

Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes

November 30-December 1, 2017

Pray, MT

Representatives present:

Mike Volesky, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Delissa Minnick, BLM Wyoming
Mary Erickson, Custer Gallatin National Forest
Melany Glossa, Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest
Brian Nesvik, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Tricia O'Connor, Bridger-Teton National Forest
Robert Michelson, Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Loren Grosskopf, Wyoming County Commissioners Association - Park Co
Susan Strusser, Shoshone National Forest
David Vela, Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Parkway
Cornie Hudson, BLM, MT
Gregg Losinski, ID Department of Fish and Game (I&E Chair)
James Hart, MT Association of Counties
Jim White, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Frank van Manen, USGS Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team
Hilary Cooley, FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator

Representatives not present:

Mary D'Aversa, BLM Idaho
Leander Watson, Shoshone Bannock Tribes
Representative, Idaho Association of Counties
Representative, Northern Arapaho Tribe
Representative, Eastern Shoshone Tribe

Advisors present:

Sue Consolo-Murphy, Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Parkway
Ken McDonald, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Thursday, November 30

Welcome and Introductions: Mike Volesky

Introductions-this meeting is to set up the operational structure of Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee (YGCC) as the replacement of the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee (YES).

Review and Finalize Charter for Committee's transition to YGCC: Sue Consolo-Murphy

Review of current position of the draft Charter and the role and responsibilities of committee members and advisors.

- Ch 6-The three working teams need roles and responsibilities defined.
- Define quorum, majority vs. super majority vote requirement.

- Membership has one rep. from BLM (this has been the pattern from YES, but needs revisited)-proposed change by working group last fall to reflect the three reps from MT, ID & WY BLM.
- Membership of the USGS-not specified voting capacity or who that is – working group understood this to be the head of study team, but that is normally an advisory role and not a voting role. It was decided that the USFWS coordinator and USGS study team leader will be considered advisors and not have a voting membership of YGCC.

Ken McDonald-CS identifies BLM one person representing each state, in the Charter it identifies one person from each state.

Delissa Minnick-Previously there was no involvement from all BLM offices in each state, states operate independently with an independent voice. It makes sense to BLM as an organization that each state office would have a voice and presence on the committee.

Brian Nesvik-Typically, most of the business that this committee handles is approved unanimously. When there was a difference in opinion it occurred during the drafting of the CS. The federal agencies desired to vote in block – forests, BLM, parks all wanted to be on the same page. That leaves 10 votes to federal government, 6 votes to state/local entities, 3 votes to Tribes. Suggest keeping the membership as listed in the draft Charter to maintain balance for voting with the requirement that the federal agencies vote in block. The forests (MT, ID, WY) would have 3 votes, Interior (BLM, Grand Teton NP, Yellowstone NP) would have 3 votes. Would make this a very balanced committee, no group could really sway the other.

Mary Erickson-In the proposed charter it looks like balance was dealt with by requiring the super majority. There are other issues where the voting wasn't straight forward, sometimes the agencies were divided within individual units. It is informative to hear different perspectives from around the ecosystem. Understand that it is desirable to have a sense of fairness too, would the two-thirds majority address those concerns? If there is value in dividing up individual entities, suggest FS be divided by regions rather than state.

Brian-Agree that the two-thirds majority would address the concerns for fairness for federal and state agencies.

Mary-Could support Brian's proposal, but is this really a case about changes to the CS? In the past when there is disagreement it has lead to increased group coordination to speak with one voice, if there is not a majority all it means is that you have to keep working to come to an agreement on something.

Brian-To clarify, this 3/4 vote ensures that no major changes to the CS or Charter can occur without some of the people responsible for both habitat and population management being in agreement.

Mike -A vote is a level of formality that we don't require in this matter, a show of hands is sufficient.

Ken-A show of hands to require at least 3/4 support of the members present to make changes to the Charter and/or Conservation Strategy (CS).

Amend Draft Charter: changes to the Charter and/or CS require 3/4 vote of current members be the super majority instead of 2/3.

Unanimous agreement-Passed.

Requirements for Voting: Sue Consolo-Murphy

Definition of 'present' in terms of determining a quorum for majority and/or super majority vote. Current Charter states that a quorum is satisfied by representatives participating via phone or teleconference; 'present' means engaged in the discussion either in person or via phone/video conference (when phone/video is available).

