

## News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Unsecured curbside collection totes causing increased bear conflicts across Cowichan**

**DUNCAN, BC** – In response to growing numbers of human-bear conflicts in the region, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and BC Conservation Officer Service are seeking public cooperation in preventing these conflicts by not putting garbage and recycling totes at the curb the night before collection.

Bears are attracted to curbside garbage, recycling and organic materials and are learning to repeatedly seek out these food sources in residential areas. The CVRD has been working with WildsafeBC and BC Conservation Officers for several years to reduce human-bear conflicts in the region. It is evident that the simplest way to reduce these conflicts is to keep curbside totes securely stored and off the street until the morning of collection.

“We are fortunate in the Cowichan Valley to have such an abundance of wildlife and natural spaces bordering our communities,” said Aaron Stone, Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional District. “But this proximity to wildlife comes with a collective responsibility to ensure we are doing our part to keep these animals safe and wild.”

CVRD Bylaw No. 1958 stipulates that curbside totes cannot be brought out to the curbside before 5 a.m. on the day of collection. Residents who put their garbage and recycling at the curbside prior to 5 a.m. will have warning stickers placed on their totes, and repeat offenders will be issued fines of up to \$230 by CVRD bylaw staff and BC Conservation Officers.

“Conservation officers don’t want to destroy bears, so fines will be issued as a measure to protect bears from becoming habituated to garbage and other food sources in residential areas,” said Scott Norris, BC Conservation Officer for the Cowichan Valley region. “We know it’s inconvenient for many to wake up early and bring their totes to the curb, but we hope residents will take heed and help protect our wildlife and our communities.”

While some residents may not mind having a bear visit their yard, it can become a dangerous situation for neighbouring children and pets. Bears that learn to repeatedly seek out food in residential areas will have to be destroyed, as moving a bear from its territory is rarely successful. It is also unsafe for bears in residential areas and they have been known to eat plastic and similar inedible items from curbside bins that smell appetizing, which can lead to a prolonged and painful death.

For tips on how to be bear smart, visit [www.wildsafebc.com](http://www.wildsafebc.com). Residents are asked to report bear sightings and human-wildlife conflicts using the Report All Poachers and Polluters telephone line at 1.877.952.7277.

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