

## 2016 Work Plan/Accomplishments

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

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

The NPS and USFWS are in the process of developing an EIS to examine alternatives for how to recover this population.

- A draft EIS will be available for public review during late summer, 2016.
- Public meetings will follow the release of the DEIS, with more emphasis given to rural areas on the west side of the ecosystem, as well as those on the east side.

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

- A round table workshop was held in June to address, as a group, comments and alternatives in the internal draft EIS.
- The second internal review of the DEIS will be completed by late November. The public release of the DEIS is expected in January.
- There will be a 60-day comment period. Plans are to hold four public meetings on each side of the mountains.
- There continues to be 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.

#### **Planned actions Item 1, Restoration EIS for the NCE, part 2:**

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, part 2:**

- The Technical Team responded to all requests for information, literature and analyses from the NPS contractor.
- The Technical Team worked closely with the Washington Conservation Science Institute (contractor) on a modeling effort to estimate population parameters and a range of values for carrying capacity in an ecosystem where the population has been functionally extirpated. The WCSI integrated spatial habitat data and hypothetical demographic parameters to address two specific questions: 1) what the potential carrying capacity is for grizzly bears in the North Cascades Ecosystem and 2) how roads influence carrying capacity. The Technical Team was fully involved throughout the process to ensure the model would best reflect existing habitat values and likely scenarios for the NCE.

- Performed modeling of North Cascades grizzly bear population restoration to provide answers to the NPS contractor for the following questions:
  - Given placement of 5 bears per year with replacement of bears that leave or are killed, how many bears could be expected to remain after the release of 25 bears?
  - After placement of 25 bears how long would it take to reach populations of 200 bears given typical rates of growth?
  - How long would it take to reach populations of 100 and 200 bears given continuous placement of 5 bears per year?
  - Using the example from the Cabinet Mountains, how far could bears be expected to disperse from the release site?

### **Planned actions Item 2, Outreach:**

Work closely in partnership with NGOs and other partners, local residents and county governments to build local support and understanding about grizzly recovery and ecosystem health.

### **Accomplishments Item 2, Outreach:**

- At least 34 presentations were made to a broad variety of agencies and stakeholder groups. Some of these *include*: Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians; Backcountry Horsemen; Hi-Lakers recreational fishing club; Okanogan, Lewis, Pierce & Skagit County commissioners; Sedro-Woolley, Lyman, Hamilton, Concrete mayors or town officials; two separate National Parks and Conservation Association/Defenders of Wildlife receptions; Swinomish, Lummi, Upper Skagit & Colville tribes; Darrington Area Resource Advocates; North Cascades Conservation Council; Mountain-to-Sounds Greenway group; Outdoor Recreation Roundtable - Snohomish County; Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission; a gathering of various outdoor recreation user groups; several meetings with either state legislators or Congressional aides; USFS Regional Director; Forest Supervisors/Leadership Teams for the Okanogan-Wenatchee and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests.
- The Methow Valley Ranger District (Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest) received a \$3,000 grant from the IGBC I&E Committee to fund a Pasayten Wilderness Bear Ranger Program in 2016, providing coverage for the Pasayten in September, when visitation reaches its peak. A two-page summary report is attached
- A Bear Ambassador program was initiated in grade schools in Chelan, Wenatchee and Leavenworth. The program was designed to engage several 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in schools in the North Cascades Ecosystem as “Bear Ambassadors”. These students would help teach their classmates and community members about bears, and how to safely live and recreate in bear country. The schools responded with enthusiasm, leading the team to engage with *all* 4,650 children attending the three schools.
- The Bear Trailer was taken to 19 special events such as the Concrete Summer Learning Adventure Program and Burlington Reading Rangers Program. Bear education outreach efforts were also implemented in Burlington-Edison, Concrete, Sedro-Woolley, and Mt. Vernon School Districts, with local girl scouts and at outdoor events and festivals. There were 3,425 community member contacts. It spent the rest of the summer at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center in Newhalem, where it attracted 3,914 visitors. A total of 7,339 people were engaged with the Bear Trailer program.

- Western Wildlife Outreach (WWO) has presented or had a display at 36 events. Their focus is on black bears, grizzly bears, gray wolves and cougars. Presentations emphasize bear safety at home, at work and when recreating. WWO has created over 20 multi-media presentations to draw from, tailored to specific audiences, locations, interests and age-levels.
- Crowds drawn to WWO's new Large Carnivore Education Trailer can be difficult to handle with fewer than four staff and volunteers.
- WWO, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, translated the *Bear Safety* and *Washington Wolves* brochures into Spanish, and printed 3,000 copies of each. WWO has also launched a new website and Facebook page in support of the Bear Smart King County project, a joint effort of the WDFW and WWO. WWO has issued a report on the number, location and nature of black bear-human encounters in Eastside King County, where incidents are increasing.
- Chris Morgan's film short "Wanted: Grizzly Bears?" has reached wide audiences, from 12,000 viewings at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center to over 150,000 online, on Air Canada flights and National Geographic's Short Film Showcase. He plans to complete a second grizzly bear film short early next year, focusing on the augmentation program in the Cabinets.

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

As possible, apply enhanced monitoring via DNA hair snags, automatic cameras, and follow-up on reported observations to assess the presence of grizzly bears in and adjacent to the North Cascades Ecosystem. Prioritize surveys in the portion of the ecosystem adjacent areas where grizzly bears have recently been detected in British Columbia.

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

- One credible report was followed up by placement of 4 remote cameras for 10 weeks. Only one black bear was "captured" on camera.
- Two credible reports of a potential grizzly bear from another area in the Pasayten Wilderness were received in September. They could not be followed up due to the remoteness of the observation and lateness of season, but an attempt will be made next year.
- The Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning staffs the 1-800-GO-GRIZZ hotline to take reports of potential grizzly bear observations in the BC portion of the ecosystem. They received no credible reports; all were of brown phase black bears.

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

Support completion of Forest Plan Revisions on the Okanogan-Wenatchee and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests that will include formal access management direction to replace the 1997 interim guidance.

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

- Interim guidance remains in place on both Forests.
- There is no timeline yet 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), after trails data have been updated.

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

The MBS has updated their road layer, but there is no timeline for a trails update. Core area reevaluation will follow this process.

#### **Planned actions Item 5 Sanitation:**

Expand sanitation database to include a survey of waste receptacles needed to replace all non-wildlife-resistant units, as well as food storage containers and signage needed in addition to existing facilities.

- Provide sanitation signage to all trailheads and camping areas. Coordinate standardized signage/ language to be used throughout the ecosystem.
- Expand the NPS food storage requirements to other federal lands in the recovery area. We propose reviewing existing food storage orders on forests in other ecosystems.

#### **Accomplishments Item 5, Sanitation:**

- An inventory of waste receptacles was made for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.
- A similar inventory of food storage facilities has been done for North Cascades National Park.
- Trailhead signage remains inconsistent and is missing at many trailheads.
- Almost 350 picnic table signs have been installed in campgrounds in Ross Lake NRA and Lake Chelan NRA, instructing campers in each campsite on how and where to store their attractants. An additional 120 will be installed next spring.
- The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest purchased 10 animal resistant garbage dumpsters (2-yard capacity) to replace non-animal-resistant dumpsters in National Forest campgrounds. These will be placed next year at campgrounds in the northern part of the Forest.
- No progress was made to expand food storage orders to other federal lands.