

Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
March 29-30, 2017 **Jackson, WY**

Members present:

Mary Erickson, Custer Gallatin National Forest
Sam Sheppard, MT FWP
Melany Glossa, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Kerrie Gunther, Yellowstone National Park
Brian Nesvik, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Tricia O'Connor, Bridger-Teton National Forest
Frank van Manen, USGS Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team
Delissa Minnick, BLM – Wyoming
Jodi Bush, USFWS, MT
Garth Smelser, Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Loren Grosskopf, Wyoming County Commissioners Association - Park Co
Craig Trulock, Shoshone National Forest
Sue Consolo Murphy, Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway
Cornie Hudson, BLM, MT
Lee Miller, Fremont County Commissioner, ID
Gregg Losinski, ID Department of Fish and Game (I&E Chair)
Hilary Cooley, FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator
Mary D'Aversa, BLM – Idaho
Sandi Fisher, USFWS, ID
Sam Sheppard, MT FWP
Leander Watson, Shoshone Bannock Tribes
Jim White, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Dave Gustine, Grand Teton National Park

Wednesday, March 29

Welcome and Introductions: Mary Erickson

Introductions and roll call

Review Past Meeting Minutes: Mary Erickson

Sam Sheppard-motion to approve draft meeting minutes from Fall 2016 meeting.

Jodi Bush-Second

Passed

All notes and powerpoints will be posted on the IGBC website.

Status of Proposed Delisting Rule: Jodi Bush

The 2016 Conservation Strategy was finalized and since then we have finalized our response to about 665,000 comments that were received during the open comment period on the Proposed Delisting Rule. We have drafted the final rule for delisting the grizzly bear. That rule is currently under review in our Regional office and will be moving shortly to the reviewing process at headquarters and then on to the Secretary. We hope to see that rule in the federal register sometime soon.

State Bear Management Plans-WFGD, IDFG, MTFWP:

MT-Sam Sheppard

Our statewide plan was updated 2 years ago. The Conservation Strategy will direct Montana's management of bears going into the future when post delisting comes. We've incorporated the demographic monitoring. In regards to our hunting program, we will remain consistent with that Conservation Strategy with the demographic monitoring areas within our hunting districts. If our hunting districts incorporate both portions of inside the DMA and outside will have a single harvest quota which will remain consistent inside the DMA and those management objectives and mortality thresholds. It's a very conservative hunting framework. Our position overall remains that we are going to allow bears to exist where they are socially tolerated. We are not looking at having no hunting zones adjacent to the Parks. The question with tolerance comes also with building that capacity within the ecosystem and beyond. There have been some requests that we develop a singular statewide management plan. Right now that's a capacity question for us as well. We will continue to operate on the NW and SW Montana management plan for now. It is worth further discussion. We have also taken the 300 and 501 hunting areas and closed those to give deference to concerns people have about connectivity, to enhance connectivity and address those issues.

ID-Jim White-ppt on IGBC website

I am a Regional supervisor for ID Fish and Game in Idaho. We have also been very busy with legislative issues. I would like to thank Curtis Hendricks for putting the majority of this talk together. ID has been involved in recovery plans since 1975. We've done several recovery plans in the state. This plan will help manage the Yellowstone population in Eastern Idaho. Like the rest of the states, we got an advisory team together back in the early 2000's with livestock folks, landowners, the Park, and a lot of different interests. Our legislature approved our plan in March 2002 and that is the plan that still stands. One thing about Idaho's plan is that there is no end date and is meant to be adaptive and responsive to management over time. The plan is linked to CS signed this fall. The way the ID plan was written was as soon as the CS is signed, it is incorporated into our plan. There are 3 main goals: ensure long-term viability of grizzly bears; support expansion beyond the PCA; manage as game animal, including regulated hunting when and where appropriate once they're delisted.

The Idaho plan has 6 Components

- 1) Distribution and occupancy
 - a. Motorized access management
 - b. Livestock and human conflicts
 - c. Habitat management
 - d. Habitat restoration

- 2) Population Monitoring
- 3) Public Information and Education -7 recommendations
- 4) Conflict Management
- 5) Harvest Management
- 6) Program Cost and Funding

We just recently hired a full time position as our grizzly bear biologist (Jeremy Nicholson), who will be in charge of a lot of the monitoring and management in eastern Idaho. We also have a wildlife/human conflict response team made up of seven people to respond to conflicts. In 2002 we spent about \$21,000 on grizzly bears and now we're spending about six times that amount. Our legislature passed some legislation saying black bears and grizzly bears are different and when we write our rules we don't just say bears. We can have different rules for the two species.