Amend Draft Charter: change (last paragraph) to "quorum is satisfied by more than 50% of the voting members" being present. Member presence includes participating remotely via video or telephone conference when available.

Unanimous agreement-Passed

Amend Draft Charter: change 'representatives' to 'members' throughout Charter. (Except from when referring to chairperson or his representative).

Unanimous agreement-Passed

Amend Draft Charter: top of pg. 3 in reference to organizational structure– change super majority to majority of members present (unless changing CS or Charter, which requires $\frac{3}{4}$ super majority). Remove super.

Unanimous agreement-Passed

Amend Draft Charter and CS: There will be a member from each state BLM office in MT, WY, ID.

Ken-BLM membership is a change to Conservation Strategy.

Unanimous agreement-Passed

Selection of Chair and Vice Chair Position

Brian Nesvik-Nominate Mike Volesky as Chairman of YGCC.

Delissa Minnick-Second motion.

Decision: Mike Volesky elected YGCC Chair.

Mary-Historically the committee has swapped between state and federal Chairmanship, with the Vice Chair serving as next in line to chair the committee. If continued this way, then BLM would be next in turn. The vice chair has been available as back up if the Chair cannot attend.

Mary Erickson-Nominate Delissa Minnick (BLM).

Brian Nesvik-Second motion to nominate Delissa.

Decision: Delissa Minnick elected YGCC Vice Chair.

Clarification of YGCC Charter Signatories: Ken McDonald

Signatories on page 2 of the Charter need to be clarified. Currently the Charter states that the committee will revise or amend CS based on the best available science. This requires public review and comment and approval of all signatories to the December CS.

Recommended changes to the CS requires $\frac{3}{4}$ of YGCC members votes, as well as each outgoing CS signatory representative.

Updates on Delisting Rule/Review of Current Litigation: Hillary Cooley

Currently there are 6 lawsuits. The general inadequacies noted to the CS are:

- CS is inadequate – entire grizzly population is not considered
- GPS policy
- Threats analysis
- Consideration of science
- Tribal consultations

There are similarities to the Great Lakes Wolf (GLW) and Greater Yellowstone Grizzly Bear – will work to evaluate similarities. Public opinion is available on the GLW.

Review of Conservation Strategy Commitments: Frank VanManen ppt. on IGBC website

Loren Grosskopf-In the GYE there are misquotations of “only” 700 bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). How do we address this misinformation to the public?

Frank-The estimator is for DMA only – the number within the DMA is unlikely to continue to grow due to population carrying capacity. Chao 2 is conservative, the real number is probably closer to 1,000 bears. There is some potential for small areas to grow, but not much overall. You can only fit so many in a can.

Loren-what are the trends for 2017?

Frank-Surprising, there are a lot of females with cubs, a testament to the population. We anticipate not as high a reproductive year in 2018 – unlikely to have 2 great years in a row. We look over a long time period and decide based on the long term average.

Jim-On hunting mortality, is it self-defense, mis-identification?

Frank-Mostly self-defense, if a female with cubs is killed then cubs are considered probable mortalities of the year.

Public Comment

Caroline Byrd- Executive Director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC)

GYC has been working on bears since the organization was started in 1983, it is a pivotal time in the process of bear conservation. GYC did not oppose delisting and are not a part of the lawsuits, we have been deeply involved in the process and intend to continue to do so. Part of that is watching and monitoring and holding accountable all of the commitments that were made in the delisting process – in the Conservation Strategy, the MOU's, in all of those documents, it is our role to be watching, to be looking at you managers as the ones responsible for keeping those bears in good shape. To that end, and how we intend to do that, is that we have created a report card. This is just a brief part and I encourage you all to look at our website to see the in depth analysis of all of the commitments that have been made in the delisting. We understand that it has only been five months, but we're only giving you passing grades, a C average, and as report cards should do, there is a lot of room for improvement. For example, as Frank was talking about, in the last three years we've seen over 150 bears die in conflicts with people and other factors, and we can do better, that is an area that we don't improve and we want to see improvement, there is more we can be doing and we are committed to partner in this effort and improve together, this is something that needs to be a higher grade. We look forward to working with you and being able to give you better grades at the next meeting and beyond, this is a new era and we are not going anywhere, we know that all of us are in it for the long run. Thank you for coming together and all of your great work and we are really excited to continue to improve.

