

INTERAGENCY GRIZZLY BEAR COMMITTEE – IGBC  
Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee  
Dec 1, 2016

Location: Northern Regional Office Federal Building, Fort Missoula, Missoula, MT

Michele Windsor	Kamiah, ID	Nez Perce – Clearwater NF
Ben Conard	Northern Idaho	USFWLS
Bryon Holt	Portland, Oregon	USFWLS
Lydia Allen	Missoula, MT	RO Forest Service
Jamie Jonkel	Missoula, MT	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Greg Gustina	Missoula, MT	Lolo NF
Jennifer Fortin-Noreus	Missoula, MT	USFWS
Ellen Davis	Missoula, MT	USFS/IGBC
Julie King	Hamilton, MT	Bitterroot National Forest
Tod McKay	Hamilton, MT	Bitterroot National Forest
Ryan Domsalla	Darby, MT	Bitterroot National Forest
Claudia Narcisso	Missoula, MT	Sierra Club
Erin Edge	Missoula, MT	Defenders of Wildlife
Fred Weisbecker	Hamilton, MT	Backcountry Horsemen

-----**NOTES BY AGENDA TOPIC**-----

**Welcome and introductions – Overview of Last Meeting Notes**

**– Julie King Chair**

Tod McKay and Julie King have served as the Chair and Subcommittee I&E Chair for over three years. The term of chairs is two. We would like to rotate off as chairs in 2017 and will need to have a new chair for the spring meeting. Julie will plan to overlap with the new chairs in the spring 2017.

**Updates:**

**Jamie Jonkel –**

- Reports of Grizzly activity in French town need to verify pictures of prints.
- Sweeney Creek picture on social media of Grizzly bear? Yes it was a Grizzly bear but it was not in the Bitterroot.
- Sapphire unconfirmed reports of Grizzlies by bow hunters, also in Big Hole and Wisdom.
- Less Bear encounters this year than last, three in Ravalli County
- On other news Felsted disposal sold out to Republic Services

**Erin Edge –**

- Electric Fence Program – 52 completed, 5 being completed, 4 in the Bitterroot, Clinton/Alberton, 6 Republic Trash cans are bear resistant.
- Max reimbursement on projects is \$500.
- Thinking about potential RAC projects for this year

- Concern for Free Range chicken push in the Stevensville area. May be a draw for carnivores.

**Ben Conard –**

- USFWS is amending the Habitat Conservation Plan, no changes in the Bitterroot Ecosystem

**Ellen Davis –**

- There is a Bear Spray topic at the upcoming winter IGBC meeting. Issues with IGBC endorsing sprays with 6 second or more duration.
- Yellowstone Conservation Strategy was approved by Subcommittee and is ready to sign at the IGBC
- \$36,000 available for 2017 grants, 22 proposals were received.

**Colleen Matt – WMI update**

- **New and updated website design increases visitor traffic.**
  - The [igbconline.org](http://igbconline.org) website has increased first-time visitor traffic by 75% over a comparable period
  - The majority of visitors to the website in the last 7 months were seeking information about certified bear-resistant products. Most people were searching for information via Google or other search engines, but a significant amount of traffic came from bear-resistant product vendors and outdoor gear review websites.
  - A significant amount of traffic is directed by press releases and news articles. IGBC member agencies could help direct traffic to the site by making sure that every bear-related press release includes the [igbconline.org](http://igbconline.org) link.
- **An interactive Food Storage Order map is almost finished and should be posted on the IGBC website by the end of 2016**
  - The purpose of the interactive map is to help the public prepare for their visit to public lands within any of the grizzly recovery ecosystems.
  - Visitors to the webpage will be able to hover their mouse over public land parcels on a map and click for a PDF copy of Food Storage Orders for visiting that parcel.
- **Interagency partnership position advances bear education in southwest Montana**
  - In 2015, the Southwest Montana Bear Education Working Group came together to create and raise support for a Coordinator position: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Custer-Gallatin National Forest, Wildlife Conservation Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Management Institute, and People and Carnivores. Montana’s Outdoor Legacy Foundation, the Cinnabar Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Vital Ground Foundation have also provided essential funding to support the bear education program.
  - In 2016, the Working Group hired Danielle Oyler in a two-year pilot program. The program establishes Oyler as the first Southwest Montana Bear Education Coordinator. For more information, read the article online [here](#).
- **Refill Device for Practice Bear Spray Canisters**
  - John Gookin, an educator for NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School), teamed up with longtime bear biologist Tom Smith (professor of wildlife science at Brigham Young University) and BYU graduate student Alison Williams to publish “A Device for refilling practice bear spray” that appeared in the journal Human-Wildlife Interactions, June of 2014. A PDF of the journal article is attached to this email.