WY-Brian Nesvik-ppt on IGBC website

This plan was approved last May after giving talks on it all over the state.

Key Components

1. History and Background
2. Adaptive Management Criteria-Recovery Criteria
3. Status
4. Regulations
5. Occupancy
6. Population Management
7. Hunting
8. Research and Monitoring
9. Habitat and Land Management
10. Conflict Management
11. Information and Education
12. Law Enforcement
13. Management Costs and Funding
14. Maintaining a Recovered Grizzly Bear Population

Damage reimbursement-in place today and will continue to be in place.

Regulations tell commission what they are empowered to do-fix seasons and bag limits, and to establish zones and areas in which trophy game animals may be taken as game animals with a license.

Management strategy was approved and served as basis to promulgate regulations, which were approved in July. No regulation that addresses hunters/seasons.

Population management-monitor for all forms of mortality. If the Commission decides to do so, hunting would be a component of grizzly bear management.

Habitat and land management-Department has no direct authority to manage habitat except on Commission-owned lands. All six forest plan revisions include standards ensuring habitat

will be conserved at levels needed to sustain the recovered GYA DPS grizzly bear population; promotes the use of bear pepper spray; advocates maintenance of roadless areas; recommends that land management agencies require proper food/waste handling practices

Conflict Management-As the population has grown in abundance and distribution we have responded in kind with increased efforts and infrastructure to deal with human/grizzly bear conflicts. We have folks in each area dealing with conflict with livestock outside DMA, which is up exponentially.

Information and education-Bear Wise Wyoming-check station gave out bear spray which was wildly popular.

Law Enforcement-Commission will ensure the fair, consistent and effective enforcement of laws and regulations related to grizzly bears

Mgmt Costs and Funding-over \$45 million spent. Bulk of it came from sportsmen's dollars

Review of Proposed YGCC Charter: Sue Consolo-Murphy

We set up a working group to review the 2007 Charter for YGCC. Charter was sent out-please get any changes to me by April 15. The first substantive change on page two-comment from Dan Tyers-suggestion habitat modeling team be struck. Dan suggests we retain the team because we still need annual reports and for running project effects analysis.

Mary-context for today's review is trying to check the language so you are not revising the charter every couple years. I don't have a concern with there being a habitat modeling team. It might be best saying that the YGCC has the ability to create any teams or working groups as necessary to serve the purpose of YGCC. I can support having a Habitat Team, Study Team and Information and Education Team.

Sue-we do need to call out the IGBST for its specific role in the Conservation Strategy, and could say other teams as YGCC deems to establish. We could specify that other teams could be set up by a majority or a super majority.

Delissa Minnick-Suggest call out the two (study team and I&E) and language to set up any additional teams as needed.

Mary-lets discuss all changes, approve or not at the end of the discussion.

Gregg Losinski-at the bottom of page 2 in the footnote it talks about the I&E Specialist from IGBC...that position doesn't exist.

Sue-could we put some language in as the committees are established, the makeup will be determined so that the Charter doesn't get down in the detail of who sits on each team.

Mary-Change the line, "with the recent delisting"-take out recent. Also this references the Dec 2016 Conservation Strategy as the heart and soul of the YGCC, but think it should say the 2016

CS and any subsequent or future amended Conservation Strategies since we did give ourselves leeway to make changes over time.

Sue-next is membership of YGCC and voting privileges-actually lists the membership, so we should clarify. Defer to each agency as to who sits. In CS, when it refers to YGCC it gives a voting seat to a representative of the Biological Resources Division of the USGS, which we assume was meant to be the study team leader, but it also says that position is an advisor without a vote.

Frank van Manen-no, we should not get a vote.

Sue-On the last page Tribal (Members appointed by Tribal Chairs) "One representative from the Shoshone Bannock, Northern Arapaho, and Eastern Shoshone Tribes". Whether they come is up to them. In the past we had one member represent both the Northern Arapaho and the Eastern Shoshone, but this indicates one each.

