



**STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR INFORMATION,
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS OF THE
INTERAGENCY GRIZZLY BEAR COMMITTEE
(Executive Summary)**



Final Report By:

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

BE	Bitterroot Ecosystem	NCDE	Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem
CWI	Center for Wildlife Information	NGO	Non-government Organization
DOW	Defenders of Wildlife	NWF	National Wildlife Federation
GBOP	Grizzly Bear Outreach Project	SCY	Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem
IE&O	Information, education and outreach	VGF	Vital Ground Foundation
IGBC	Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee	WMI	Wildlife Management Institute
LWWF	Living With Wildlife Foundation	YE	Yellowstone Ecosystem
NC	North Cascades Ecosystem		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) asked the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) to review information, education and outreach (IE&O) efforts of the IGBC member agencies and their non-government organization (NGO) partners and develop recommendations to make future IE&O more strategic with respect to recovery, delisting and ongoing conservation of grizzly bears. WMI used online surveys, workshops in 4 of the 5 recovery ecosystems, reviews of planning documents and funding requests to compile information on the nature, strengths and weaknesses of current IE&O efforts; assess the importance of barriers to recovery and delisting that are a function of human attitudes, beliefs and behaviors; assess the effectiveness of current IE&O in addressing those barriers; and identify ways to make future IE&O most effective.

OVERARCHING FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IGBC member agencies and their NGO partners have a strong interest in using IE&O to advance recovery, delisting and conservation of grizzly bears. A wide range of tools are being used across the 5 recovery ecosystems to reach multiple audiences with messages about the status of grizzly bears, the need for recovery, the importance of securing attractants, ways to coexist safely with grizzly bears and other topics. IE&O programs vary widely depending on the circumstances in each ecosystem, the nature of the audiences, the level of interest and participation by NGOs and the resources available. Perceptions of the effectiveness of current efforts also vary widely, but the impact of IE&O is rarely measured.

A common issue identified by agency personnel and NGOs was insufficient time or resources dedicated to IE&O. Virtually every agency employee and many in the NGOs indicated the demands of other duties affected their ability to deliver IE&O related to grizzly bears. This issue is not unique to grizzly bears and almost any program area would benefit from additional personnel or funding. It is important for the IGBC to recognize, though, that without committing additional resources to IE&O or assigning more personnel time to work on this issue, gains in the effectiveness of IE&O to advance recovery and delisting will be incremental, not exponential.

The IGBC needs to improve coordination and support of IE&O across all 5 ecosystems through its overall I&E Subcommittee and ecosystem-level I&E working groups. This would help the IGBC develop clear, concise and consistent messages related to a number of issues such as use of bear spray or securing attractants. It would also reduce confusion that results when the public receives too many different, and sometimes conflicting, messages from various agencies or NGOs. Improved coordination could also identify additional partnership opportunities.

The IGBC can improve coordination by either assigning additional staff time or requesting WMI to assist with coordination under the existing cooperative agreement. To provide clearer direction, the IGBC should adopt a vision and guiding principles for IE&O and take action on the recommendations in this report. A recommended vision and list of guiding principle are:

Vision Statement

Information, education and outreach efforts of IGBC member agencies and their partners in the conservation community instill human attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that enhance public safety, promote coexistence of people and bears, and support recovery, delisting and ongoing management of grizzly bears.

Guiding Principles

IE&O efforts of the IGBC member agencies and their partners in the conservation community should:

- *Focus on the highest priority issues affecting human safety; coexistence of people and bears; recovery, delisting and management in each ecosystem*
- *Be proactive and adaptive*
- *Be based on the best available science, knowledge, and experience*
- *Have realistic objectives and outcomes that can be, and are, evaluated in a cost-effective way*
- *Address the proper audiences*
- *Convey age- and audience-appropriate messages*
- *Use effective and efficient communication techniques and media*
- *Take advantage of partnerships and opportunities to leverage resources*

The IGBC benefits substantially from its relationships with NGOs including the Center for Wildlife Information (CWI), Grizzly Bear Outreach Project (GBOP), Living With Wildlife Foundation (LWWF), National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Defenders of Wildlife (DOW), and the Vital Ground Foundation (VGF). Partnership with NGOs allows agencies to leverage their limited IE&O resources and to reach some audiences or deliver some messages that the agencies cannot. The IGBC should maintain or expand these partnerships, yet avoid becoming so dependent upon NGOs that agencies either lose their identity with the public or IE&O programs suffer when economic factors impact the ability of NGOs to provide partnership benefits or services. The IGBC also needs to recognize that there are differences between the goals of the IGBC and some NGOs that may affect working relationships.

