

Human-wildlife conflicts in coastal South Carolina

Factors that influence how humans respond to human-black bear conflicts and conflict mitigation strategies in coastal South Carolina



College of
**AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY
AND LIFE SCIENCES**
Clemson University

A McIntire-Stennis supported project

As development expands along South Carolina's coast, people and black bears are running into each other more often—especially in fast-growing areas like Horry County. Bears are often drawn in by unsecured trash, pet food, bird seed, and outdoor grills. These encounters can lead to property damage, safety concerns, and, in some cases, bears being put down. Even though bear-proofing tools exist, they aren't being widely used—and we don't fully understand why.

To find answers, Clemson University's Rodriguez Human Dimensions of Wildlife Lab is studying the fast-growing Carolina Forest community. The team is working to understand what people know about black bears, how they view the risks, and what makes them more or less likely to use bear-safe practices like secure trash cans.

By learning what drives or blocks action, this project will help improve public safety and protect wildlife. The findings could lead to stronger policies, better waste management practices, and new education efforts that encourage communities to live more safely alongside bears.



About McIntire-Stennis

The McIntire-Stennis program, a unique federal-state partnership, cultivates and delivers forestry and natural resource innovations for a better future. By advancing research and education that increases the understanding of emerging challenges and fosters the development of relevant solutions, the McIntire-Stennis program has ensured healthy resilient forests and communities and an exceptional natural resources workforce since 1962.



COLLABORATION

Clemson's research team is engaging with residents, local waste management officials, county council members, and wildlife staff from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

IMPACT

By understanding why people do or don't use bear-safe practices, this research will help create better strategies for keeping bears and people safe. The results could lead to improved waste policies, new education programs, and stronger partnerships between residents and wildlife officials.



3,000

Number of property owners randomly selected for the survey in Horry County.



75%

Coastal residents in a related study said they would support conservation programs if better informed.



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Stakeholder groups, including residents, waste managers, county council members, and state wildlife staff.