflicts are on the rise (Figure 1).

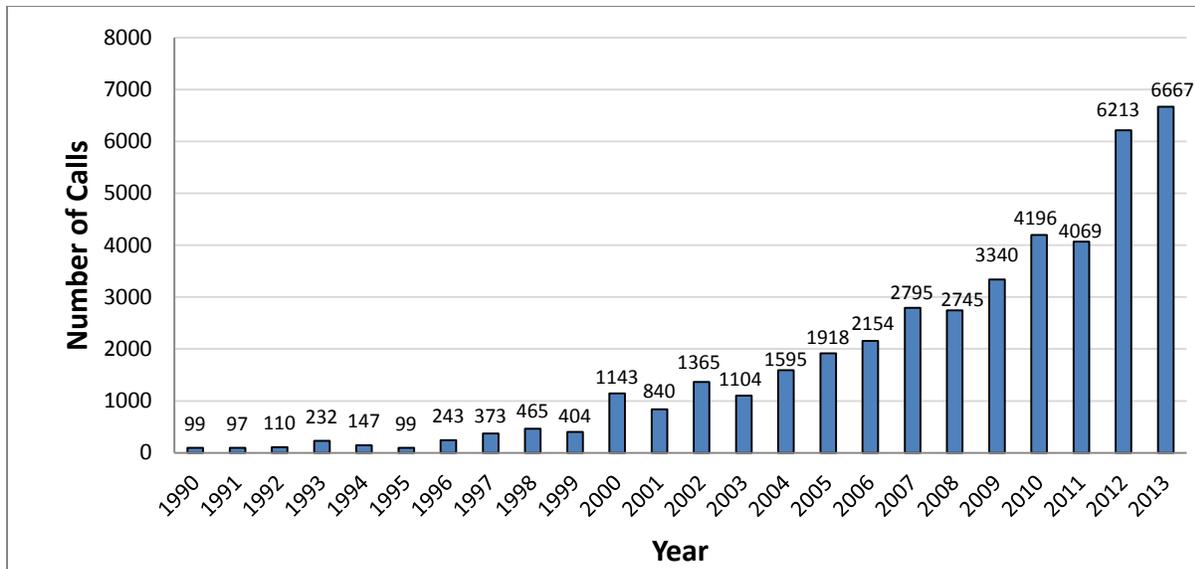


Figure 1. Bear-related calls received by FWC in Florida from 1990 to 2013 ( $n = 42,758$ ).

The greatest number of bear-related calls to FWC come from Central Florida (Figure 2). Using major roads as boundaries, BMP identified parts of 9 counties in central Florida that comprised 53% of all calls received statewide between 2010 and 2013 (Figure 3).

The majority of the statewide calls FWC receives are related to bears entering neighborhoods to access garbage and other human-provided foods (i.e., reports referring to a bear in garbage, the general area, the yard, or a tree). The FWC's Bear Management Program (BMP) has therefore focused efforts on encouraging residents and businesses to secure trash and other items that attract bears into communities. Many options are available to keep bears from accessing garbage, including cost-free alternatives such as storing garbage in a secure location like a garage or sturdy shed, and low cost options where residents or businesses can modify trash containers themselves to make them more bear-resistant.