Leander Watson-as far as the Shoshone Bannock, we've been working on the consultation process. The other tribes mainly send their councilman to these meetings and their vote is going to count. As far as the Shoshone Bannock, I am technical staff and everything goes to the council for vote. As far as other tribes, there are the Crow, the Northern Cheyenne, and I'm not sure how the Blackfeet would be involved.

Sue-I think we should say that this is in no way intended to replace consultation responsibilities that each land management agency has. The language was very specific in the strategy about those tribes who have land in the DMA.

Mary-Would it be best to keep the language in this document echoing what it says in the CS that the tribal members would be appointed by the tribal chairs and there would be a seat for each sovereign nation who have lands within the DMA, and perhaps name the three nations. This has been messy over time because the Shoshone Bannock have been very consistent in attendance. That hasn't been the same but we should keep the language for the ability for those others to participate.

Brian Nesvik-I think we need to make sure we leave as is, when we get down to the next discussion, when we talk about signatures, we can make an exception for tribal members of YGCC, if the tribal council doesn't want them to be signatories, it doesn't prevent them from being voting members.

Leander-The Shoshone Bannock wants to be proactive, not reactive, in management of grizzly bears.

Jodi Bush-I think the other point is the idea that this providing representation to the tribal members does not replace the tribal consultation process and maybe we need to put that somewhere.

Loren Grosskopf-Just want to verify that these are the three tribes that have lands in the DMA, correct? Are we limited to the DMA, or the GYE...maybe should specify.

Sam Sheppard-I think the way it has geographically been stated is the way it should stay for now.

Mary-would like to echo that. We don't want to confuse consultation obligations which might involve many tribal nations versus the work of the YGCC is really around the land management aspects around the CS. We need to stick to the sovereign nations that have lands within the DMA.

Sue-Membership-suggestion that may be interest in adding the refuge managers who have not been traditionally part of this group, but as the bear population has expanded, they are dealing with some of the same issues.

Brian-I do not support including the refuges because if you consider the breadth of authority of those sitting at this table to manage entire forests or national parks or grizzly bear populations within a sovereign nation or in the states. That is a significantly different level of responsibility of a very small refuge with intermittent issues with grizzly bears. If they have issues they want to discuss or present, at no time would we ever not let them sit at the table to discuss issues.

Sam-I would echo that, not to be exclusionary, and it remains an important partnership with all of us, but can be better served through that collaborative partnership. I've personally had some private landowners who have larger areas and have expressed some interest.

Jodi-the Service as a whole is not a voting member of YGCC and I think that's appropriate. The flip side of this is the refuges would be implementing the CS. That's different than private landowners. They are federal lands. Can I ask the managers who are here today what they think?

Bill West-I don't want to complicate grizzly bear management but I would say we have had some disagreement in the way bears have been managed. I may not be aware of everything that's going on. In 2015 we had nine grizzly bears by the refuge boundaries by 10:00. It's not like we don't have bear responsibilities. I agree we can come to the table, but sometimes problems can happen because we have not been consulted. As an example, we could be a release site for a bear that was causing problems.

Sam-Bill I would be willing to talk in depth about your thoughts on how grizzly bears were managed in Montana here recently. From Montana's perspective the disagreement was not necessarily a bear that was on the refuge. It was my understanding it was on an opinion on what should be done, calling into question the judgement and professionalism of Montana's best grizzly bear biologist. That's something we can have a further conversation about. He knows what he is doing and how we've gotten here is through the dedication of those people. They also hold the ultimate responsibility. He has to make those decisions day to day on individual bears. It's not my place to second guess the decisions of our biologists, who don't take those responsibilities lightly.

Sue-Joe brought up a discussion about voting and decisions—it will be a coordinating committee so may not really have decisions to make. The primary activities identified in this

charter are insure data is collected, share information, identify shortfalls, research, and things like that. The question is do we include these two refuges for coordination and information exchange?

Mary-I can see both sides. On one hand, the two refuges are two pieces of federal public lands that are part of the expansion area for grizzly bears that are part of that future canvass on which bears will expand. We're trying to have people at the table that have the management wherewithal who work together on future management challenges and conflicts. I don't have a concern with those entities being on there. The alternative is we go simply with the members listed on the CS, and then our framework should be not exclusionary, but invite others to work through the committee over time without adding membership. The other is with the two additional members added on. There might be another option-acknowledge that they are smaller than a national forest, but we could add those two public lands as non-voting members to represent the land management issues and concerns that management might have.

