

## **Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Accomplishment Report for 2015**

**Planned:** *Reduce human caused grizzly bear mortalities, particularly in the front country. Continue implementing food storage orders and sanitation measures on public lands.*

**Accomplished:** All four National Forests continued efforts to educate both the public and employees regarding the food storage order and proper behavior in bear country. This included the use of Bear Rangers on the Kootenai (KNF) and Lolo (LNF) National Forests. Colville National Forest (CNF) Forest Protection Officers conducted ~20 patrols to inform and educate forest visitor about camping and hunting safely in grizzly bear habitat while other staff provided training on food storage and large carnivore safety to campground hosts and other groups during the summer.

Most campgrounds, developed recreation sites and many trailheads have “Bear Aware” information posted. Other sanitation related activities included the installation of 50 food storage boxes on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNFs), and the installation of one food storage pole and additional bear-resistant garbage containers on the KNF. The CNF purchased 32 food storage boxes with financial assistance from six groups (i.e. Conservation Northwest, Defenders of Wildlife, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Pend Oreille County Public Utility District, Seattle City Light, and Selkirk Conservation Alliance) for installation at heavily used recreation sites within or adjacent to the Selkirk recovery zone. Five were installed in 2015 while the remaining boxes will be installed in 2016. A CNF concessionaire (Scenic Canyons Recreational Services, Inc.) purchased 3 additional lockers.

Idaho Fish and Game conducted a spring emphasis patrol geared towards reaching bear hunters on both federal and Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) portions of the Selkirk recovery zone. The patrol involved eight law enforcement officers from multiple agencies and contributed over 70 patrol days with an emphasis on bear identification and proper food storage.

The CNF, KNF, IPNF and LNF conducted gate monitoring on the 1,136 closures installed on NFS lands within the recovery zones. Approximately 50 percent of all closures are checked on an annual basis.

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), through a Habitat Conservation Plan with the USFWS, continued to implement measures to avoid and minimize grizzly bear mortality. MT DNRC trains employees to work in bear country; posts signs at key portals to grizzly bear habitat; and has a food storage order, among other measures.

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**Planned:** *Continue improving sanitation conditions within all land ownerships, particularly on private lands. Use the results of mortality analysis to tailor public outreach/education and sanitation strategies via citizen’s committee input (e.g. KVRI). Implement strategy as opportunity arises. Use results from public opinion poll to supplement and fine-tune existing public education programs.*

**Accomplished:** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP) and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) have bear management specialists/conservation officers working to prevent and respond to private land conflicts. Kim Annis is on call to handle conflicts in Montana while Brian Johnson manages conflicts in Idaho. They continued their Information & Education efforts focusing on bear identification and proper storage of attractants while living/recreating in bear country. Kim continued the popular bear resistant garbage container loan program and continues to work with local county officials to resolve dumpster/sanitation issues in Lincoln and Saunders counties.

KNF conducted Information & Education efforts via meetings, booths at fairs, campground presentations, and disseminated information regarding living in bear country. Additionally, a KNF Bear Ranger staffed a booth at Lincoln County Fair in Eureka using MTFWP equipment to set up electric fencing displays and providing information on Defenders of Wildlife Electric fencing Incentive Program.

Lydia Allen (IPNF) and Brian Johnson (IDFG) teamed with the Idaho Conservation League (ICL) to present a Living in Bear Country/Bear Spray workshop in Sandpoint for the general public. The workshop was well received. A second venue in Boundary County was cancelled due to fire activity. IPNF & CNF employees provided bear ecology/bear spray training to fire crews operating on the Tower and Clark Fork complexes.

