

**NCDE**  
**Fall 2014 MEETING**  
December 2, 2014

Montana Depart Fish Wildlife and Parks: conference room  
3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula, MT 59804  
Phone: (406) 542-5500

Deb Mucklow contact: 406-387-3851 or dmucklow@fs.fed.us

**Agenda Review – Introductions** – Deb Mucklow, FNF

Deb Mucklow went through the agenda topics. It was asked that presenters provide a brief synopsis of their topic to Deb Mucklow by COB Wednesday, December 3, 2014. There were no changes to the agenda.

**Business Topics – IGBC, vice chair , 5 yr plan** – Deb Mucklow, FNF

Vice-chair is still vacant; however, a person should be determined next week. Five-year plan will be updated and reviewed at the spring meeting.

**Conservation Strategy Plan Updates** – Chris Servheen, USFWS

Document is in draft format with public comments being incorporated. The demographics section has some continuing discussions between USFWS and MFWP. Once demographics section is resolved, Conservation Strategy will be finalized. Conservation Strategy document needs to be completed before the US FWS delisting process may start. The US FWS proposed rule and incorporation of the Conservation Strategy into various federal/state plans have to be completed before delisting.

**Forest Service plan amendments and revision updates based on Draft Conservation Strategy** - Deb Mucklow/Kathy Ake, FNF

Notice of Intent (NOI) will be out February 2015. Team is working on proposed action, including habitat component for Conservation Strategy. Team is also working on language from Conservation Strategy to be in sync with 2012 Planning Rule. Changes in wording are for 2012 Planning Rule language requirements. Flathead NF is under the 2012 Planning Rule while the other 4 forests are under the 1982 Planning Rule. Standards and guidelines from the Conservation Strategy are being included in the Forest Plan Revision & Amendments. There will be a 45-day scoping period from mid-February with a series of open houses in areas of interest, concentrating on the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) and Management Zone 1. There will be “1-stop shopping” for comments for both Flathead

NF and the amendment forests. Staff from the 5 forests will be included in the process. There will be 1 EIS document, and it will be clear on the effects analysis portion.

Questions/Comments:

- Derek Goldman asked about the snowmobiling and the relation to forest plan revision per spring meeting information. Answer the Flathead and Lewis and Clark NF's are increasing awareness of the closed areas and increasing coordination on patrols to improve compliance.

### **NCDE Data Base Manager updates** – Kathy Ake, FNF

Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 accomplishments included: incorporated updates from agency/unit review of draft 2011 baseline; bi-annual review of 2013 motorized access; requests from US FWS for Conservation Strategy document; motorized access projects (Helena NF, Kootenai NF, and Lolo NF); responded to questions about the Conservation Strategy from public & agencies, as a result of incorporating the Strategy into various plans; conversion of GIS AMLs into Python scripts for motorized access analyses; and responded to questions and requests for information. FY 2015 work plan included: complete 2011 and 2013 motorized access analyses; bi-annual review of 2014 developed sites & grazing allotments; provide information as requested by US FWS for final Conservation Strategy document; provide information, GIS needs and analyses for incorporation of Conservation Strategy into forest plans; motorized access projects (Helena, Kootenai, Lolo, and Flathead NFs); and respond to questions and requests for information. The annual funding request was for \$2700 from each of 10 cooperators (BLM, US FWS, US NPS, MT DNRC, MT FWP, and Flathead, Helena, Kootenai, Lewis & Clark, and Lolo NFs), which provides for about 85 days, or 32%, of Kathy Ake's time. In the future, the workload is expected to remain the same until delisting. After delisting, there will be a review, as requested, of the funding mix from the cooperators.