Loren-we already have 18 or 19 voting members. We're not talking about only federal lands here; there are also private lands. I think if we start expanding to adding all federal agencies we may have to look at adding other state agencies. We certainly have some ranch owners who have larger areas than the refuges. I would support not adding any more.

Jim White-I would lean towards not adding folks too. A couple things to think about is how big does the group get until you are not able to function real well. Also as bears move further out, does my counterpart in Pocatello or Salmon get voting rights?

Mary-just want to clarify that each state has a representative. In general the states represent private land owners and ranchers.

Brian Nesvik-the more that we add, the more we complicate things and set up roadblocks

Mary-At this point, we just signed the CS and maybe we need to stick with the entities that listed in the strategy. Maybe we focus on how we coordinate and encourage dialogue with other land management entities.

Sue-On the draft the wording suggested is, "By vote of the (super?) majority of current members, other agencies having lands in the GYE DMA may be added to YGCC", which would leave that door open

Brian-instead of talking about agencies having lands, I think it should be "other entities that have habitat or management responsibilities".

Mary-let's leave it where it is today, that leaves the door open at future meetings

Garth-if I had bears, I would want to be at this table and I would want to vote. Slippery slope to put value judgements on the size of the land. If I'm responsible for supporting the strategy, then I should have a seat at the table, regardless of how big my land is. The conflicts aren't any less impactful. But I am okay with leaving as is for now.

Sue-In the 2007 charter it says, "The US Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, and Field Office Supervisors from Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming will serve as ex-officio members of the committee". Would this be sufficient representation?

Jodi-no the refuges are not in the chain of command.

Mary-that wording is not in the Conservation Strategy-need to strike that in the charter. We propose what is in the strategy for FWS representation will carry over into the charter.

Delissa-question on super majority, majority votes

Brian-recall we talked about 2/3 as super majority for large issues like changing the charter

Loren-2/3 of those present, not the whole group

Mary-all voting has to be those members/proxies present in person or by phone-no proxy after the fact.

Sue-any identified need for some quorum to do business?

Brian-most groups-has to be over half to be a quorum.

Jodi-another question-relationship between this new body and IGBC. We should spell that out somewhere.

Mary-there's been a little dialogue on if and when the bear is delisted, and we go to YGCC, does this subcommittee directly report to IGBC in terms of they are the parent committee and this committee needs to follow their direction. At IGBC the conversation I recall was no, but we would keep an association with them. Annually we would go to IGBC and report on progress. Because this is long term documentation, maybe there is value to adding something that describes that if and when the group goes to YGCC, the relationship with IGBC changes from a subcommittee answerable to them.

Jodi-can we go back to the FWS representation. I suggest we leave the grizzly bear recovery coordinator as an ex-officio and strike the rest of the field office supervisors from the list? That person, like Frank, is relevant to this committee to provide information and be a conduit.

Brian-maybe even wording it like Frank's position as a technical advisor.

Mary-I support that, you would have both those roles, a study team lead and recovery coordinator mentioned in the charter as important to this group.

Brian-one more thing, do we need to talk about petitioning for relisting on page three?

Sue-the suggestion is for us to keep the first sentence about YGCC does not supersede the authority....and the last two sentences about petitioning to re-list would go away.

The last thing we need to discuss is who will sign the charter?

Mary-send any other comments to Sue, she will incorporate our comments from today, and send it out to the entire membership in the next few weeks. Then at the fall meeting, the first order of business is the vote on the final YGCC Charter. There is a process on how you nominate the Chair and Vice-Chair. You could record those present for the vote-roll call vote on the Charter in the minutes and attach it to the Charter.

Research Update: Relationships between Grizzly Bears and Livestock Allotments, Analysis of 25 Years of Data-Smith Wells-ppt will be on IGBC website after Smith defends her thesis—by end of summer

Dan Tyers-Smith is a graduate student at Montana State University in the Animal and Range Science Department and has an undergraduate degree from the same department.

Smith-thanks for having me here today. This powerpoint includes my preliminary results.

