

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-062

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA, URGING THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION TO REINSTATE THE PROHIBITION ON BEAR HUNTING THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND FOCUS MORE ATTENTION ON REMOVING CONFLICTS BETWEEN BEARS AND SUBURBAN AREAS THROUGH DETERRENT TECHNIQUES; ALTERNATIVELY, URGING THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION TO, AT A MINIMUM, PROHIBIT FUTURE BEAR HUNTS IN THE CENTRAL BEAR MANAGEMENT UNIT OF THE STATE; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the County of Volusia has made significant commitments to protect natural habitats, including but not limited to habitat for bears through regulatory and land use protections, and through the award winning "Volusia Forever" program; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the State Constitution, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission ("Commission") has regulatory and executive powers over wild animal life, which includes the regulation of bear hunting; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Commission approved the Florida Black Bear Management Plan to conserve the state's largest land mammal, which created seven Bear Management Units ("BMU") which are geographic locations bounded by county and/or state borders with one of the seven Florida black bear subpopulations within it; and

WHEREAS, the goal of a BMU is to provide a defined area within which the Commission can have a community-focused effort to effectively manage and conserve Florida black bears; and

WHEREAS, the County of Volusia is located within the Central BMU, which has established a minimum subpopulation objective of one thousand thirty (1,030) Florida black bears; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Black Bear Management Plan provides that the management objective is to maintain or increase the current Florida black bear population within the Central BMU; and

WHEREAS, while the Florida black bear population has increased in the Central BMU by nineteen (19%) percent, this increase is less than the population increases measured in each of the state's six other BMUs for the last two years; and

WHEREAS, the Commission estimates that available Florida black bear habitat within the Central BMU is three times greater than required to support the minimum subpopulation objective of one thousand thirty (1,030) Florida black bears, which means the biological carrying capacity of the Central BMU may be as high as three thousand (3,000); and

WHEREAS, in June 2015, the Commission approved bear hunting in certain BMUs throughout the state, including East Panhandle BMU, North BMU, Central BMU, and South BMU, reversing the statewide ban on bear hunting that had been in place since 1994; and

WHEREAS, the Commission approved bear hunting without the benefit of a statewide bear count that was slated for completion in 2016; and

WHEREAS, the authorized week-long limited bear hunt harvest objective was three hundred twenty (320) bears, with one hundred (100) within the Central BMU, a total of three hundred four (304) bears were killed in just the first two days; and

WHEREAS, the first bear hunt in twenty-one (21) years was ended early because the number of Florida black bears killed in the East Panhandle BMU was three times the established quota, and the number of bears killed in the Central BMU—one hundred forty-three (143) bears—exceeded the limit by over forty (40%) percent; and

WHEREAS, accounts of unreported killings, bears suffering a slow death, and the killing of lactating bears, which was forbidden, likely increased the death toll and reduced the Florida black bear population in the Central BMU to approximately nine hundred twenty-seven (927) individuals, below the stated minimum population target of one thousand thirty (1,030), and well below the biological carrying capacity in the Central BMU; and

WHEREAS, twenty-one (21) bears were harvested in the County of Volusia, which accounted for fifteen (15%) percent of the total for the Central BMU; and

WHEREAS, the black bear is the only bear found in Florida and is estimated to have a total population of approximately three thousand (3,000) throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, the black bear population is not sufficient to sustain hunting throughout the state, having been listed as a threatened species until 2012; and

WHEREAS, black bears tend to avoid confrontation with humans; and

WHEREAS, although bears foraging for food may lead to their unintentional presence in suburban areas, precautionary methods may help prevent their return; and

WHEREAS, the Commission Director of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Thomas Eason, noted that the more than two decades of no bear hunting has made Florida black bears “relatively naïve” to the dangers of hunters; and

WHEREAS, the Commission should prohibit bear hunting statewide and focus on providing “bear-proof garbage cans” and reducing palmetto berry harvests in bear habitats instead; and

WHEREAS, if the Commission insists on conducting a future bear hunt, the Central BMU, which includes the County of Volusia, should be excluded.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA, IN OPEN MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED IN THE

THOMAS C. KELLY ADMINISTRATION CENTER, DELAND, FLORIDA, THIS 5TH
DAY OF MAY, 2016, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Urges the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to reinstate the prohibition on bear hunting throughout the State of Florida and focus more attention on removing conflicts between bears and suburban areas through deterrent techniques.


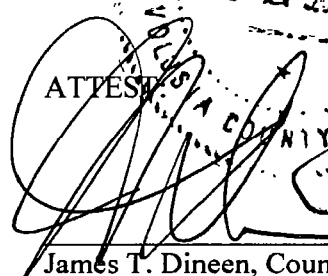
SECTION 2. Alternatively, urges the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to, at a minimum, prohibit future bear hunts in the Central Bear Management Unit.

SECTION 3. Directs the County Manager to send a certified copy of this resolution to the Governor, Senate President, House Speaker, the Chair and Members of the Volusia State Legislative Delegation, and the Commissioners and Executive Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

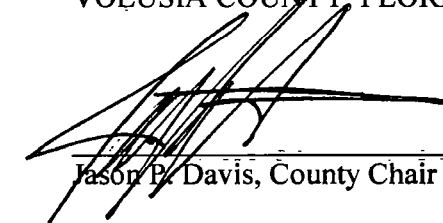
SECTION 4. Directs the County's state lobbyists to advocate for the legislative action set forth in Sections 1 and 2 above.

SECTION 5. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

DONE AND ORDERED IN OPEN MEETING


ATTEST

James T. Dineen, County Manager

COUNTY COUNCIL
VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA


Jason P. Davis, County Chair