### **Information and Education updates** – Bill Cook, FWP

Laurie Evarts of FWP was unable to attend due to illness, FWP volunteer Bill Cook gave a presentation about bear awareness programs offered through FWP's Montana WILD education center in Helena. Cook explained that while most presentations are made to school groups (grades three through college) at the Montana WILD center, Montana WILD also goes into the community to make bear presentations in schools (both urban and rural) and to scout and youth groups. Plus, Montana WILD also makes bear presentations to groups of adults (trail riding clubs, senior citizen groups, state agencies, Montana Conservation Corps and Americorps crews). Cook described the wide range of subjects covered in typical presentations, including bear ID, conservation history, ESA (listing, take and delisting), bear biology and research, bear behavior, food storage in the backcountry, use of bear spray, the relative efficacy of bear spray and firearms, and the use of electric fencing to secure livestock and other attractants. Cook handed out a recent article from

High Country News that highlighted Montana WILD's bear programs, and said that he (as a Montana WILD volunteer) was available to assist with bear awareness outreach anywhere in the NCDE region. MT Wild education center has a website, linked through MFWP website.

**Video clips, education/grants – IGBC Information, Education & Outreach – Colleen Matt, Wildlife Management Institute**

Job is to support IGBC and I&EO efforts via website, bear-resistant containers, I&E grants, printed media, and new products. Website is being improved. Bear resistance container outreach includes: problem, possible solution, IGBC testing protocol, and certification of product. I&E Grants to ecosystems for this year will be awarded this week, with most of the funding to various types of bear rangers. Media projects include: Bear Safety brochure can download off website; Bear Spray Brochure and video with Craig Boddington; many video clips of Brutus (captured trained bear) in various human-bear conflict situations. Additionally, I&EO efforts raise funds, \$9,500 from 2012-2014 for various agencies, NGOs. WMI is creating a clearinghouse for video clips that can be downloaded for use by all members of the IGBC. These video clips will be ideal for use in programs and for visual media outlets like local television. Ultimately, they should increase the distribution of our prevention of human-bear conflict messages.

There are possible cuts to FY2016 budgets to IGBC, which includes I&EO. An evaluation process occurred last year using various surveys. Evaluation will be presented to IGBC on Dec 9, 2014. If you have opinion, talk to your IGBC representative. From the evaluation, most recommendations of the I&EO strategy remain relevant, such as additional resources needed, personal contact are most effective, budget cuts will reduce conservation effectiveness, the IGBC-WMI agreement adds capacity and consistency.

Potential projects include: new grant proposals for the ecosystem; easily accessible library of bear-human contact footage; new bear safety coloring book; food storage order interactive map, with a request for consistency at least within forests; longer “tutorial” bear spray video; potentially other issues in North Cascades, and the delisting in NCDE & GYA.

There is an effort for a website with a library of bear videos on vimeo.com(?). Site will be available shortly after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year with ability for specific bear researcher, biologist, or manager to be able to download and give out a video.

If interested in food storage sign (message on more durable plastic, 8x11), contact Colleen.

#### Questions/Comments:

- Jim Williams mentioned the need for media blitz on the delisting to help public understand the various processes and documents.
- Scott Tomson asked about consistency in food orders between NCDE and GYA. Response is this has been looked at, and even with differences, food storage orders are still making a difference. FS has talked about it. From Scott Jackson, the interactive map may daylight some of the inconsistencies, and some of the differences have significant reasons for the difference, is confusing for the public. From Jamie Jonkel, he thought maybe small work group could look at this. From Deb Mucklow, if interested in forming a small work group, get with Deb Mucklow. If enough interest, there maybe follow-up. Priority remains to get food storage orders and as has been learned over time – even though there is differences – they make a difference and the resources on the ground are not getting confused public on what is allowed or not.

#### **Research Updates** – Tabitha Graves, USGS

There is a pilot project on huckleberry and bear food research & monitoring.. Foods and mortality risk affect bear abundance, so far mortality has the larger impact. Using niche envelope models suggest huckleberries in Alberta are increasing and *Hedysareum* spp. Are decreasing. Spatial-temporal influences on productivity poorly understood. Pilot project components include: 1) Productivity monitoring over several years; 2) Phenology has very little research to date. Data collected on phenology at 12 sites. There is potential for Citizen Science Data Collection to help with the monitoring; 3) Pollinators were unknown previously. This summer identified multiple species of bumblebees which may be good, as there are a lot of bumblebees on flowers as well as a whole host of other pollinators, which may be good; 4) Invasive pests will be studied, such as spotted-wing drosophila (fruit fly), and other insect impacts (leaf cutters and microlepidoptera, but not really determined at this time; and 5) Fire severity will be studied. Severe fires can damage rhizomes and thus regeneration. There is at least one case where shrubs were present before fire but still not producing berries after the fire (Robert fire, 2003). It is unclear if resources are there to answer this question.