Implications

- Provide information on ecosystem-wide livestock stocking and grizzly bear depredation on public lands, 1992–2014
- Identify allotment and habitat characteristics that are related to depredation events
- Use results to enhance adaptive management approaches for grizzly bear conservation and livestock grazing on public lands in the GY

Public Comment

Caroline Byrd-GYC-Grizzly bear conservation has been a tremendous success story and is a testament to the Endangered Species Act and the hard work of all the agencies and people sitting around this table. It is clear that people care deeply about Greater Yellowstone grizzly bears. The public has sent in more than 650,000 comments on grizzly delisting. It's a testament to the Endangered Species Act that the public had an opportunity to participate and that this process has been guided by the best available science. We believe the engagement in this process has improved these plans and the process and has addressed many, but maybe not all of our concerns. We look forward for the opportunity to look over the final rule. The bottom line at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition is we want to keep bears alive. We want to see bears wild and people safe. We're proud of our partnership with the Forest Service and have installed 700 bear boxes in the campgrounds around the ecosystem, and we are dedicated to install even more by extending this partnership into 2018. We continue to work around the ecosystem with communities, landowners, rangers, and hunters to reduce the conflicts that are killing too many bears. We look forward to continue working with you on these important partnerships as we move forward. We know there is uncertainty yet on how this process will

conclude, and we all know that the hunting issue will be fraught with controversy. While GYC does not support sport hunting of grizzly bears as a biologically necessary tool, we understand that hunting is part of state management plan that has been discussed for decades. To reduce this controversy, we recommend that you delay hunting at least through this transition of management. We also recommend that any hunting that later occurs is extremely limited and is focused on conflict areas and away the Park and connectivity corridors. We look to work on the decades of progress made. Your work and our work doesn't stop because of delisting and we must continue to build on this legacy of this committee and commemorate the success of the Endangered Species Act.

Thursday, March 30

IGBST Research and Monitoring 2016: Frank van Manen-ppt on IGBC website

Discussion

Brian-curious as to your prediction regarding the southward expansion of occupied habitats at the south end of the DMA, and also outside the DMA I noticed that most of that new occupied range is male occupancy and that female occupancy follows behind the male. Do you have predictions based on past trends, when female occupancy will move in?

Frank-yes, that is an important question for you as managers to know. My assessment is that I wouldn't be surprised that within five years we'll see the Wind River Range pretty well occupied. In terms of the DMA, once the Wind River is occupied, there's not much left. We may see a little expansion on the eastern edge and western side of the Idaho edge.

Delissa-I have a similar question about eastern expansion in the Bighorn Basin. The question I get asked is when this might happen.

Frank-that is a lot more speculative. I would be a lot more hesitant to make any predictions there. We're talking about a lot of country in between where I imagine conflicts will be pretty high. We will keep updating the condition of occupied range every two years.

Conflict Reports – 2015 and 2016-ppts on IGBC website: **WY**-Dan Thompson, **ID**-Jeremy Nicholson, **MT**-Jeremiah Smith, **GTNP**-Dave Gustine, **YNP**-Kerry Gunther, **FWS-Wind River**-Pat Hnilicka

YES I&E Committee Updates: Gregg Losinski-ppt on IGBC website

When it comes to Yellowstone and bears, it's automatic news. Even the littlest thing can be used for or against what we are working on. Ten years ago, we didn't have so much "Bear Aware" information to get out to the public; everyone knows the drill now. Everyone is doing the most they can in getting the word out, but it is a never ending battle.

There was a human/bear conflict workshop in Bozeman with the states and some Canadians, and the Parks involved. It was great to have on-the-ground managers talk messaging and working with the public, education and how that's a big part of conflict resolution. I would encourage you folks to be sure your public information folks are involved and make sure they understand what bear managers do. The Forest Carnivore Managers class at Lamar is coming up in June, which is a great learning opportunity.

Bear outreach and education is a large program that does great work; it's a resource that is out there that helps the agency and the public. We still have much education to do about bear spray.

We are posting the recommendations of the boards of review so people are aware of what they can do. We are also posting more information on food storage and what that entails; have some interactive maps on IGBC website.

There are people who want science to be part of the tools for managing bears but don't want hunting to be part of that science. We need to educate the public on what we do and why we do it.

GYCC Wildlife Subcommittee Updates-Employee Bear Safety Training: Andy Pils

We've talked about bears expanding out into areas employees may not be used to seeing and may not know what to do. We have also experienced a lot of turnover and lack the expertise to deliver training to our employees. We are all aware of the human fatalities and injuries that keep safety front and center. Dan Tyers has been tasked with corralling some of these issues and moving forward with covering the improvement of bear safety training. In working with the GYCC committee, they have decided the wildlife subcommittee is a good vehicle for rounding up these issues and making this happen. This committee is comprised of wildlife biologists from all the GYCC agencies across the ecosystem that includes national forests, parks, BLM, FWS, national wildlife refuge. We have several people who have a lot of history working with grizzly bears.

