



**Meeting Date:** May 19, 2016

**Agenda Item:** 11-C

## Report to Town Council

**Topic:** Resolution 2016-07, urging the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission to reinstate the prohibition on bear hunting throughout the State.

**Recommended Motion:** Approval of Resolution 2016-07.

**Summary:** Please see attached staff report.

**Requested by:** Councilmember Paritsky

**Approved by:** Ms. Witt, Town Manager



**MEMORANDUM**  
**TOWN OF PONCE INLET – OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER**

*THE TOWN OF PONCE INLET STAFF SHALL BE PROFESSIONAL, CARING, AND FAIR IN DELIVERING COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE WHILE ENSURING PONCE INLET CITIZENS OBTAIN THE GREATEST VALUE FOR THEIR TAX DOLLAR.*

**TO:** Town Council

**FROM:** Jeaneen Witt, CMC, Town Manager 

**DATE:** May 10, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Urging the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to reinstate the prohibition on hunting the Florida black bear

---

The Volusia County Council adopted the resolution now proposed to the Ponce Inlet Town Council, urging the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to reinstate the prohibition on hunting the Florida black bear. Like Volusia County, the Town has taken many extra steps in the past to protect natural habitats of both plant and animal life. Therefore, it is natural that the Town too would consider supporting Volusia County in this noble effort and by also adopting this resolution. Many reasons for such are described in detail within the Whereas clauses of the resolution.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2016-07**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF PONCE INLET, 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 Town of Ponce Inlet supports the resolution adopted by the County of Volusia on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 urging the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to reinstate the prohibition on bear hunting throughout the State of Florida and to focus more attention on removing conflicts between bears and suburban areas through deterrent techniques; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Ponce Inlet and the County of Volusia have both made significant commitments in many ways to the protection of natural habitats, with Volusia County specifically maintaining natural 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; which, for Volusia County, located within the Central BMU, provides for 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 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, but, 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;

**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 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; 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**, 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**, 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 the black bear population is not sufficient to sustain hunting throughout the state, having been listed as a threatened species until 2012; 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**, although bears foraging for food may lead to their unintentional presence in suburban areas, precautionary methods may help prevent their return, as black bears tend to avoid confrontation with humans; and 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 TOWN COUNCIL OF TOWN OF PONCE INLET, VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA, THAT:**

**SECTION 1.** The Town Council 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 Town 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.** This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

It was moved by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ that this Resolution shall be adopted. A roll call vote of the Town Council on said motion resulted as follows:

Mayor Smith, Seat #1	_____
Councilmember Milano, Seat #2	_____
Vice-Mayor Hoss, Seat #3	_____
Councilmember Perrone, Seat #4	_____
Councilmember Paritsky, Seat #5	_____

Adopted this 19<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2016.

Town of Ponce Inlet, Florida

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary L. Smith, Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeaneen Witt, CMC  
Town Manager/Town Clerk