

For Immediate Release



Monday, August 17, 2009

Contacts:

Black Bear Conservation Coalition, Paul Davidson,  
Tel. (225) 763-5425 pauldavidson@bbcc.org  
BP America, Karen Hyland, (281) 366-3353

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Bears are returning to East Texas – but how many, and where are they? BP America helps find answers.**

Longview, Texas – *Bears are being seen in East Texas for the first time in 50 years* – the latest indication of the success of what has been called the most progressive species recovery program in the country. In an effort to improve our understanding of the bear's return, BP America has joined with the Black Bear Conservation Coalition (BBCC) in support of its bear work in East Texas. Designated as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1992, the Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*) is making a comeback with help from the BBCC and its partners.

BP America has donated a Ford F250 four-wheel drive truck to the BBCC to support bear recovery work in Texas. The truck will be used in a BBCC partnership project to study bear population and habitat in southeast Texas. The research study is headed up by Dr. Christopher E. Comer of Stephen F. Austin State University. The three year study will determine occupancy and distribution of black bears in southeast Texas, examine demographics, and assess the suitability of forested habitats to identify priority locations for bear habitat. This baseline assessment will provide critical data for long-term management of this federally threatened species. The 2.5 million acre study area includes the southern portion of the Pineywoods, the Middle Neches and Lower Neches River Corridors, and the Big Thicket National Preserve.

BP America strives to preserve and improve the environment in areas where it operates. “We are excited to be playing a roll in the new projects that the Black Bear Conservation Coalition is working on in our area,” said Arno Appel, Operations Center Manager for East Texas. “Hopefully our truck donation will assist the BBCC in their conservation efforts in our community.”

This donation from BP America's Longview, Texas facility will lead to a better understanding of the bear in East Texas, and by extension, the hundreds of other species that call the bottomland hardwoods of the region home. This area is also a vital flyway for migratory birds and waterfowl. “The recovery of the black bear and the conservation and management of its forested habitat will benefit a whole suite of other species including bats, neotropical birds, and support broader wildlife biodiversity and watershed management of this region,” said BBCC Chairman Nathan Garner.

The BBCC is nationally recognized for its efforts to restore the Louisiana black bear throughout its historic range in East Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas. As a broad-based coalition, its members include private landowners, state and federal agencies, private conservation groups, forest

industry, agricultural interests, the academic community, and concerned citizens all working together to address management and restoration of the Louisiana black bear. Unique in its inclusive and cooperative approach, the BBCC's success is the result of partnerships with stakeholders, credible science-driven management, and a genuine commitment to the restoration of the bear. Through education, research, and restoration of habitat, the BBCC is reversing those factors that brought about the decline of the Louisiana black bear.

East Texas operations of the BBCC are coordinated through its East Texas Black Bear Task Force (ETBBTF) subcommittee. The BBCC and the ETBBTF encourage interested parties to visit our newly updated website at [www.bbcc.org](http://www.bbcc.org) and become a member of this home-grown success story. East Texas Media kits are available at [www.bbcc.org/etbbtf/press.aspx](http://www.bbcc.org/etbbtf/press.aspx). The BBCC/ ETBBTF also offer educational materials for teachers and classroom use at <http://www.bbcc.org/etbbtf/teachers.aspx>.

The BBCC/ ETBBTF work in close partnership with many partners in Texas, including Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Houston Zoo, Stephen F. Austin University, and many other organizations, corporations, and individuals dedicated to the black bear.

To report a bear sighting in East Texas and request Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) investigate, call 1-800-792-1112, or (903) 566-1626 ext. 221.

To report a poached or injured bear in Texas, please call Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) Law Enforcement 24 hour Poaching Hotline at 1-800-792-4263.

Upcoming bear events:

September 25, 2009: BBCC 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Cenla Bear Banquet, Alexandria, Louisiana.

September 26, 2009: Bear Awareness Day, The Houston Zoo, Houston.

October 17, 2009: Educators Workshop, Big Thicket National Preserve Visitor's Center.

For more information, see [www.bbcc.org](http://www.bbcc.org).



BP America's Erik Sandvik, Field Materials Coordinator (left), and Gordon Tate, Integration Team Leader (right) hand over the keys of a much-needed research support truck to BBCC Chairman Nathan Garner (center).

## end ##