For the past year we have been wrestling with this issue and our first priority is developing a standardized bear safety program to be used as an introduction for new employees, seasonals, and volunteers. The format is an hour presentation designed to use at yearly orientations covering standard topics like bear identification, food storage, how to handle precautions, bear spray use, and time for discussion of local concerns. A draft has been developed, a subset of our committee is making some edits, and our goal is to have that ready for a pilot program in time for this field season to be used across the ecosystem.

Another priority we talked about to get at this issue of capacity to deliver training is developing a train the trainer program to reach the people who will be delivering the training to all employees. We would like to move forward in the coming year with developing a 1-2 day workshop for that.

Cornie Hudson-one thing that would make it easier is if we could have one food storage order across all state and federal boundaries. I know we have struggled with that, but why is it so hard?

Gregg-IGBC has tried to handle this in all recovery areas, but in the last decade they haven't been able to dent it. I suggest YES approach them again.

Mary-in our region we have spent hours on this. At one point we had a consistent GYA one and then we looked at the Northern Continental Divide and we tried to reconcile our food storage with them because we're in the same state, and that caused us to be inconsistent with the Shoshone right across the line. Maybe it is time to bring it to IGBC again since they reach across all ecosystems.

Moth Sites Study Update: Andy Pils

I want to talk about a project we are initiating with Dan Tyers and the grizzly bear study team. Many of you know that the moth feeding sites are a very critical food source for grizzly bears especially in the eastern part of the ecosystem. The Shoshone Forest supports most of the sites. For the last ten years we've had some anecdotal information that there's more human pressure on some of these sites with a steady stream of commercial filming requests, and people guiding trips to see bears feeding on the moth sites, as well as a general public increased awareness of where these sites are and going to view bears there. There's been an increase in concern for human safety as well as effects to bears.

We are lacking data on how many people go to these sites and how they are using them. As a result of that this project has been identified as a priority. This project first gained some momentum back in 2010 when Dan Tyers was new to his position. He met with Chuck Schwartz, the outgoing study team leader at the time, along with the Park supervisors and Forest Supervisors to identify relevant topics for land management agencies and the study team to pursue. This was one of those. The Shoshone recently completed our forest plan and recognized that we need to improve our understanding of these sites and how humans react to them before we can entertain more commercial use requests.

We've been successful in getting some funding for this project. We've developed a partnership with MSU and have developed some objectives: how many people are going to these sites; how bears respond; model human access relative to sites. They are in remote and rugged areas and logistics is one problem. We've had some discussion focusing our methods and identified a graduate student from MSU and will start implementing it this year.

Habitat Standards Review & Re-write Process Update: Kerry Gunther/Dan Tyers

Dan-Chapter 3 in the Conservation Strategy addresses habitat management with language about standards and monitoring. There are definitions about rules associated with secure habitat development of sites and livestock allotments, all metrics of human related activities. In the recent delisting effort we reviewed the 2007 CS, made changes for the 2016 version. A more substantive change has been offered by the National Park Service related to application and rules for developed sites. We have incorporated into the 2016 version that we would visit

the definition of developed sites, and in so doing, form a team of appropriate managers to address the topic with a due date of 2018. This enterprise is directly driven by some Park Service concerns on their overall and holistic management.

Kerry-ppt on IGBC website

Questions

Mary-this was put in and we said we would do some work on this with a recommendation by the end of 2018. Today's presentation was just a reminder that this is out there and will be an important piece of work.

Status of Delisting, cont'd-Jodi

People wanted a little bit more information on where we are. One of the questions that was brought up was in our draft final rule, did anything change so that we have to go back to the Conservation Strategy? The answer is no, and the reason is we waited so long to finalize our delisting rule was because we were making sure the CS had everything we needed and all the comments were addressed through that process or were going to be addressed through our delisting rule.

