



City of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2014 #15-15

For further information, contact:
David Boag at 604-463-5221.
dboag@mapleridge.ca

Maple Ridge Boosts Funding For Bear Aware Program for 2015

Maple Ridge, BC: The City of Maple Ridge will be continuing the local Wild Safe BC Program, formerly called the 'Bear Aware Program,' for 2015. The Maple Ridge program was started three years ago in partnership with the Ridge Meadows Recycling Society, who has championed the delivery of information to citizens.

Funding from the Provincial Wild Safe BC Program enhances the delivery of service from May through November, allowing the local Coordinator to do additional work during the summer months when wildlife interactions are at their highest. In Maple Ridge, the Coordinator works year round combining the Wild Safe information with the Ridge Meadows Recycling Society's messaging around recycling and composting. The two messages work very well together.

The Wild Safe BC Program focus is on the things that citizens can do to minimize conflict with wildlife in the large forest interface in our community. This work is done through classroom visits, joint education and enforcement work with local BC Conservation Officers and through participation in community festivals.

While the most visible wildlife interactions are with bears, the reality is that there are a large number of wild animals that are impacted by the interaction with humans on the forest interface. It is common to see deer, raccoons, skunks and coyotes wandering through neighbourhoods foraging for food.

In 2013, changes were made to local bylaws based on the recommendations of our local Wild Safe BC Coordinator. The updated bylaw ensures that citizens do not put garbage out for pickup in the evenings, but instead do it in the morning to minimize the potential for wildlife to break

into the cans. This one behaviour change helps minimize the circumstances where wildlife becomes 'habituated' to the urban setting and becomes a danger to citizens.

The funding for the position for the enhanced work from May to November will be split by the City and a Provincial Grant which is currently being negotiated. The City portion is being funded from operational savings through the systematic installation of wildlife proof garbage cans in parks in the interface areas. These wildlife resistant receptacles have reduced garbage related wildlife incidents in the parks.

Maple Ridge has seen a reduction in the number of bears that have had to be destroyed due to habituation throughout the three year cycle of the program. This statistic is a testament to the work done by our local Coordinator and the cooperation of citizens in the forest interface in changing the way they manage their garbage, gardens, raising poultry and fruit trees, the most common attractants for wildlife.

For more information about the Wild Safe BC Program please contact David Boag at dboag@mapleridge.ca or call 604-463-5221.