Friday, December 01

Habitat Standards Monitoring-Process and Reporting Timeline: Dan Tyers-ppt on IGBC website

Habitat monitoring standard data is still being collected for the current year. This is a quick overview of the methodology and brief overview of the report that will be available in June/July. There are essentially two pillars in a conservation strategy: population monitoring and monitoring habitat condition, and there is an obligation to report annually on both dimensions. Human activities assessment dimensions are based on human change on landscape over time.

- Roads vs. no roads
- Grazing allotments
- Developed sites

These are measured against an established baseline which has the database accompanying it. That time was fixed as 1998 due to the bear population doing well at that time. Use the condition of habitat at this time as the benchmark. Annually we track changes by that baseline, all land managers report in respective to the metrics, we tabulate metrics and look for change or departure against that 1998 baseline. That report then appears as an appendix in the IGBST annual report that comes out around June.

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

Parks outreach is adjusting to increased conflicts and new types of conflict due to high visitor use and technological advancements.

Park outreach includes:

- Signage
- Human outreach (Rangers)
- Basic bear information and warnings

Introduction/summary

People are getting exposure everywhere. Bear aware message is being implemented in multiple languages throughout the park. I think everyone is working in their own realms to do the best they can, again what we could push for is that we work together better, I think there are lots of great products being created in the various agencies and partners but sometimes we don't share it very well. The one thing that I would ask is that we continue and actually increase our communications. MT, WMI has really helped to get the program together and it's shown by the numbers that they've produced that you can make a difference with a community but it does take an effort of time and money and people. That's something that the agencies are going to really need to look at because at this point we are funded by soft money, we're at the point where we need to be looking at the budgets and have some hard money in there for personnel, staffing, programs, and literature – right now its scraping by however we can. When you're out there talking to people you're making a difference and I think Montana's done a great job getting people to think about bears earlier and later in the season and educating people on carrying bear spray, Wyoming has also done a great job with their bear spray giveaway program. It is challenging to reach all the people that are visiting the parks, it's a new crowd of people each day, this work is going to get larger and larger each day as we continue to be more successful.

In Idaho our bear trailers are staffed with Master Naturalists, these people are busy literally all summer, spring, and fall doing school programs and every type of outreach they can. The Forest Service has been a great partner in this and the GYC is actually paying for the truck that one of the bear technicians use, so again all of these tools are out there and the more we use them the better we are at reaching the various populations. This is the price of our success, we have to work with the public to educate them more because there are more bears out there. The chances of running into a problem bear are higher and we need to do everything we can at the individual and community levels to make the difference in protecting people and bears.

Discussion

Melany Glossa-With Gregg leaving is there a strategic plan for who will take over. Are we thinking strategically and talking about mortality rates in I&E?

Chris Smith, WMI-Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) and IGBC have partnered to develop a comprehensive strategy for education and outreach by examining action plans for each ecosystem. IGBC provides WMI with about \$50,000/yr through cooperative agreement to provide ongoing support particularly in I&E:

- IGBC website maintenance.
- Produce outreach materials.
- Partnership with the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center and the bear resistant container testing program.

- 2yr pilot program with USFS, USFWS, Wildlife Conservation Society, People and Carnivores and Southwest Montana Working Group (51 events across SW MT, 22,000 people reached, trained over 9,000 people in the use of bear spray).

In discussions now on how to use funding from FWP and the legislature to continue the outreach work particularly in Yellowstone and GYE where problems with bear movement are anticipated. It is my understanding that YGCC will continue to support involvement from WMI.

Mary-Thanks Greg for all the years of what you've done for this committee.

- Level of specifics that each agency commits to is lacking.
- Every agency at this table has some I&E efforts that are good, but they are hit and miss in how well they are interwoven together.
- This could be one of the big efforts of the YGCC – need agency leadership and convening.
- Putting together a broader working group and including strategic plans from WMI and previous work done on conflict management could be really helpful.

Greg-Similar with all agencies – What is happening with YGCC is the same as what happens with all of the agencies, we are science and enforcement based agencies and I&E gets spread out and any help from all agencies is extremely helpful.

David Vela-GYCC has put together a sub-committee that may help with this, they are in contact with their communities and know their audiences. This may be a good opportunity to get them engaged to help us spread the word about areas of mutual interest. Have successfully worked with NGO's and federal agencies to address signage on roads etcetera.