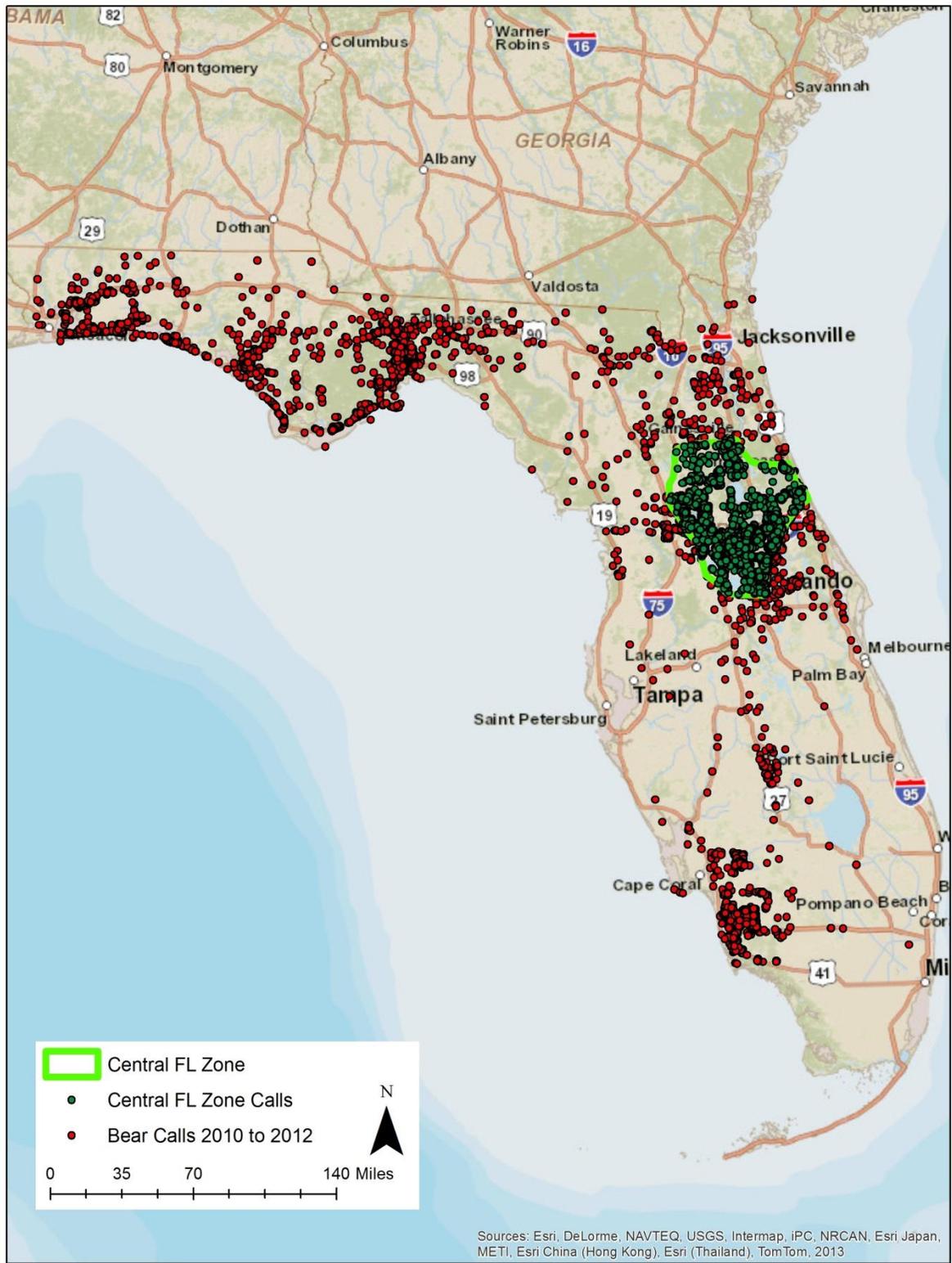


Figure 2. Bear-related calls received by FWC statewide and those received in the Central Florida Zone between 2010 and 2012.

