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Eye on the Environment Spring Bear Wake Up Social

By MARK RUBY, Swan Ecosystem Center

On April 30th Swan Valley Bear Resources will be hosting their 2nd annual Spring Bear Wake Up Social at the community hall in Condon from 6-8 pm. The event will include presentations from Tim Manley, Grizzly Bear Management Specialist with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and Dr. Chris Servheen, Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Free hors d'oeuvres will be served and door prizes awarded. This event is put on for and open to the public. To RSVP, please contact the Swan Ecosystem Center at (406) 754-3137 to RSVP.

The Spring Bear Wake Up Social will focus on the most up-to-date research, management, and other bear related issues relevant to the Swan Valley. Both speakers draw from a wealth of experience within their respective niches in the bear biology world. Their presentations are guaranteed to be engaging and bring an unparalleled depth of information to the audience.

Spring is an especially important time for bears as they emerge from their dens in search of food. With relatively little natural food resources available this time of year, bears that find food rewards in people's garbage, pet and/or livestock feed, birdfeeders, or from other human attractants, are subject to becoming food conditioned and/or habituated to people. This is a poor scenerio that has proven fatal for bears and potentially dangerous for people.



Private property and bear habitat often overlap in the Swan. Photo used by permission of Tom & Lucinda Heekins.

Due to the rural nature and high quality habitat values of the Swan Valley, bear habitat and people habitat overlap. This creates unique circumstances that require an increased sense of awareness from the public. Unfortunately, the Seeley-Swan has become what biologists and managers refer to as a "mortality sink" with regards to grizzly bears. This simply means that when grizzly bears come into our valleys, their chances for survival dramatically decrease.

With this in mind, Swan Ecosystem Center, Northwest Connections, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and other Condon community members have partnered up to create Swan Valley Bear Resources.

Swan Valley Bear Resources is a collaborative effort focused on providing information on living with bears, aiding managers with responding to conflicts, monitoring bear activity in the valley, and working with landowners to eliminate, reduce and mitigate attractants.

The presence of bears on private property and around homes in the area is a normal occurrence. Thus being a knowledgeable landowner about responsible cohabitation with bears becomes all the more vital to rural citizens. Considering the pace of life, folks can easily become overwhelmed with extraneous information continually presented about responsible living with wildlife. The Spring Bear Wake Up Social is an interactive public

venue to provide exposure to the most contemporary bear information.

In the upcoming season, the Swan Valley Bear Resources will offer personal consultation and information on bear attractants around the home and even furnish zero-to-reduced cost materials aimed at securing attractants so they remain unavailable to bears.

The group aims to work hands on with private citizens with electric fencing, noise deterrents, and bear resistant containers, and answer questions about the most effective strategies to minimize conflict with bears. Ultimately, by reducing the potential draw to human property human, neighborhood and wildlife security can be served.

With spring here to stay, the Swan Valley Bear Resources invites the public to The Spring Bear Wake Up Social. With the promise of good food, good company and featured speakers presenting on informative and pertinent local bear information the evening promises to be a can't miss.