



Press Release

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Sierra Club Donates Bear Spray Training Canisters for Montana Hunter Education Programs

BOZEMAN, MT ... To promote grizzly bear recovery and keep backcountry recreationists safe, Sierra Club has announced a program to provide free inert bear pepper spray training canisters for use at Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP) hunter and bowhunter education courses in the region. Sierra Club has purchased these canisters to encourage proper use of bear pepper spray for hunters who enjoy their sport in grizzly bear country, and to take proactive steps towards reducing human-bear conflicts. Bear pepper spray has proven itself to be an effective tool for avoiding fatal encounters between people and grizzly bears.

The Sierra Club donation will allow MTFWP to conduct hands-on training in the proper use and safety of bear pepper spray. The program will provide enough canisters to reach many hunter education participants in more than 10 locales in southwestern Montana in the next year. America's oldest and largest grassroots conservation organization will also look to expand this pilot program in the coming years to include other hunter education programs taking place near remaining grizzly bear habitat in the lower-48 United States.

"This is a great opportunity to allow future hunters to get hands-on training with the bear spray canisters," said Monica Fella, Conservation Organizer with the Sierra Club's Grizzly Bear Ecosystems Project in Bozeman. "The donation of these training canisters to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, represents a significant step towards both promoting backcountry safety and encouraging more hunters to carry bear pepper spray."

No deterrent is 100% effective against an attacking grizzly, but compared to other counter-measures, including firearms, bear pepper spray has demonstrated the most success. In scientific studies conducted by University of Calgary grizzly bear expert Stephen Herrero, bear pepper spray was found to be 94% effective in deterring aggressive bears.

"Conflicts between hunters and bears occur every year. Carrying and knowing how to use bear pepper spray is recommended for everyone—hunters and other backcountry recreationists alike—who venture into bear country," said Kevin Frey, FWP Bear Management Specialist. "Students in the MTFWP Hunter Education Program now have a unique opportunity to learn about bears and bear pepper spray. The inert training canisters provided by Sierra Club give students safe, hands-on training. This training is essential for anyone traveling in the woods during any season."

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Bears prefer to avoid humans, and if they see, smell or hear people they almost always retreat. In fact, most encounters between bears and humans occur without the human ever becoming aware of the bear's presence. Still, grizzlies can be provoked to aggression when people approach too close, when they feel their cubs or their food sources are threatened, or when they are simply surprised.

Unlike a gun, bear pepper spray does not have to be aimed precisely to stop a charging bear. The bear pepper spray makes a fog in the air, and when the spray hits the bear, it causes irritation in the eyes, nose, mouth, throat and lungs, temporarily disabling the bear. According to experts, there is no better way to stop an attack by an aggressive grizzly.

When buying bear pepper spray, be sure the container says the product is made for stopping or preventing bear attacks. Also, be sure the canister contains at least 7.9 ounces of spray with 1-2% capsaicin/capsaicinoids, has a spray minimum of 25 feet, has a minimum spray duration of 6 seconds, and is EPA registered. Cans that are smaller than these requirements may not last long enough or spray far enough to stop a bear's charge.

Sierra Club appreciates the assistance of bear pepper spray manufacturer Counter Assault of Kalispell, MT in this project and the opportunity to contribute to Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks hunter education program.

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ON THE WEB: For more information about the grizzly bear conservation, or to join [Sierra Club's Grizzly Guardian](#) list-serve, point your browser to <http://www.sierraclub.org/grizzly>