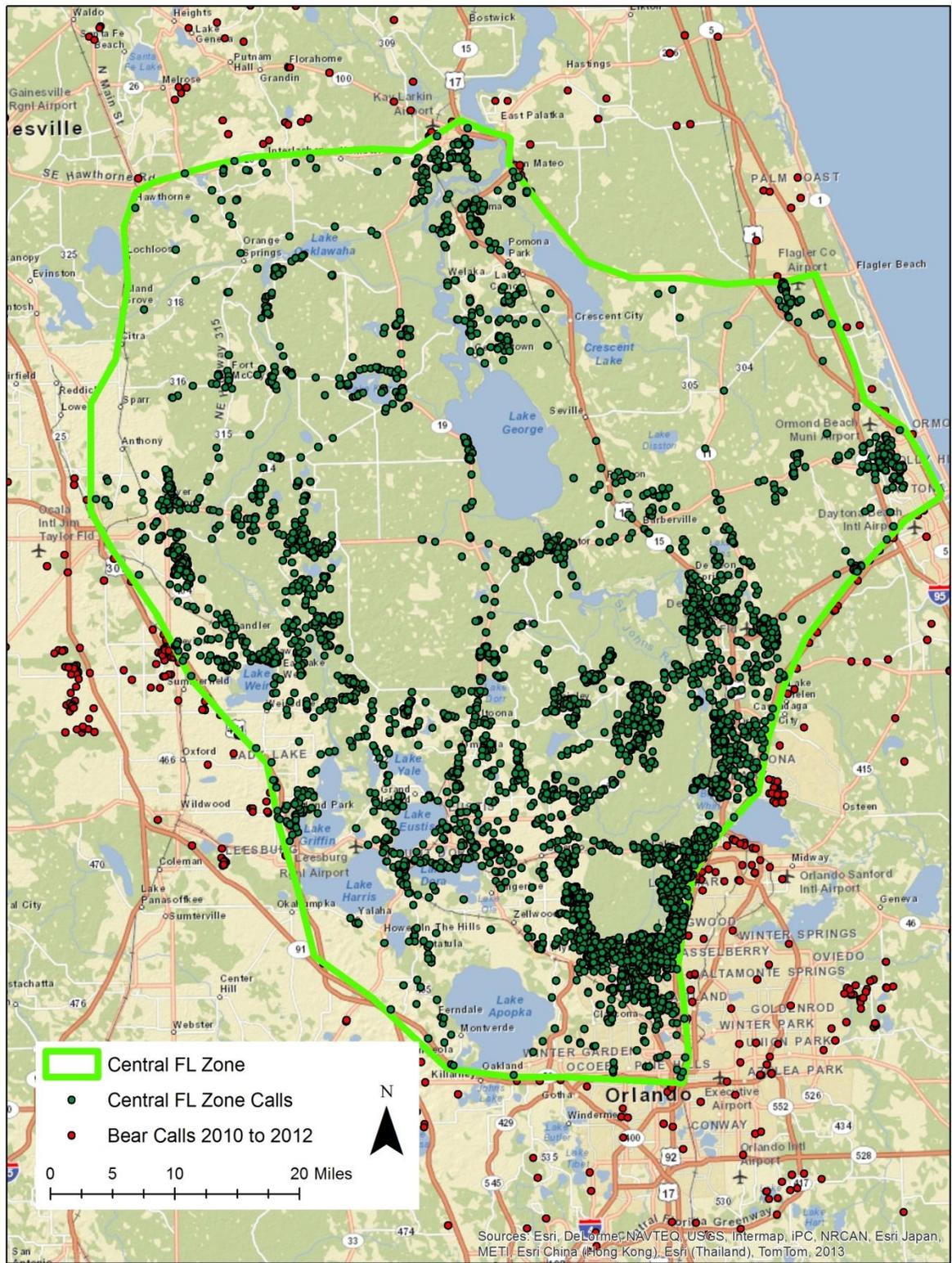


Figure 3. Bear-related calls received by FWC in the Central Florida Zone between 2010 and 2012.

Since 2008, BMP has been actively involved with increasing the availability of bear-resistant trashcans in Florida. BMP has provided grant-based incentive funding for seven of the nine counties in Florida where residents are offered bear-resistant trashcans by their waste service providers (Table 1). Note that waste service providers are offering two primary options to residents at this time: an extra monthly fee to lease the cans or an outright purchase of the cans. There is a wide range of fees associated with the bear-resistant trashcans varying by company, county, and in some cases, within the same county (Table 1).