Chris-Custer Gallatin, B Bar D, and FWP have been active in working with the GYCC to build a great model for a working group.

- Raised funding for one person to be focused on a consistent message across the landscape. Demonstrated model effectiveness.

The I&E person generally comes with the chair agency. FWP will take care of the I&E position for the next meeting.

Jim White-Would like to see 4-5 people on a committee and have it figured out at the spring meeting.

Spring I&E Committee Needs: Ken McDonald

- Food storage regulations standardized across regions
- Connectivity
- De-listing
- Tolerance

Mary-Federal public lands and food storage orders have been developed separately in all ecosystems. F.S. has been talking about combining food storage orders across the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) and GYE. Difficult because the approved storage orders

are so different. How much effort should be put into this by the YGCC? This should be taken care of by the IGBC. Even within the GYE there is not consistency.

- Orders are 90% alike and 10% different, differences include:
 - Electric fencing
 - Distance from attractants and sleeping arrangements

Brian-Agree that consistency is a way to prevent conflict and gain support through the public eye. Support and compliance through understanding is consistently seen as a success. Not out of the realm of the YGCC.

Mary-There is a product that has been compiled in the past that compares these orders and includes the public process. F.S. will bring this to the spring meeting.

Ken-What is the process to change the orders?

Mary-Analysis is required, it is not a NEPA process – the challenge is not mechanical it is social and unit specific based on existing rational that has been established in local communities.

Mike-Sounds like we need to tackle this issue. IGBC is the place for this, YGCC will request guidance for a standardized food storage order to be crafted by the IGBC.

If IGBC standardized the food storage regulations all agencies will be expected to implement the new regulation. This is important for public support and compliance as well as for the bears.

Decision: Chair of YGCC will draft a memo to IGBC requesting guidance on consistent food storage regulation.

Tribal Information: Hilary Cooley

Hilary Cooley-Crow Agency is not included in the three Tribes that are members on the Charter, does the committee want to add Crow as they are now in the DMS?

Ken-Have Crow expressed interest?

Hilary-Not that I am aware.

Mary-It is not appropriate to add the Crow without past participation. We need clarification on all Tribes included inside DMS. The committee should do outreach to determine interest to all Tribes within the DMS boundary. It would require a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote to amend the Charter.

Mike-Garner the level of interest and bring that information to the spring meeting.

Paths for Gene Flow: Frank VanManen ppt. on IGBC website

Loren-How much is on private land?

Frank-Did not calculate that but a large portion would be private with human landscape.

Delissa-Did the models have any barrier for interstates and roads?

Frank-No, we did not know how much of a barrier a road would be.

Brian-Are you able to use this to predict range expansion?

Frank-Yes. We will get to that. It was a big hope behind this model.

Mike-Plans to continue and refine the model?

Frank-No, but it will be useful for other populations.

GYCC 2018 Meetings

Spring 2018 will be in Cody, WY April 4-5.

Fall 2018 will be in Jackson, WY Oct. 31-Nov. 01.

The designated chair is Mike Volesky, State of Montana. The Vice-Chair is Delissa Minnick, BLM Wyoming. Mike Volesky will be facilitating the next meeting.

Public Comment

Bonnie Rice-I Want to express the appreciation of the Sierra Club and everyone on the committee and in this room that works really hard to prevent conflicts with bears. I want to express my support the idea to look at what can be done for conflict prevention and those plans, I think that one that wasn't mentioned was IGBST prevention report from 2009, there were a lot of really good suggestions in there and some progress has been made on some of those but not on others so I think it is a really good time to take a look at that again. In particular with the hunting related conflicts which we have all seen as an increasing source of grizzly bear mortality and just in this year what we have seen is that over half of the mortalities are under investigation, a lot of those are hunting related and happened over the past few months. So that source of mortality in particular would be really good to look at in terms of what further things can be done, and so we would just like to help facilitate that conversation in any way we can. I think I speak for all the NGO's in the room that would like to have a broader conversation with everyone on the committee and would like to move that forward. Sierra Club is one of the groups that is with the ...I really appreciate and agree with Gregg's comment that we all need to be working together in terms of conflict prevention and we are interested in doing that, I think that regardless if bears are listed or delisted everyone wants to prevent conflicts and injuries to people and bears. We would really like to see the committee move forward and to help with that. Thank you.