



Electric Fencing Incentive Program

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to long term grizzly bear recovery in the lower 48 states. Conflict with people is a major cause of grizzly bear mortality and reduces human tolerance for the species. Defenders' Electric Fencing Incentive Program provides financial and technical assistance to help landowners minimize conflict by securing their livestock, beehives, gardens or other bear attractants. Our program field staff work directly with communities and landowners to improve awareness and implement conflict reduction measures across recovery areas in five grizzly bear ecosystems: Greater Yellowstone, Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak, Selkirk and Bitterroot.

In addition to individuals and communities, Defenders collaborates with nonprofit organizations, small businesses, and state, federal and tribal agencies to complete a wide range of electric fence projects, primarily on private lands. We provide the financial support and technical expertise to build electric fence systems that effectively deter grizzly bears and other carnivores from accessing human-related attractants.

Program Summary

Defenders' electric fencing program is designed to proactively prevent conflicts, with priority given to landowners with past bear problems. At sites with completed fences that are maintained, we see a direct reduction in human-bear and other wildlife conflicts.

Initially, we reimbursed landowners \$100 of the cost to install an electric fence around an identified grizzly bear attractant. In 2012, we improved the program to reimburse 50% of the cost of electric fencing around any grizzly bear attractant within priority counties, up to a maximum incentive of \$500 per landowner.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of our fencing program, from its humble beginnings in 2010. The popularity and visibility of the program continue to grow, as it now reaches Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Washington.

Our total number of completed projects since the program began is now 466 electric fences (see the



Above: Defenders and USDA Wildlife Services staff complete a high tensile, eight-strand electric fence around a calving pasture in Northwest Montana experiencing grizzly bear and wolf activity.

spatial and temporal map of all projects completed to date on page 4) and over \$149,000 in reimbursements and financial support to participants. For more information, visit the grizzly bear section of our interactive web feature, [Storymapping Coexistence Across the Country](#).

2020 Results

Despite fieldwork limitations surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, the program directly assisted 54 landowners with technical assistance and reimbursements. Our ongoing partnership with USDA Wildlife Services – Montana yielded an additional 20 projects where we provided materials support. The combined total of 74 completed electric fence projects is a record annual

total for the program. The reimbursements and materials costs totaled \$18,743.

We conducted nine site visits with participants, including several direct responses to ongoing bear conflicts. We also attended six outreach events to promote the use of electric fencing to reduce conflicts and contacted well over 100 landowners and livestock producers. Many of these contacts are anticipated to carry over into 2021 as future projects.

Average reimbursement (2020)

- \$290 per project

Fence type (2020)

- 72% of participants built permanent fences.
- 17% of participants built semi-permanent fences.
- 11% of participants built temporary fences.

Attractants secured

- In 2020, protecting livestock was the top reason for installing a fence, followed by chickens, bees and fruit trees (Fig. 1).

Program awareness

- In 2020, Wildlife Services was the most commonly cited source of initial information on the program, followed by word of mouth and state and tribal wildlife managers (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1: Percentage of fence projects by type of attractant secured (2020)

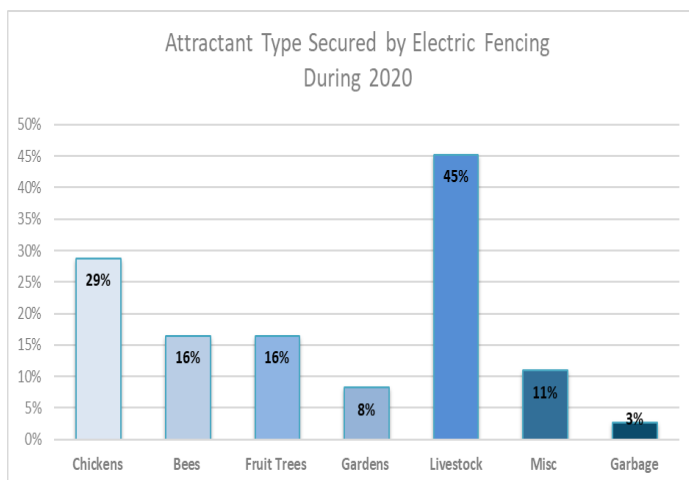
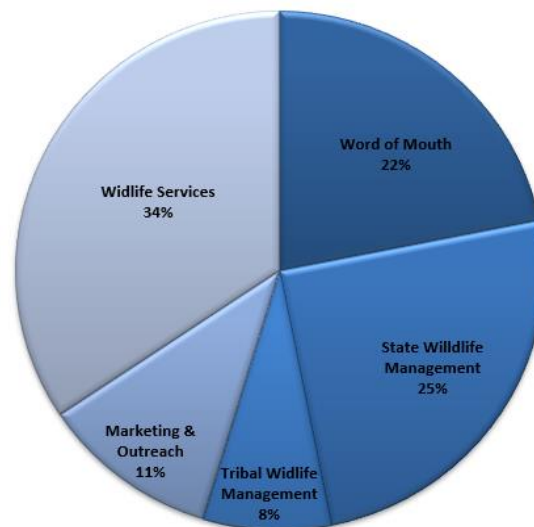


Fig. 2: How participants heard about the program (2020)



2010-2018 Participant Survey Highlights

Defenders monitors pre- and post-fencing success related to human-bear conflicts on private lands by annually surveying participants with electric fences in use for one or more years. Since 2012, we have also been collecting a variety of participant and project data.

Of the 145 participants surveyed to date:

- 51% experienced past bear conflicts at their site.
- 94% report their electric fences are still in use.
- 99% report that their fence has successfully protected the intended attractant.
- 3% report experiencing some type of fence failure resulting in a conflict; each failure was attributed to technical difficulties and/or user error.
- 25% have improved or expanded their fences since the time of installation.

Participant testimonials

“We know it’s working because we’ve seen bears hit it and move on. They tried climbing in, got shocked, and never came back.”
 – R. S., Kalispell, MT, 2016 participant

“I believe this support of landowners who might be directly impacted by grizzly bears is an important part of keeping bears out of trouble. Thank you for your work.”
 – M. G., Roberts, MT, 2018 participant

