



Pardon Dolly

Save the Mama Bear

Mistreating Mother
Nature is like being
ugly to your mama
-Dolly Parton



*These mountains gave us
Dolly Parton. They also gave
us Dolly the bear. Let's choose
compassion. Let's choose
coexistence.*

Help us save Mama Bear Dolly, proudly named for the late and loved Dolly Parton. We're asking the Governor's Office to Pardon Dolly. Like Dolly Parton, this black bear is a native of these mountains. She did not choose the circumstances that brought her here, but her story does not have to end because of them. One act of mercy, one decision to choose compassion over destruction, could change the course of her life.

I get that not everyone will approve of naming a black bear who is being painted as the villain after a beloved American legend. But, I think Dolly Parton herself would. In fact, I think it's the best way to honor her. She was more than her music, her philanthropy, and her books---because those were just the symptoms of something deeper. Her compassion, humility, love, kindness, and generosity are who she was, and from there she chose to live a life that made others' lives better.

Born in the heart of Appalachia, Dolly Parton never forgot the mountains that raised her, and she carried with her a deep love that led her to support monarch butterfly habitat, bald eagles, homeless domestic animals, and native wildlife.

Growing up in poverty as one of 12 children, she was given opportunities, encouragement, and second chances that helped her build an extraordinary life. Yet even after finding success, she spent decades giving back, helping children, families, and communities because she believed in kindness, compassion, and lifting others up.

Dolly Parton showed us that where you start should not determine how your story ends. She taught us that small acts of kindness can create lasting change. Today, we ask our leaders to honor that spirit by giving Dolly the bear a second chance.

PARDON DOLLY

We Can Coexist



Contact Governor Stein:
(919) 814-2000

Key Objectives:

To advocate for a compassionate, non-lethal management variance from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) for 'Dolly'—the Asheville mama black bear currently facing a humane dispatch order. With her two cubs already safely captured, this campaign proposes a sanctuary-first approach modeled after successful national precedents where public outcry converted lethal mandates into community partnerships.



Successful National Precedents

- 'Hank the Tank' (California, 2023): Public outcry led the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to issue a rare policy variance. Instead of euthanasia, Hank was transferred to an out-of-state permanent sanctuary, and her cubs were routed to specialized rehabilitation behavior programs.
- 'Mink' (New Hampshire, 2018): Following intense community advocacy, state officials issued an executive pardon. Mink was translocated 120 miles north to remote wildlands, while her yearling cubs were safely raised at a specialized center before release.

Proposed Partnership Framework for NCWRC

- Sanctuary Transfer Variance: Grant a formal policy exception to relocate Dolly to an accredited, non-profit wildlife sanctuary equipped for habituated adult bears.
- Family Reunification: Reconnect Dolly with her two already-captured cubs within a managed sanctuary environment to maximize long-term rehabilitation.
- Community 'BearWise' Mandate: Mobilize neighborhood-wide pledges to secure garbage, remove bird feeders, and eliminate the human food attractants that caused the habituation.
- Humane Tracking Alternative: Utilize a satellite tracking collar to monitor her safely if a remote, wilderness-edge relocation option is attempted by the state.

Community Call to Action

- Sign the Petition: Scan official campaign materials or visit the online portal to join thousands of residents demanding a non-lethal resolution.
- Contact the NCWRC: Politely call state wildlife officials to request a 'sanctuary variance for the Asheville mama bear' rather than lethal dispatch.
- Secure the Neighborhood: Immediately adopt BearWise protocols to demonstrate to officials that the community is actively fixing human mistakes.



Let's protect our community AND our wildlife.
Coexistence is possible.

It's not bad behavior—it's bear behavior.

Last night, the screams of a young family being ripped apart rippled through the coves and hills north of Asheville. A mother bear, whose only mistake was trying to feed her family—not understanding that retrieving cat food, birdseed, and garbage left around open doors and outside homes would get her not only killed, but tortured in the process. One of my neighbors described it as, "The devil is screaming behind my house."

"Humanely dispatched" is a euphemism. Even if her final moments are sedated and injected with poison to stop her heart, the moments leading up to it are anything but humane. Watching and screaming for her young—who were caught in a trap set for her, then ripped away, barely old enough to survive on their own—is cruel and unnecessary.

Are we safer now that there's a mother bear with a shattered heart roaming the hills in search of her two missing cubs? I dare say not. She hasn't been caught yet, but it's only a matter of time.

I am feeling very defensive of our black bears in Asheville—outraged, heartbroken, shattered, defeated. Recent news broke about a mama bear and her three cubs: the mama entered through an "unlocked" door of one of my neighbor's houses to retrieve some nearby cat food, and after investigating the event, the Wildlife Commission decided that this mama is a threat to public safety. They refer to her habituated nature and food retrieval around humans, cars, and homes as "bad behavior."

But it's not bad behavior, is it? It's bear behavior. These intelligent, nurturing mammals that share our mountain city aren't acting badly—they're acting like bears, searching for food in a fragmented natural habitat made worse by Helene in 2024 and the continued sprawling development in Asheville.

I'm struggling with wanting someone to blame in all of this. I want to blame the Wildlife Commission that oversees the capturing and killing of the mama. I want to blame the neighbors who feed the birds, leave their doors unlocked, and don't put their trash out right before the truck comes to avoid attracting bears. But I myself had my car broken into a few weeks ago, and the bear left with a whole bag of dog food. No one is perfect, and there's no single person to blame. This is a systemic failure—a lack of the infrastructure, education, and outreach needed to stop this tragedy before it reaches the agony we all heard and felt last night.

We must do better, and I believe we can, but it's going to take a collective effort. Call your representatives. Talk to your neighbors. Don't feed the birds. Keep your doors locked and your trash tidy. Be kind. Bears don't get notifications and website links explaining why eating birdseed is dangerous, or why walking through an open door will get them killed. It's up to us, the humans in this equation, to do better.

Hannah Furgiuele
Asheville, NC



I'm writing about the black bear encounter on Spooks Branch Road in North Asheville, and the plan to euthanize the mother bear involved. I am neighbor to the homeowner, and her account differs from reports stating the bear entered an "unlocked door." Her houseguest left the door open, and the bear came in after a bag of cat food nearby. The bear grew agitated when the guest banged on a back door trying to wake the homeowner; when she ran to widen the bear's exit, the startled animal swatted at her on its way out. That's defensive, not predatory. The homeowner has pleaded with the NC Wildlife Commission not to euthanize the bear, and so do her neighbors.

This bear has young cubs. Euthanizing her doesn't help people learn to coexist in bear country.

Hannah Furguele, Asheville