The Canadian Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project (TBGBP) through Michael Proctor, has been involved in organizing and implementing conservation solutions for grizzly bear recovery within the Canadian South Selkirk and Yahk ecosystems. For instance:

- ✓ In 2012, M. Proctor started a 50 percent cost share electric fencing program for farms and homesteads that are in grizzly bear habitat and identified linkage areas. That project has been expanding every year and to date they have sponsored over 35 electric fences in linkage areas along Highways 3 and 3A in the Creston Valley at a cost of \$60,000 to date on this effort.
- ✓ They also sponsored a bear resistant bear bin program by supporting the regional community organizer and buying a portion of the bear bins that are now in a loaner/purchase program across the South Selkirk and South Purcell region. This program is just getting underway, and they have invested approximately \$6,000 in organizer's wages and the purchase of bear bins.
- ✓ M. Proctor has also carried out an effort to assist and train BC Conservation Officers in non-lethal management methods for potential problem bears. This includes radio collaring and applying hard or soft releases, or short relocation within the animal's home range, to appropriate bears. In the past 8 years they have had a 100 percent success rate with 8 females and ~ 50 percent success with 14 males. This effort has paid off, in that the BC Conservation Officer Service is starting to take on the non-lethal management as their strategy of choice when appropriate.

These efforts, and the research carried out by the TBGBP, have been funded by a suite of organizations including:

**Canadian Funders**

- Columbia Basin Trust
- BC Habitat Trust Foundation
- Fish Wildlife Compensation Program
- Nature Conservancy Canada
- Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

**U.S. Funders**

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative
- Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Foundation
- Wilburforce Foundation

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**Planned:** *Support the multi-year DNA study in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem.*

**Accomplished:** Research publication submitted to the Journal of Wildlife Management in 2015 and is undergoing further review/revision. Results indicate 48-50 bears in the CYE. Final publication expected in 2016.

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**Planned:** *Develop an approach for integrating the Resource Selection Function (RSF), a habitat-based predictive model developed from Yaak ecosystem data, into access management. Present progress report of applications in the Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems and adjacent areas at the spring IGBC meeting.*

**Accomplished:** There was not a presentation of the RSF model at the 2015 spring meeting. However, a first generation RSF map was used to provide guidance in site selection of the DNA hair-snare sites for the 2012 Cabinet-Yaak project as well as the 2015 effort in the Selkirk ecosystem. A refined RSF for the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Ecosystems is underway and anticipated in 2016.

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**Planned:** *Implement an Information & Education management actions strategy for the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem and further develop the details of the monitoring strategy.*

**Accomplished:** April SCYE/IGBC Workshop discussed/summarized I & E needs for SCYE. I & E chair created an Information and Education Task Group with members from multiple agencies.

**Planned:** *Support and participate in augmentation of acceptable grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem.*

**Accomplished:** One male grizzly bear augmented into the ecosystem in August of 2015. He subsequently moved to the Coeur d'Alene RD on the IPNF and was later shot during the hunting season on September 30th.

Additionally attempts to capture a female for the program were suspended in late August due to fire activity and poor food resources throughout the Cabinet Mountains.

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**Planned:** *Continue participation in agency efforts to maintain funding for a full time bear management specialist for the State of Montana, as well as to return full-time positions to the State of Idaho where they currently are not fully funded to do bear management work.*

**Accomplished:** Human-caused mortality is down in both ecosystems from previous years. The current I & E program which includes the efforts of bear management specialists or conservation officers has likely contributed to reducing human-caused mortalities in both ecosystems. In 2015, there were no documented human-caused related deaths in the Selkirk ecosystem. However, there were two human-caused related deaths in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem.

MTFWP Bear Management Specialist position continues to be supported through "soft" money. This includes funding from Revett Mining (\$50,000) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$50,000). Hecla Mining has since taken over Revett Mining and it is hoped they will continue financial support of the position in the future.

The IDFG conservation officer/bear management specialist position continued to receive funding to support some Information & Education/Law Enforcement and bear management efforts. Funding for this position came from Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) (\$30,000), US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Section 6 (\$22,000), USFS IPNF (\$7,000), and SCYE IGBC grant funds (\$4,500) in 2015. IDF&G funding provided the remaining \$36,500.

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**Planned:** *Continue systematic and opportunistic DNA data collection of grizzly bears in the Selkirk Recovery Zone (WA and ID) and adjacent areas.*

**Accomplished:** DNA is routinely collected on all radio-collared bears and during DNA-hair snare corrals and rub station efforts. Additionally, DNA may be collected opportunistically at a rub or camera site in both ecosystems.