Status of on-going projects is as follows.

- Abundance across systems (2004 data) paper is in for review at this time, relationship between bears and habitat, factors influencing bear density (mesic habitat, meadow shrub habitat, ownership & management, previous extent) with implications that both habitat and mortality risk influence bear abundance. It is expected that density will change over time.
- NCDE family tree/dispersal, as it applies to connectivity, has studied dispersal being influenced by family tree and habitat. Paper on methods has been published, although the dataset and full evaluation will be this spring with some new methods. There are over 1000 bears in the USGS dataset. Family tree development may allow us to look at effective population size, habitat of offspring compared to parents, does habitat relate to fitness, and if results imply resiliency to climate change, etc.

- NCDE rub project has had latest round of data back and will analyze this spring 2015. Analysis will be looking at if model work for monitoring grizzly bears annual density, abundance, and growth rates. Final analysis will be using spatial capture/re-capture, discussing strengths/weaknesses. Preliminary analysis conducted in 2010 suggested that the population is increasing with near stable in GNP and positive trend outside GNP.
- Alberta monitoring initiatives, or counting grizzly bears more affordably in Alberta CA, will be using spatial capture/re-capture. They are also experimenting with citizen science.

If anyone has questions on these projects, contact Tabitha Graves directly. Tabitha is interested in getting feedback on the direction projects will take, [tgraves@usgs.gov](mailto:tgraves@usgs.gov).

#### Questions/Comments.

- From Chip Weber, anyone looked into or asked why stable in GNP. Response not yet.
- General question about the roads and slope used as costs for dispersal? Response is variable for successful dispersal, reflects the costs of avoidance of habitat, movement, and mortality.
- From Rick Mace, when is final rub tree paper out? Response is analysis starts in January.
- From Claudia Narcisco, does aspect affect dispersal and density? Response has not looked at specifically for its effect on density, but may have indirect affect. Modeling has improved, and can look at other more direct variables.
- From Tim Manley, are you looking at other variables on the density, including population density? Response, yes.

#### **Ethyl – 2800 miles** – Chris Servheen, US FWS

Chris provided a summary of the travels of one grizzly bear, Ethyl. The movement was not typical, it's very unusual. Ethyl's history: Born 1994. Detected in 2004 DNA. Captured, Sept 12, 2006, near Lake Blaine as a management conflict and moved into South Fork Wounded Buck at age 12. Initial movements were tracked until collar failed. Captured second time in 2012 near Lake Blaine, again as a management conflict, and moved to Puzzle Creek (up near Marias Pass). Then she started traveling for 3 years, and not getting into trouble. Her travels went from Middle Fork of the Flathead River, to southern and eastern NCDE in Bob Marshall wilderness (at age 19 her home range was becoming really large), into south end of Mission Mtns, into north of I-90 corridor (west of Missoula to Coeur d'Alene) over to Idaho and back into Montana along south side I-90 to Missoula and then south to past Hwy 12 to mountain face west of Florence, then back towards Missoula, west back to Missoula towards Kellog/Coeur d'Alene, and back into Montana where crosses I-90 around Fish Creek, along to north of Missoula (including dump north of Missoula), then back towards Hwy 93, staying east of highway (in this area going back & forth from feeding in an orchard and traveling 4 miles back to hills many many times), headed north back into

Bob Marshall and into Glacier NP (August 2014), then north and finally west to Eureka where the collar was finally pulled off in mid-October 2014. Ethyl traveled a total miles 2800 minimum, and there were very few sightings during these travels.

Questions/Comments:

- How many sightings during these travels? Response is a very few
- Did her travels validate travel corridors & linkage zone? Response, unfortunately, the locations were too far apart time wise to determine where she specifically crossed.

