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News Release

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Keep bears & all wildlife wild

BISHOP, CA June 11, 2021 — As the summer season gets underway, the Inyo National Forest and California Department of Fish and Wildlife would like to remind visitors to be vigilant with proper food and trash storage. Working together with visitors, permit holders and private and public entities we can help keep wildlife wild.

We offer the following recommendations for proper food storage and appreciate your participation to this matter. The following recommendations include rules and responsibility with the intent that such practices become the norm and lead to positive experiences when visiting the Inyo National Forest.

Do not leave food or fragrant items without properly storing them. Bears and wildlife have a keen sense of smell and will access your campsite, car, or cabin if you don't take the precaution of storing your food properly. Bear-resistant containers, including equine panniers, are the most effective method of food storage. Use bear resistant food lockers (normally 48 inches wide, 29 inches deep and 38 inches high (24 cubic feet). Lockers are at many trailheads and campgrounds to be shared by visitors. Space in lockers is limited so bring only what you will need during your trip. Deposit trash in bear resistant trash cans, not in lockers.

Non-food items such as plastic bottles, water bottles, coffee mugs, pet food, empty cans, trash, wrappers, cosmetics, grocery bags, boxes, and ice chests must also be secured. Do not leave these items in your car or tent. Removing such items may help deter a bear from entering and doing damage to property. Always clean up your camp of food and trash promptly after meals so that bears are less likely to visit your camp. If you have a child who uses a car seat, please consider cleaning the car seat, because too often there are food particles found in car seats that may attract bears. Other attractants such as bird feeders & bird houses (not authorized) could also attract a bear, and should not be placed on forest system lands. Please discontinue this practice

In all wilderness areas of Inyo National Forest, use of bear-resistant containers is strongly recommended. There are eight specific areas where using a container that prevents access by bears is mandatory: Bishop Pass Area, Cottonwood Lakes Basin/ Cottonwood Pass Area, Duck Pass/Purple Lake Area, Fish Creek Area, Kearsarge Pass Area, Little Lakes Valley Area, Mammoth Lakes/Rush Creek Area, and the Mount Whitney Area. Maps for these areas can be found at: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/Inyo/Bears.

Bear containers are preferred over counter-balance hanging because trees are limited above certain elevations, and where they do occur, they are easily accessible to climbing bears. Bear proof designs are proven deterrents, odor proof, weigh less than 3 pounds, and come in hard and soft designs.

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) are the most abundant and widely distributed bear; they have been recorded in all states except Hawaii. Black bears can vary in color from jet black to cinnamon to white. Bears eat a variety of plants and animals; their diets consist mainly of grasses, roots, berries, insects, and fish and animals, including dead animals. They have an acute sense of smell; they can smell a scent from miles away. Although black bears rarely kill or seriously injure people, when they do, it's most often the result of predatory behavior by single males. Most conflicts between humans and black bears occur when bears access and become addicted to human food sources.

More information on proper food storage is on our website at: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/Inyo/Bears. Bear Safety Tips from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is available at: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Bear>.

To report human-bear conflicts, contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at (916) 358-2917, or report online using the Wildlife Incident Reporting (WIR) system at <https://apps.wildlife.ca.gov/wir>.



Campground storage locker, photograph courtesy K. Schlick

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