

Quotes from Plaintiffs in Louisiana Black Bear Lawsuit

“The only true Louisiana black bear populations are in the TRB and the LARB separated by over 160 miles, as the crow flies, and with no hope of ever connecting unless the bear is listed again and the ESA protections are implemented. To make matters worse, the LARB population is along the coast south of Highway 90 (soon to be 1-49), with no viable corridor to safely move north into the Atchafalaya Basin as sea level rises. Nothing is sacred to the state or the FWS. We paid millions of dollars to permanently protect critical habitat, but roads, fields and houses are built in violation of those easements, conditions are never enforced for permitted activities, and not only are our environmental laws not enforced but illegal developers are even rewarded with after-the-fact permits. None of the forests, on which bears depend for acorns as food prior to winter, is truly protected from clear-cuts, which are found even in wildlife management areas.”

Basinkeeper Executive Director Dean Wilson

“The alleged ‘recovery’ of the Louisiana black bear is based primarily on the claim that the Tensas River Basin (TRB) and the Upper Atchafalaya River Basin (UARB) are viable and securely connected through a group of TRB bears that were artificially translocated to the Three Rivers Complex (TRC), an area between the TRB and UARB. The TRB, UARB, and TRC bears now supposedly have formed a growing ‘metapopulation’ with genetic exchange throughout. Despite FWS claims, however, the UARB population is not native *luteolus* but the descendant of another subspecies introduced from Minnesota in the 1960s to foster sport hunting.”

PEER General Counsel Paula Dinerstein

“If the UARB population is not the legally listed *luteolus*, the recovery criterion of two viable populations is not met, the claim of a secure connection is obviated, the concept of an expanding, interchanging “metapopulation” within the TRB, UARB, and TRC falls apart, the TRC group is demonstrably a hybrid, and the sole remaining supposedly viable population, that of the TRB, is shown to be in imminent danger through hybridization with an alien entity.”

Ron Nowak, a mammal taxonomist and former employee of the now abolished FWS Office of Endangered Species

“The 2016 FWS delisting rule stated that the Louisiana black bear was listed as a ‘practical means for protecting any possibly remaining unique genetic material belonging to *U. a. luteolus*.’ The original 1992 listing rule stated: ‘Hybridization as a threat has neither been discounted nor proven and remains unsettled. Since the genetic profile of a known *U. a. luteolus* is unavailable, the issue is unlikely to be settled.’ However, the Laufenberg and Clark report has provided comprehensive genetic data on all bears in Louisiana and proven survival of genetically distinct populations of *luteolus* and historical lack of hybridization. FWS’s failure to properly interpret the latest studies makes a mockery of the requirement that only the ‘best available science’ be considered pursuant to the Endangered Species Act.”

Dr. Michael Caire, Louisiana black bear advocate

“Louisiana has more than its fair share of wild game to hunt ethically,” said ***Scott Eustis, Community Science Director for Healthy Gulf***. “The Louisiana black bear should not be sacrificed for the hunting interests of a few people at the peril of the species’ survival. The Louisiana black bear should be immediately returned to the threatened/endangered species list.”