### **Bear Management Specialists - 2014 activity updates**

Tim Manley - MFWP R1 – The goal is to prevent property damage, unnecessary death of bears, and provide safety of people. From 1993 to present, there were 366 captures of 206 individuals with an average of 17 per year. In 2013, there were 12 captures. In 2014, there were 10 captures. With the bear resistant garbage bin testing, Kodiak variety was bear-proof. Jolt (wiring around Rubbermaid garbage cans) testing around garbage can did not work because energizer was faulty, but has worked elsewhere. They are trying different products. Manley worked with 4 different counties on their dump sites. Current status is some are and some are not bear-proof. Middle Fork of Flathead River site has been consolidated and completed. Glenn Lake dumpster site was successful, once the fencing went up. Two family groups on chickens, three 2-yr olds were shot (currently under investigation). Chicken & pig farm was fenced, and works as long as it's hooked up. Manley has tried different set-ups of electric fencing as well as "critter getter" noise makers, successfully on chicken coops & grain storage. His message to people is to not feed the wildlife. There were I&E education workshops, with two volunteers helping, to public and agencies. There were a couple of Bear Fairs with I&E. There was fund raisers for technicians around NCDE. Manley continuing to working with land owners, they are the main focus. The work used and/or still uses the automated bear trap, remote cameras (too help figure out what's actually going on at sites), bioimpedance analysis (BIA) for percent body fat and status of conditioning, bacteria swabs on mouths for doctors treating mauling victims, micro-chipping bears for ID, pulling hair for DNA, soft and hard (noise, rubber bullets, bear dogs, etc.) releases. Radio tracking is moving from fixed wing to using helicopter. While the helicopter is more expensive, there is better quality for determining locations (particularly den sites) and determining cub presence. Helicopter has camera and ability to film infrared and visible. Augmentation from NCDE to CYE over the years included 13 grizzlies with be 2 dead and 11 surviving. Three of those surviving returned to the NCDE. The remaining bears stayed in the Cabinets at least until their collars dropped. In 2014, two 2-yr old females are still there. This was a great huckleberry year, and activity was quiet until the huckleberry crop was done. Manley's message is to secure attractants, let neighbors know, report conflicts, carry & know how to use bear spray.

Mike Madel - MFWP R2 – East side had moderate berry year, but one of lowest conflict years with 21 conflicts. Some of the primary attractant areas are now protected, taking care of the attractant site, but possibly why conflicts are lower. Primary goal is to reduce conflicts between bear and people. In 2014 had 41 bear incident and observation calls, and confirmed a total of 21 grizzly bear conflicts: 4 livestock (4 calves & 1 ewe), 5 residential (bears in proximity), 2 property damage, 3 encounters (all hunting related, resulting in 1 bear mortality), 6 beehive damage (all unprotected beeyards way out to east), 1 crop foraging (corn). On beehives, MFWP used to try and trap bear, but now are fencing to protect bee yard and it's successful. There were 9 conflicts in spring, 3 in summer, 9 in autumn. There were 18 conflicts on private lands (86%), and 3 encounters on USFS lands (14%), which is similar pattern to the past few years. Of the 21 conflicts, 5 were control actions with one bear captured, and 13 had preventative measures taken. Spring conflicts often relate to livestock and grain/feed. Summer conflicts were more corn damage, compost facility, and beeyards. Autumn conflicts were in grain storage and hunting encounters. As grizzly bear expand eastward, we will have to be working with more and more land owners. In 2014, captured, marked and radio-transmitted 6 bears: 5 for research, and 1 for management. Of the 6 captures, 2 were males and 4 were females. Measures, weighing, DNA, BIA were also collected on all handled bears. By chance, Madel viewed two male grizzly bears fighting. Madel continued working with landowners to minimize or prevent bear conflicts, conducting over 180 land owner contacts. In 2014, 68 livestock carcasses were removed and redistributed in the front country. All bears feed on dead livestock in the spring as a protein source. If bears use the livestock boneyard, the bears are often getting into conflict with humans. There were a total of 6 temporary electric fences for beeyards, barns, and small livestock pens this year. And 4 permanent fences were installed. One fencing project had 18 different bears using the site, and after the fencing, bears were denied access. Approximately \$16,000 in funds were raised from federal, state, & NGOs to work on the various projects.