A multi-agency effort resulted in the installation and monitoring of **190** DNA hair-snare corral sites and **19** rubs sites in and around the Selkirk grizzly bear ecosystem in 2015. This included financial/personnel support from the CNF, IDFG, IPNF, Kalispel Tribe, Kootenai Tribe, USFWS, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Idaho Panhandle Resource Advisory Committee (RAC), as well as coordination with federal, state and private land management entities (i.e. USFS, IDL, and Hancock Forest Management). The CNF and WDFW successfully partnered to seek USFS Region 6 approval for installation of corrals in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness.

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**Planned:** *Continue trapping and monitoring efforts in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem and reinitiate efforts in the Selkirk ecosystem.*

**Accomplished:** USFWS trapping crews operated in both the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems during the spring and summer seasons. Wayne Kasworm monitored 12 grizzly bears in the Cabinet—Yaak ecosystem, 6 grizzly bears in the U.S. Selkirks and another 11 bears in the B.C. Selkirks for some portion of 2015. Aerial monitoring was supported with funding from the USFWS, IPNF and KNFs.

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**Planned:** *Complete annual recovery status report. Target date: May 2015.*

**Accomplished:** Wayne Kasworm reported on the current recovery status at the April 2<sup>nd</sup> SCYE IGBC Workshop.

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**Planned:** *Participate in efforts to assess linkage opportunities within and between recovery zones and in British Columbia.*

**Accomplished:** RSF model pertaining to linkage between recovery zones was published in the Journal of Wildlife Management in May 2015, i.e. *Grizzly bear connectivity mapping in the Canada–United States trans-border region* (Proctor et al. 2015).

Michael Proctor has been working with several land conservation organizations (Nature Conservancy Canada, Nature Trust of BC, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative) within Canada to purchase (directly or in conservation easements) lands within identified linkage areas to foster and enhance inter-mountain connectivity of grizzly bears and other wildlife species. To date, over 1,200 acres worth \$2.6 million of prime linkage area lands have been protected within the Canadian Hwy 3 and 3A areas. These linkage lands help reconnect the Yaak ecosystem across BC Highway 3 to the larger healthier Purcell Mt grizzly bear population in southern Canada, and the South Selkirk grizzly bear population also to the larger healthier Purcell Mt population (~600 grizzly bears).

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**Planned:** *Compile a record of administrative use on restricted roads for Bear Year 2014 and update condition of OMRD, TMRD and Core in each BMU. Make headway towards achieving motorized access standards by 2019.*

**Accomplished:** Report completed and submitted to the USFWS by April 15, 2015.

Road decommissioning (3.5 miles) occurred in the Roderick (#11) BMU (Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem) which was already meeting access standards.

Monitoring of the 1,136 gates/barriers throughout both recovery areas was conducted by Forest Service and State employees throughout the bear season. Repairs/enhancements of closures included:

- ✓ IDL reconstructed 3 barriers and repaired a gate on IDL lands east of Highway 95 in the Cabinet portion of the recovery area (i.e. Twenty Mile Creek). Total cost of \$1,200.
  - ✓ IPNF repaired/enhanced 17 existing closures at a cost of \$28,000.
  - ✓ CNF completed full obliteration or reestablished long term drainage on a total of 4.3 miles of old road that had been previously closed (bermed) (FSR #1932) to ensure hydrological stability. This closed road was considered “core” habitat but had experienced some illegal ATV use in the past. The prism was planted with trees and seeded. Total cost of \$53, 500.
  - ✓ Hancock Forest Management replaced a gate in the Grouse BMU (CYE) at a cost of \$3,000.
  - ✓ MT DNRC implemented measures from their HCP to minimize and mitigate the effects of their transportation system on grizzly bears in the CYE, and reports to the USFWS.
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**Planned:** *Continue to develop and implement a coordinated, long-term, sustainable funding strategy. Pursue funding for identified unfunded work priorities: (1) Cabinet-Yaak information and education; (2) Selkirk radio-telemetry monitoring; and (3) Wildlife resistant dumpsters and food storage containers.*

**Accomplished:** April SCYE IGBC Workshop participants discussed development of SCYE IGBC pool of funding. Group was successful in pulling together funding for Selkirk radio-telemetry effort from multiple partners and grant opportunities. CNF and IPNF made significant headway in securing funding for purchase/installation of bear resistant food storage boxes.