The IGBC needs to establish reasonable objectives for IE&O that can be measured in cost-effective ways to monitor and adapt programs. Objectives could be based on outputs, such as number of people contacted, students reached through hunter education classes or programs delivered. These are easier to measure, but do not provide as clear an indication of the impact of IE&O as objectives based on outcomes, such as a change in the number of people observed carrying bear spray in a National Park, reduced frequency of conflicts in an area, or changes in public opinion in sequential surveys.

Each ecosystem is at a different point on the recovery spectrum and has unique circumstances that must be factored into the design, execution and evaluation of IE&O. Each subcommittee needs to focus on the issues it faces and use messages and tools tailored to fit the audiences affecting recovery and delisting for that specific ecosystem. A “one-size-fits-all” approach to IE&O will not be effective.

ECOSYSTEM-SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

North Cascades (NC) Ecosystem

Current IE&O in the NC is focused on improving sanitation, creating awareness of the status of grizzly bears and reducing opposition to recovery based on misinformation. IGBC agencies in the NC rely heavily on the GBOP to provide IE&O. This partnership is one of the main strengths of IE&O in the NC. Weaknesses of IE&O in the NC include uncertainty about the future direction of recovery efforts; uncertainty about the presence of a viable grizzly bear population in the NC; inability to translate broad philosophical support for recovery in the large, urban population in the Puget Sound area into effective political or financial support; inability to overcome political resistance to recovery in the rural areas east of the Cascades; the challenge of working in a trans-boundary region; and the impacts of other endangered species issues on staff and resources.

The IGBC needs to assess how realistic it is in the current fiscal environment to advance recovery in the NC. If the IGBC wants to make progress consistent with its existing 5-year plan, future IE&O in the NC should continue to be based on a strong partnership between the IGBC and GBOP and should:

- Continue efforts related to sanitation and attractant management, but pursue alternative funding sources appropriate to reducing conflicts with black bears to enable redirection of IGBC funding to grizzly-specific IE&O.
- Explore the potential to secure private, philanthropic or foundation funding to produce and broadcast a video program or programs, hosted by Chris Morgan, about the need for, and value of, recovering grizzly bears in the NC.
- Continue to focus targeted outreach on specific, strategic audiences including the ranching and agricultural community, timber and energy-development industries, and local elected officials to develop an improved understanding of the concerns that lead to resistance to recovery and develop support for funding and actions needed to recover grizzlies in the NC.

Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE)

Current IE&O in the BE is focused primarily on sanitation in backcountry areas, in anticipation of eventual recovery of grizzly bears. However, plans to reintroduce grizzly bears have been stalled by the political environment resulting from reintroduction of wolves. The prolonged timeline for the current recovery approach through natural re-colonization, combined with other demands on staff, have relegated grizzly bears to a low priority in the BE.

The IGBC needs to let the BE subcommittee know what priority to place on recovery in the BE. If the IGBC wants to use IE&O to advance recovery through natural re-colonization, it should:

- Continue efforts related to sanitation and attractant management, but pursue alternative funding sources appropriate to reducing conflicts with black bears to enable redirection of IGBC funding to grizzly-specific IE&O.
- Increase IE&O on the importance of maintaining effective connectivity between the BE and other ecosystems.
- Emphasize the importance of bear identification in hunter education and outreach.

Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak (SCY) Ecosystem

Current IE&O in the SCY is focused on reducing human-caused mortality to the small grizzly population in the ecosystem by reducing conflicts associated with unsecured attractants and reducing fear of, and opposition to, grizzly bear recovery. Strengths of the program include the presence of knowledgeable, respected agency employees who have credibility with the public, availability of good hands-on materials, involvement of GBOP and other NGOs, and constructive engagement of county officials. Weaknesses include declining funding to support local bear management specialists, a complex land ownership pattern and international setting, dispersed human population, lack of effective prohibitions of feeding bears in Idaho, local and seasonal populations for whom English is not their first language, difficulty reaching seasonal visitors, and disagreement over the number of bears in the ecosystem.

To maximize the strategic impact of IE&O in the SCY, the IGBC should:

- Maintain or increase efforts related to attractant management by agency employees and NGOs in local communities.
- Increase efforts focused on bear identification by black bear hunters and getting all hunters to carry and know how to use bear spray.
- Increase IE&O related to the importance of augmentation and maintaining linkage within the SCY and between the SCY and other areas.
- Leverage local interest and participation in the DNA study to increase awareness of the status of grizzly bears and support for recovery.

Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE)

Current IE&O in the NCDE is focused on reducing bear-human conflicts associated with unsecured attractants, increasing human safety in grizzly bear habitat, and increasing awareness of the expanding number and distribution of grizzly bears. The complex land use patterns across the NCDE and expanding range of this growing population create a challenging environment for IE&O. Among the strengths of the program in the NCDE are a cadre of experienced, respected local FWP bear management specialists and seasonal “Bear Rangers” with the USFS, good scientific information about the size and trend of the population, generally positive public attitudes toward bears, a clear focus for management (delisting in the near term), good outreach materials, cooperation from waste management companies, and strong partnerships with several NGOs that provide support in an atmosphere not yet affected by litigation over delisting this population. Weaknesses include the lack of means to measure the effectiveness of

outreach, lack of coordination across the ecosystem and with other ecosystems, difficulty developing messages and reaching a diverse audience that includes both long-time residents and relative newcomers who are unfamiliar with bears, inadequate use of the internet and social media, and difficulty reaching front-country day users in Glacier National Park.

To maximize the strategic impact of IE&O in the NCDE, the IGBC should:

- Maintain or increase funding for full-time and seasonal field staff engaged in direct public contact and bear conflict management.
- Focus IE&O on securing attractants in general and small livestock in particular to reduce conflicts with bears in dispersed, rural settings and along the “dispersal front” of expanding grizzly range.
- Increase outreach to local communities, homeowners associations and county planning authorities with respect to securing attractants to reduce conflicts and increase public safety.
- Increase hunters’ and other recreationists’ knowledge about and use of bear spray.
- Increase public awareness of the presence of grizzly bears along the “dispersal front” and reasonable, appropriate steps residents can take to avoid conflicts.

Yellowstone Ecosystem (YE)

Current IE&O in the YE is focused on reducing bear-human conflicts associated with unsecured attractants, increasing human safety in grizzly bear habitat and during bear-human encounters, and reducing conflicts between big game hunters and grizzly bears. Among the strengths of IE&O in the YE are strong support from the YE Subcommittee; a clear direction for IE&O; enforceable rules; good interagency coordination; and a cadre of knowledgeable, local staff that have earned the respect of people in the YE. A number of NGO partners assist with IE&O in the YE, but disagreement over delisting this population undermines the relationship between agencies and some NGOs and contributes to conflicting messages about the status of this population. Weaknesses include the difficulty of reaching a large, transient audience of day users in the National Parks and Nation Forests; the dispersed nature of rural residents; inconsistency and “message overload” in signage; and ineffective use of social media. The protracted delisting process and associated litigation complicate IE&O efforts and partnerships between the IGBC and some NGOs.

To maximize the strategic impact of IE&O in the YE, the IGBC should focus on:

- Reducing conflicts associated with unsecured attractants on private lands and in gateway communities.
- Increasing public awareness of grizzly bear distribution and appropriate human behavior, including use of bear spray, especially among day users in National Parks and National Forests.
- Reducing conflicts, human injuries and grizzly bear mortalities due to encounters between grizzlies and hunters by increasing hunter awareness and use of bear spray.
- Creating more positive attitudes about grizzly bears and their recovered status.

THE IGBC WEBSITE AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The internet and social media are now a primary mode of communication and information sharing in America. The IGBC needs to use these channels more effectively to increase the impact of IE&O to advance recovery and conservation of grizzly bears. First, however, the IGBC member agencies need to make a fundamental, strategic choice between two alternatives for use of the internet and social media.

One option is for the agencies to pool additional resources to support a full-time employee or contractor to make the website more dynamic and to create and sustain an active presence on social media for the IGBC, as a collective entity, representative of all the member agencies. There are some advantages to this approach, but the overall cost, demands for coordination, and impact to the individual agencies' ability to support and maintain their own online and social media presence would be substantial.

An alternative is for the IGBC to improve its website using existing funds budgeted for IE&O and to encourage member agencies to enhance their individual use of online and social media channels for IE&O related to grizzly bears. This approach would enable the IGBC to continue to use its website to communicate the overall IGBC mission and goals and ecosystem-specific information and to serve as a link between member agencies. The IGBC website would also be a "portal" for the public to access member agency content. This approach would promote public awareness of the individual agencies and their responsibilities and provide for more dynamic, localized, and targeted use of social media in a more cost-effective, decentralized fashion. WMI is prepared to implement this recommendation under our cooperative agreement, if the IGBC concurs.

NEXT STEPS

The IGBC Executive Committee needs to consider the recommendations in this report and provide feedback to WMI and the ecosystem subcommittees. Based on direction from the IGBC Executive Committee, WMI is prepared to work with agency staff and NGO's to assist them with implementation to strengthen IE&O. The initial focus for the remainder of the current federal fiscal year would be redesigning the IGBC website and developing and specific implementation actions and budget for the upcoming fiscal year.