Jamie Jonkel - MFWP R2 – There were 7 radio-collared grizzly bears. Four were part of monitoring study (2 adult females and 2 sub adult females). Two additional females were management bears (one from CS&KT, and Ethyl the traveling bear). In fall had a management action, where Jonkel assisted wildlife services on a heifer depredation. As a result, 2 grizzly bears were captured, one large male, one NCDE monitoring female. There were not sure which bear involved until dental work indicated the male did the depredation, and he was relocated into Flathead NF. There was 1 mortality of monitoring female. She came out with cubs of the year, then cubs disappeared, but she was seen with adult male. She crossed the Hwy 200 continually, and was eventually road-killed. The other monitoring female came out with 2 cubs, and also lost her two cubs. In 2014, there were 65-70 conflicts, majority are agricultural in crop fields (radishes, alfalfa, oats). There

is still one female with cubs not in her den. Besides the heifer depredation, one other minor livestock, and several chickens (which were dealt with using electric fence). Jonkel tends to be responding to conflicts with electric fencing. The grizzly bears in agricultural fields is becoming an issue. Jonkel put in for NRCS grant funding to assist tackling this issue and preventative management. For preventative management, Jonkel had a bear spray project, with spray being purchased with assistance from NGOs. Bear spray is being issued to hunters in block management areas as well as ranchers. Jonkel is seeing a difference in people carrying bear spray. Thank you to NGOs for bear spray purchasing and electric fencing. There is a lot of sanitation work on south end, getting a lot of bear resistant garbage cans (both through sanitation companies and grants). The work with neighborhood networks are all over valley, and successful in sending out bear alerts, bear reports as well as "ratting out" neighbors. In Blackfoot corridor, Jonkel is continuing the carcass pick-up program. There is a range rider, assisting with land owner relations. Agricultural issue is the "big gorilla" in the corner.

Chris Servheen for Dan Carney – Blackfeet – There were 14 documented depredations (1 cow, 11 calves, 1 yearling steer, 1 horse) for \$22,780.50, or \$16,780.50 minus the horse. There were 7 captures: 3 females (one for trend), 4 males. There were 8 mortalities: 4 females, 3 males, 1 unknown.

Stacy Courville – CS&KT – There were 5 captures, mostly early spring and mostly due to two year olds running around. One capture was a sub-adult female bear who killed over 200 chickens in one night near Arlee, MT, and in the fall, was back in orchards. One capture was a pre-emptive capture at Ninepipes refuge, whose collar was shed in the Swan Valley in September. The bear made some interesting crossings of highways, and never did get in trouble again. One capture was habituated female in St. Ignatius in an agricultural field. She approached, but did not depredate chickens, and was moved. She did not cause problems afterwards. Once huckleberries were out, conflicts dropped. In mid-august, when berry crop done, bears got into field corn (dozens and dozens of incidents). In the past has tried large 7-wire electric fencing around large pivot corn field, but it is only protecting the alfalfa at this time. At end of November, there was a young female mortality (not sure if bear was shot or hit) west of Dixon, MT. Only had one failure on the jolt fencing (electrified cage around Rubbermaid garbage can), the rest where successful.

John Waller - GNP – There was one grizzly bear mortality found on the Going-to-the-Sun road. The investigation indicated the bear probably fell onto the road from a steep snowbank. There were a few black bear conflicts, one bear was euthanized. There were conflicts at the garbage dump site near Sherburne, on Blackfeet IR. After a couple years of people being allowed to carry firearms in the park, there was an incident. A hiker deployed



bear spray and subsequently discharged a gun, wounding a bear. There was one photo of a hiker avoiding a grizzly bear by climbing off the trail to allow a grizzly bear to pass along the steep rocky face of the Highline Trail. There was one bear conflict up on the remote 50 Mountain area.

