



## District of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Maple Ridge Launches Bear Aware Program

**Maple Ridge, BC:** At the Council Workshop meeting on April 2, 2012 Maple Ridge Mayor and Council received a briefing on the District's Bear Aware Program which is now rolling out to the community. The program will involve a number of different initiatives across many departments with a common goal of reducing human/bear interactions in our community.

"It is clear from the presentation from the BC Conservation Service and District staff that the first priority is for all of us, as citizens' to take more responsibility in reducing the 'attractants' that bring the bears from the forest into the populated areas. The number one attractant is garbage! If we stop putting the trash out at night before we go to bed, and instead put the trash out first thing in the morning, that will have a big impact," said Mayor Ernie Daykin. He continued, "The presentations also reminded Council members that such things as bird feeders, pet food, fruit trees, gardens, livestock and even bee hives are all potential sources of food for bears. Once a bear finds a source of food, it will become bolder around humans and develop into a threat to safety. We can all do our part to break the cycle."

The public education component of the program is administered by the Ridge Meadows Recycling Society, in cooperation with District departments. Staff and volunteers from the Recycling Society are doing neighbourhood patrols in areas that have been identified as problems by the Provincial Conservation Service.

"We did a blitz of homes in the Fern Crescent area where a large number of bear sightings have taken place. Volunteers placed 'door hangers' with information on how to reduce bear interactions in the hopes that if garbage is secured on properties and not left out overnight prior to pick-up, the bears will revert to their natural food sources," said Kim Day, Executive Director of the Ridge Meadows Recycling Society. As we roll the program out we will be doing patrols with the Conservation Officers to ensure people are fully aware that they are responsible for controlling attractants on their property. While people are subject to Provincial fines for non-compliance, our hope is that the education program will result in the change that we need to make to reduce human/bear interactions," she concluded.

The other aspects of the District's initiative will be around communication and the continued deployment of wildlife-proof garbage containers throughout the District's park system. Dave Boag, Director of Parks & Facilities for the District noted that a third of the District's garbage cans are already bear resistant. "The deployment of the bear proof containers has already occurred in the parks that are in the more rural areas of the community. Each year we retrofit some of our parks, and in the new parks that we are building in Silver Valley these are part of the initial installation. In other parks, we will be designing new signage for the cans to remind people that they should take more responsibility for disposing of food waste by taking it home with them, rather than just placing it in park garbage cans," said Mr. Boag.

The District's communications initiatives include the new web pages and 'bear aware' button that has popped up on the home page at [mapleridge.ca](http://mapleridge.ca), and there will be reminders in District advertising and social media sites that we all need to be more 'Bear Aware.'

"One thing that we can all do is call the Conservation Service at 1-877-952-7277 if you spot a bear in your neighbourhood. These reports are essential in identifying and tracking human/bear interactions before the bears become a problem. This will also help us target areas to send our volunteers to in order to help educate the public and help us understand how our activities impact the wildlife that we share the community with," said Mayor Daykin.

If you are interested in volunteering with Bear Aware in Maple Ridge or would like more information about the program, please contact Alison Thompson at the Ridge Meadows Recycling Society at 604-463-5545 ext. 226 or by email at [alison@rmrecycling.org](mailto:alison@rmrecycling.org).