- The device refills empty inert bear spray canisters with water, albeit at a lower pressure than brand new inert spray.
- Danielle Oyler, Southwest Montana Bear Education Coordinator, has built a refilling device according to Gookin and Smith's specifications. She will try it out in southwest Montana during the 2017 summer season.

### **Grizzly Bear Information/Education Working Group -Tod McKay**

#### I & E Grants

- Bear Ranger – Bitterroot NF = \$5,000

Bear Ranger – Lolo NF = \$6,000

#### Bear Ranger Program - Results

- This is the second year of this program for both forests.
- Face-to-face interaction between Bear Rangers and public recreating, camping, hunting on NF Lands.
- Target high-use campgrounds, trailheads, recreation areas, rental facilities, hunting areas between May-Oct.
- Bear Rangers distribute educational brochures, post signs and talk with the public about bear safety, Leave No Trace, hiking and camping in bear country, bear spray use, bear identification, proper food storage and food storage orders.
- Rangers held trainings for forest recreation staff, backcountry rangers, fire crews, and campground hosts addressing food storage and bear safety.
- Developed Bear Aware Kits for 16 volunteer campground hosts. Kits contained bear safety information and brochures, activities for kids, inert bear spray training canisters. Also developed an interactive quiz and board game to be used in schools and can be checked-out for educational events.
- Bear Rangers attended numerous community events in the summer including Hamilton Farmer's Market, National Get Outdoors Day, Junior Forest Ranger Day, Montana Youth Camp Expo, First Friday, Nature Walk Week, and others.

#### Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen / Partners

- We also continue to partner with Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen on a Bear Aware/large carnivores class taught by retired fish & game warden Fred Weisbecker. Class is presented to 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Hamilton, Darby, Corvallis, Florence schools and to Adult-Ed classes in Hamilton & Darby.

Missoula Bears: We continue to partner on increasing local awareness by getting out information to help reduce conflicts with wildlife. This includes improved attractant management (bird feeders, electric fencing, fruit trees, gardens & compost, trash etc.). We're hoping to start a pilot program in 2017 with Bitterroot Disposal to target some 'problem areas' in our valley for sanitation and garbage.

### **Five Year Action Plan – all, Action items have arrows**

Discussion about monitoring and hair snares/cameras in wilderness. Forests have the ability to analyze proposals and allow stations in wilderness. Do we want to work on an MRDG together to have it all ready to go?

- Lydia Allen will contact Colville NF on their MRDG and we will go from there.
- What about utilizing rub trees for hair sample? Jamie Jonkel could conduct training for fire folks and trail crews.
- Erin Edge interested in exploring options for RAC Grant Application, the criteria for use of the funds is “benefiting National Forest System Lands” might be a challenge.
- Need to create Sanitation Plan, Ellen Davis will consult with other ecosystems for an example, Ben Conard may have one to share.
- Engage county commissioners in the Bitterroot ecosystem, invite and include them to be members of the I&E Subcommittee? Invite to our bi-annual meeting?
- Report on “Black Bear Linkage Report”: Wildlife Crossings set up on I-90 in places thought to be likely passage areas for wildlife but are not being used much. A report will be done on the crossings next spring? Have we seen this?