

# 2015 Work Plan/Accomplishments

## North Cascades Management Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee

### Planned actions Item 1, Restoration EIS for the NCE:

- The NPS and USFWS will jointly publish a Notice of Intent to initiate an EIS in the North Cascades in early 2015, examining alternatives for how to recover this population.
  - Public scoping efforts will take place early in 2015.
  - The NCE Technical Team will provide support to the NPS contractor to assist as possible with document preparation and public review.

### Accomplishments Item 1, Restoration EIS for the NCE:

- The Notice of Intent was published in February, followed by a series of open house-format public scoping meetings in Winthrop, Okanogan, Wenatchee, Cle Elum, Seattle and Bellingham, WA during the first two weeks of March.
- There were over 500 attendees with approximately 2,900 comments submitted. Fewer form letters were received than is usual in the scoping process.
- A summary of submitted comments is found at:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=327&projectID=44144&documentID=66506> .
- Primary concerns expressed included:
  - Across the spectrum of those who work and recreate in the ecosystem, how access may be affected and/or restricted.
  - Supporting the restoration of an endangered species, with suggestions for accomplishing this through translocating bears; a no-action alternative was seen as ineffective.
  - Supporting the no-action alternative as a means of “natural recovery”.
  - Restoring grizzly bears for ecosystem function and health (another step toward restoring a complete suite of predators).
  - Questioning whether there were ever grizzly bears here, and whether there is suitable habitat. If it were suitable, why are they not here?
  - Stating that the ecosystem provides viable habitat for grizzly bears.
  - Restoring and protecting grizzly bear habitat through access management, salmon habitat restoration and a sustainable fire management policy.
  - The need for cross-border commitment to restoration from US and Canadian governments and First Nations/Tribes as well as by surrounding land users.
  - Including a citizens’ working group to be involved in project management.
  - That state and federal agencies coordinate and cooperate with each other.
  - Enhancing visitor experience and boosting ecotourism with resulting benefits to local economies, or
  - adversely affecting visitor experience and decreasing visitation to the ecosystem, with resulting economic losses.
  - The potential for agricultural depredation (livestock, orchard crops), with requests for a compensation program and/or the ability to kill depredating grizzly bears.
  - Personal safety.

- The need for improving bear-related sanitation with bear-resistant food storage and waste receptacles available and in use throughout the ecosystem.
  - Given the large human population on the periphery of the ecosystem, the need for extensive grizzly bear-related education for both recreationists and those living and working on the land.
  - The short-term impacts to soundscapes generated by translocation operations and monitoring would be acceptable in designated Wilderness,
  - or would not be.
  - The increased potential for translocated grizzly bears to be harmed by humans and to affect or be affected by other species, including species listed under the ESA.
  - Whether actions taken to restore grizzly bears would have the same impacts on natural resource-based communities that other species (particularly spotted owls) have had.
- There is concern over how an existing state statute (*RCW 77.12.035 Protection of grizzly bears -- Limitation on transplantation or introduction -- Negotiations with federal and state agencies*) will be addressed during the EIS process.
  - A workshop for developing draft alternatives was held in November.
  - A Science Team comprised of the NCE Technical Team and other agency biologists provided comments on the Literature Review, and met with the contractor via a series of conference calls to refine EIS topics and issues. The team also deliberated the merits of habitat modeling approaches and continues to work with the modelers to consider appropriate parameters.

**Planned actions Item 2, Outreach:**

- Work closely in partnership with local residents and county governments to build local support and understanding about grizzly bear recovery and ecosystem health.
- Continue to work with and support the efforts of the Western Wildlife Outreach (formally the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project) to aid in outreach to local communities.

**Accomplishments Item 2, Outreach:**

- A communications plan for the EIS process was developed by IE&O representatives from the National Park Service, US Forest Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Six community meetings were held in addition to briefings for the Washington State Legislature and meetings with tribal, congressional, legislative, county and NGO representatives as well as local interest groups.
- The USFWS took over responsibility for the bear trailer in July and is managed in partnership with the NPS. The bear trailer program focuses on bear education and safety, as well as educating the public about the Grizzly Bear Restoration EIS. The bear trailer houses two fully mounted bears, one black and one grizzly, along with other educational artifacts such as bear skins, casts of paw prints and skulls. It was a highly visited and visible mobile exhibit at events such as the Washington State Fair and local festivals. When not on tour the bear trailer is stationed at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center in Newhalem, where rangers conduct bear programs throughout the summer. Over 10,000 people were engaged (watching a program and/or conversing with a staff member) during the 2015 summer season. The bear

trailer will continue its calendar of events in 2016 by participating in outreach on the east side of the Pacific Crest in Wenatchee and Tonasket, as well as attending several events along the I-5 corridor.

- The WWO continued to assist in staffing the bear trailer at several locations including the Woodland Park Zoo's Bear Affair (Seattle); Cabela's (Marysville); Stillaguamish Salmon Festival (Arlington); Skagit River Festival (Anacortes); and the Wenatchee River Festival (Leavenworth). They conducted additional outreach at the Issaquah Salmon Days, the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery and in numerous locations in state parks, national forest visitor centers and summer camps. While much of the outreach necessarily focused on black bears, they also provided information about grizzly bear biology, behavior and restoration.
- The WWO printed their Bear Safety brochure in Spanish with assistance from the USFWS. They are partnering with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on a Bear Smart program for King County, where exurban Bellevue/Issaquah is rapidly expanding into bear habitat.

#### **Planned actions Item 3, Report follow-up:**

- Continue to follow up on all reliable reports of grizzly bear presence. Seek funding to support a crew of technicians to follow up the most credible reports with techniques that obtain samples for DNA analysis or photographic record.

#### **Accomplishments Item 3, Report follow-up:**

- Reports of possible grizzly bears were followed up by interviews and/or site visits as warranted.
- A grizzly bear (gender unknown) was verified near EC Manning Provincial Park, BC in October, approximately 10 miles north of the border.

#### **Planned actions Item 4, Access management Part 1:**

- Explore means to formalize access management on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, through a NEPA process. This may take the form of amendments to existing forest plans until forest plans can be completed. Interim guidance was issued by the forests in 1997.

#### **Accomplishments Item 4, Access management Part 1:**

- Interim guidance remains in place on both Forests.
- There is no timeline for release of the draft EIS for the O-W NF Plan Revision.
- Funding is not available for the MBS.

**Planned actions Item 4, Access management Part 2:**

- Re-evaluate core areas and road management in the western part of the recovery area (Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF).

**Accomplishments Item 4, Access management Part 2:**

- The MBS has updated their road layer, and trails will be updated in 2016. Core area reevaluation will follow this process.

**Planned actions Item 5 Sanitation:**

- Expand the NPS food storage requirements to other federal lands in the recovery area. We propose reviewing existing food storage orders on national forests in other ecosystems.

**Accomplishments Item 5, Sanitation:**

- No progress was made to expand food storage orders to other federal lands.