**Livestock reimbursement** – George Edwards, Livestock Loss Board

In 2014, there were 30 animals lost due to grizzly bears for a total of \$41,514. Losses were mostly in Glacier County. In Glacier County alone, the total is \$32,094 (including the 3 wolf kills). Defenders of Wildlife provided some funding for grizzly bear loss prevention projects. Statistics on losses is available on their website, <http://liv.mt.gov/LLB/default.mcp>. Currently, the Board is just entering the grant process, see their website [llb.mt.gov](http://llb.mt.gov). Board is accepting grant applications through 31 January 2015, with awarding grants and providing funds back to successful grants in February 2015. Primary focus on grants is for \$100,000 to be awarded for wolf projects, but the board would like the focus of funding in areas with both wolf & grizzly bears. In 2013, grant funding was \$100,000 for wolf only, but did have a proposal focusing on grizzly bears & wolves together in southwest Montana. There will be a Non-Lethal workshop, spearheaded by USDA wildlife service, January 7<sup>th</sup> in Dillon, MT. It is an all day workshop.

**Mortality update 2014 and summary of 2003 – 2014** - Chris Servheen, USFWS

In 2014, there were 18 known and probably known mortalities from the following causes: 2 natural, 2 handling in management captures, 7 illegal kills, 2 augmentation, 2 automobiles, 4 self-defense, and 1 train. In 2014, there was not one mortality from a management removal in the NCDE. The recent good huckleberry crops was a contributing factor. Mortalities were distributed on the periphery for the most part, and none occurred on east-side front south of Blackfoot IR and central area of the Bob Marshall wilderness. There were 28 mortalities in 2013 and 18 in 2014, and it appears that the mortality number is stabling out. Mortalities by land ownership included: 6 on FS land (two were augmentation), 7 on private land, 2 on Blackfoot IR, 1 Flathead IR, and 2 on highways. Prevention is the key, as no management removals this year. The review of mortality percentages and land ownership percentages has the largest percentage of mortality on private land, which has a low percentage of land in the NCDE. The safest place for a grizzly bear is Glacier NP. October is still the riskiest month.

**Summary of trend: captures and distribution of radio collared bears 2014 and current analysis on survival with known-fate data** – Rick Mace, FWP

The topic is to cover some of the more important items of the last year or so. There are 4 key points: 1) Trend started in 2004, as a companion study to USGS DNA study; 2) State,

federal, tribal, and Canadian members are on the team; 3) It is identified as primary monitoring tool; and 4) it is part of the draft Conservation Strategy. The objectives are: 1) monitor population vital rates (trend, survival and reproduction); 2) monitor mortalities; 3) monitor bear distribution; and 4) data base archive. On average 20-24 females are followed annually, as well as a complimentary number of management bears. Generally around 90 bears are tracked annually.

What do we know about NCDE population, since 2004. This is based upon published papers and recently analyses, drawing in data base archives (reproduction, captures, genetics, distribution, telemetry, mortality). From Kendal et.al publication in 2009, in 2004, we had 765 grizzly bears in the majority of the NCDE with a confidence interval of 715-831. The population was 62% females, and a density map was produced. Mace and Cecily Costello improved the distribution map from 2004 with the female distribution and their movements. Map was completed for males & females, ranging from 0 bears to 12 bears. The highest density is still in Glacier NP.

What do we know about trend. Starting with 765 bears, and average growth rate of 3%, trend indicates there are 1059 bears in 2014, assuming a straight line growth rate. But there is uncertainty and not a straight line increase due to survival of independent bears and young, young litter size, age of 1<sup>st</sup> reproduction, reproduction longevity, inter-birth interval, reproduction transitions (female with none one year transitions to cubs next, transitions to yearlings, etc). The 3% growth rate in 2012 has confidence intervals of 0.928 to 1.102 (decrease 7% or increase 10%). The evidence that growth rate is not going down includes: 1) Female survival and lambda tied together. If female survival is 90% it's close to a stable population, if above 90% survival, population going up. From 2004-2013, NCDE has 95.6% adult females and 92.5% sub-adult females survival rate. 2) DNA study comparisons 2004-2011. In 2004, there were 156 males, and in 2011, there are 179 males. In 2004, there were 121 females, and in 2011, there are 140 females. This is suggestive of increasing numbers. 3) The change in mortality distribution from 1970-1980, and 2003-2013. The earlier years had more mortalities internal to NCDE, and the later years had more mortalities on the periphery. 4) Expanded distribution, looking at variety of information. Isopleth of occupied habitat indicates expansion beyond NCDE Recovery Zone. 5) Exploitation of periperal habitats. Grizzly bears are spending most of their time, or even year around, in peripheral habitats (foothills, agricultural lands). This is creating agricultural bears, and not the wild bears living on top of mountains. We are starting to see bears denning on front. 6) Evidence of density dependence. Population is starting to see evidence it is deregulate itself in certain areas. Through increasing density and mean litter size statistics, as density increases the litter size decreases. 7) Density dependence transitions. Transitions are for females: no litter year one, cubs year two, yearlings year