The other questions were about timing, and I was intentionally vague because we have a new administration and every new administration takes a little bit longer to look at things. Our agency only has an acting director yet and that adds time to things. The document was written, given to the regional office to review and at the same time to our solicitors. They will read, provide comments and give back to address any comments. Then it is given back to the regional office. Once the regional office and our solicitors say OK, it goes to our headquarters office in DC and the Department of Justice. They also review it and if they have any comments, they send it back to us. There is another agency called the Program of Policy and Management that also has to review it. Finally it goes to the Secretary, who will ask all of us if we are good with it before they will officially sign it. If everything works perfectly, we're looking at June.

I just want to say, since this group will transition to the YGCC and FWS will not be involved, all of you at this table are the reason we got where we are and we know that. This is a partnership and it couldn't have been done without you. The recovery of the grizzly bear is really a success, so we want to say thank you to all.

Tribal Information-Loren Grosskopf

Mary-We became aware of some of the concerns of the Northern Arapaho Tribe last fall. I wanted to be sure the committee was aware of how we responded to a letter we received. Our intention is to be open and inclusive to the tribal participation on this committee. We send out information to a mailing list and invitations to our meetings and we have not had participation in the last couple years from the Northern Arapaho or the Eastern Shoshone, but we've had consistent participation and involvement from the Shoshone Bannock Tribe. This last fall I received a copy of the Northern Arapaho Tribe letter from their historic preservation officer that was sent to Secretary Jewell with some of their concerns with the delisting process and the consultation process, and opposition to delisting and the Conservation Strategy.

After our meeting in Cody, I got a letter in December from the director of the preservation office stating they wanted to register a “no” vote on the Conservation Strategy. They had not been at the Cody meeting but wanted to go on record. We don’t have a protocol for that process and typically we say they need to be at the meetings to do that. I simply put that into the record for the YES committee to say where the Northern Arapaho landed. You may have seen in the news release that the N. Arapaho had not attended these meetings and was not welcome, so we spoke about the need to get the information out and I did some additional outreach to the Northern Arapaho and the Eastern Shoshone that we would love to have their participation in these meetings.

Loren Grosskopf-As a County Commissioner, we’ve learned that hard way that we don’t always respond to comments, especially to newspaper reports, but there are times when you feel you need to respond to set the record straight. I think this is an appropriate venue for the YES committee to respond to it. We want to make this a positive statement. We need to establish an administrative record for today so we put in our minutes what our policy is. People have asked how we allowed this to happen, and I know we didn’t, so it is appropriate to have it in our record and move on.

Mary-I also had contact with public radio and said we have never excluded the tribes and have always been very open and have included them on the mailing list, but the decision on sending representation rests with those individual tribal governments. We reached out again to emphasize that this body would love to see that representation at the table, and Pat (Hnilicka-FWS) committed also in his work with the tribes to make sure that folks are aware of meetings and that we’d love to see their participation.

Pat Hnilicka-just so the group knows, we meet monthly with both councils of the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone and we’ve updated them on the conservation strategy and delisting so they were aware of it, so that letter and all that came up was surprising to me as well. The councils do know when the meetings are coming up.

GYCC Fall 2017 Meeting-Mary Erickson

The preferred date for our fall meeting is Dec. 6/7 in Bozeman. I had a question on our protocols on our transition of the Chair and Vice-Chair. YES has never had a written charter and set of protocols. As I know it, the Chair role beginning in 2007, with 2-year terms:

Caribou-Targhee National Forest
ID Fish & Game
Grand Teton NP
State of WY
Forest Service

We designated the next state representation to be the State of Montana. From there the YGCC Charter speaks to the Vice-Chair. Sam Sheppard will be facilitating the next meeting.

Public Comment

Andrea Santarsiere-Center for Biological Diversity-As you know, we oppose delisting. For the second year in a row we're looking at a declining population with high mortality rates. Last year when the population declined we were told multiple times, one year does not make a trend. So today I ask does two years make a trend? How many years do we need to see the population decline before we're looking at a trend? We're concerned that many have asked that the states consider delay/prohibit hunting just outside of Park boundaries. Despite this request, even coming from groups that put their money where their mouth is, these concerns have been largely ignored. We are made to believe that hunting and management are synonymous. The agencies here are touting a recovered population in the GYE and we've gotten here today without hunting, and even if hunting could be used to reduce conflicts inside the DMA, we have no commitment from states that hunting will be concentrated in those high conflict areas. We're also extremely concerned that hunting outside the DMA may be very liberal and that will curtail grizzly bear expansion and potentially eliminate the likelihood of connectivity. These are some of the reasons we continue to oppose delisting.