Many waste service companies are charging residents an additional monthly service fee of \$5 to \$15/month to have bear-resistant trashcans. The extra service charges help offset the additional cost of the bear-resistant trashcans and, in some cases, modifications to the garbage trucks. A standard 96 gallon rolling polycart costs the waste service company around \$60, whereas the bear-resistant model of that same trashcan costs around \$200. Residents living in parts of Orange, Seminole, and Volusia counties can get bear-resistant trashcans from their waste service providers, but they must purchase the cans outright at \$180 to \$200.

However, bear-resistant trashcans often last 60% longer than regular trashcans, and so negotiations in pricing should consider this increase in durability over regular trashcans. FWC has also found that waste service companies are more likely to offer bear-resistant trashcans at a reduced rate when 1) the county or city they are operating in has universal service, and/or 2) the contract with the county or city extends for several years. In those cases, the higher up front capital investment in bear-resistant trashcans is offset by the higher number of customers associated with either universal service or the longer time frame of the contract to recoup the costs. In large areas experiencing conflicts, residents and home owner's associations have suggested creating a special tax district to grant all residents access to bear-resistant trashcans.

For residential customers, FWC recommends using bear-resistant trashcans with automatically-locking lids (see <http://www.myfwc.com/media/1496088/BearResistantContainers.pdf>). Studies have shown that users of bear-resistant trashcans requiring lids to be manually clipped or otherwise locked often do not remember this extra, but critical step. In addition, waste service providers prefer this style of can as it typically can be opened more quickly than one requiring additional steps to open.

The FWC recommends any schools, restaurants, community centers, and other business in bear country use bear-resistant dumpsters or cans to keep bears from accessing garbage and protect people frequently these locations. There are several options to make a regular dumpster bear-resistant, including changing from simple plastic lids to plastic lids reinforced with metal frames and lock bars (see <http://www.myfwc.com/media/1334130/whatisabearproofdumpster.pdf>).

Table 1. Information on bear-resistant trashcan availability, costs, and use in Florida.

County	Company	Initial Fee	Fee Purpose	Extra Cost/ Month	Number of Cans in Use	CWT Grant Funds	CWT Grant Funds For
Franklin	Waste Pro	None	NA	\$5.00	380	\$6,000 <sup>a</sup>	6 mo. free for 1 <sup>st</sup> 200
Gadsden	Waste Pro	None	NA	\$6.00	Unknown	\$0	N/A
Leon	Waste Pro	\$30.00	Delivery	\$8.00	24	\$10,000	3 mo. free for 1 <sup>st</sup> 100
Okaloosa	Waste Management	None	NA	\$10.50	20	\$4,930	3 mo. free for 1 <sup>st</sup> 100
Orange	Veolia	\$200.00	Purchase	None	40	\$9,997	50% off purchase for 1 <sup>st</sup> 100
Santa Rosa	Waste Management	\$10.00	Exchange	\$5.31	75	\$0	N/A
Santa Rosa	Waste Pro	\$60.00	Delivery	\$15.00			
Seminole	Waste Pro	\$180	Purchase	\$5.00	None Yet	\$20,000 <sup>b</sup>	\$40 credit for 1 <sup>st</sup> 500
Seminole	Waste Pro	\$180	Advance	\$15.00			
Volusia	Waste Pro	\$200.00	Purchase	None	45	\$5,000	50% off purchase for 1 <sup>st</sup> 100
Volusia	Republic	None	NA	None	132	\$29,964	100% purchase for 120
Wakulla	Waste Pro	\$60.00	Advance	\$6.00	132	\$6,000 <sup>a</sup>	6 mo. free for 1 <sup>st</sup> 200

<sup>a</sup> A total of \$6,000 was provided for residents of Franklin and Wakulla counties to try out 200 bear-resistant trashcans for free for six months.

<sup>b</sup> Funds for Seminole County have not yet been released, as this is a CWT grant from FY14-15 which begins July 1, 2014.