three, two year olds year four, then none again. It is a repeating status on females. A lot of things can affect this rotation, and it is not always the same. A total of 233 transitions were reviewed, along with relative density. In looking at probability of the transition from no cubs to cubs, evidence of the probability is going down. At this time, the survival of cubs is not affected. With these parameters, there is the suggestion of certain areas seeing a topping out.

Next step down is an approach of the following:

- Population management plan for NCDE, dovetailing with the Conservation Strategy. Provide management pathway for a suite of population goals and objectives.
- Incorporate all the demographic data summaries.
- Sustainable mortality levels.
- Describe population metrics to monitoring – monitoring protocols.
- Incorporate objectives with National Park Service, Tribes, and Regional game managers.

Question/comments.

From Deb Mucklow, is there any role of land managers in that plan (above)? Response, there will be some cooperation.

From Tabitha Graves, concern about some of the assumptions, need to get some other information. Response, Rick and Tabitha to talk later.

From Claudia Narcisco, has factors of the fencing, etc. incorporated into how this affects population?

Response, hard to take any particular thing on the ground that “did it”, more in concert with the host of stuff. Not sure how to incorporate all of these factors that into analysis.

From Keith Hammer, on the change in distribution, bear in mind the hunting in the heart of the ecosystem, and remember that the hunting is gone. Response, understood, but even back then mortalities not on the periphery as we see today.

### **Public Comment**

As the meeting was short on time, if there are any comments, please e-mail or call Deb Mucklow. Deb will get those comments into the meeting notes.

### **Schedule spring meeting**

Deb Mucklow will “doodle” for dates. The spring meeting will be around the end of April.

If there are any comments you want brought to the upcoming IGBC meeting, get them to Deb Mucklow.

**Concluded by 4:10.**

## **Public Comments received via email:**

Keith Hammer, Chair Swan View Coalition –

“follow-up comment to Derek Goldman’s question of what was being done in Forest Plan revision to address the late-season snowmobiling in the Skyland and Badger-Two Medicine areas near griz dens as reported by Mike Madel at last spring’s meeting.

Per the email response below, Chip Weber says that input on this matter for Flathead Forest Plan revision “is the right approach.”

This is not simply a matter of better law enforcement needed on the Badger side of the Divide - it is also a matter of the Flathead Forest Plan currently allowing late-season snowmobiling in the Skyland-Challenge area through May 14, grooming of the access roads there through May 14, and rental of the Challenge cabin during winter months - all of which contribute to easier access to grizzly bear denning habitat on the Flathead side of the Divide and illegal trespass on the L&C side.

The Subcommittee should also know the Flathead is proposing to begin renting the Anna Creek Cabin during the winter, as snowmobilers are pushing to get the West Side Reservoir Road groomed as well. This would set up a second unacceptable situation of funelling snowmobiles into another late-season snowmobile area in the Swan Range as though it will not result in disruption of grizzly bears emerging from their dens nor increase snowmobile trespass in the closed Jewel Basin Hiking Area.

The public should know that the Flathead Forest Supervisor has invited this discussion and input during Forest Plan revision and that he’s already received comments urging an end to the late-season snowmobile areas that were NOT a part of the settlement of MWA’s snowmobile lawsuit years ago, that FWS’s biological opinion on Amendment 24 found that snowmobiles near female griz with young during the spring season is a taking of grizzly bear, but that detection of that disruption is highly unlikely.

This leaves bears vulnerable to such disruption until someone like Rick Mace, Mike Madel or Tim Manley are fortunate enough to get photos of snowmobiles near griz den sites or females with young and successfully get the attention of FWS and FS - which is a wholly inadequate and backwards way to protect bears and den sites.

By addressing this email also to the Flathead Forest Plan Revision Team, we ask that it be included in that public record and discussion as well.”