

7 November 2017

North Cascades Ecosystem Subcommittee Meeting, North Bend, WA

Subcommittee:

Karen Taylor-Goodrich (NPSⁱ, chair)
Mike Williams (USFS)
Dianne Freeman (USFS)
Hilary Cooley (USFWS)
Tony Hamilton (BC MoE)
Jack Oelfke (NPS)

Technical Team:

John Rohrer (USFS, chair)
Anne Braaten (NPS)
Jesse Plumage (USFS)
Gregg Kurz (USFWS)
Wayne Kasworm (USFWS)

Other participants:

Monte Kuk (USFS)
Lorna Smith (Western Wildlife Outreach)

Colleen Matt (Wildlife Manage. Institute)

Audience:

Joe Scott (Conservation Northwest)
Andrea Lyons (Wa. Conservation Science Institute)
Bill Gaines (Wa. Conservation Science Institute)

Darren Masters
Julia Tesh (Nat'l Parks Cons. Assoc.)
Rob Smith (Nat'l Parks Cons. Assoc.)

EIS Update: Jack Oelfke

- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement closed for public comment on April 28th. Nearly 127,000 comments were received. The contractor has analyzed and summarized the comments.
- The EIS process was put on hold in June, pending direction from the Department of Interior. There is no timeline for its completion.

British Columbia update: Tony Hamilton

- The Auditor General's *Independent Audit of Grizzly Bear Management* was released in October. It included 10 recommendations, including the need to identify grizzly bear populations in need of recovery, and to outline what actions will be taken and when. An appendix calls out the North Cascades as a case study for grizzly bear recovery in British Columbia.
- The Okanagan Nation Alliance initiated collaboration with several other First Nations to create the 5Nations Grizzly Bear Recovery Working Group. They have met several times over the past year, shepherding the crafting of First Nations' resolutions on grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades of BC, for presentation to the government of British Columbia. Their priorities are working on access issues, increasing connectivity and translocating grizzly bears into the BC Cascades.
- Tony is retiring in December. He will be missed. A new BC representative to the Subcommittee and the executive IGBC has not yet been named.

Reaffirming the No Net Loss policy: John Rohrer

- The interagency agreement to no net loss of core area per Bear Management Unit throughout the NCE is now 20 years old. Comments were made to the draft EIS regarding the age of the agreement and the need to reaffirm it.
- There are a number of issues that need to be addressed. The Technical Team will meet to revisit existing information, then report back to the Subcommittee.

Western Wildlife Outreach Program update: Lorna Smith

- WWO received a grant from the IGBC to continue work on black bear management in the burgeoning east King County exurbs. Many communities are expanding into bear habitat, with new residents thoroughly unaware they are in bear country, much less how to coexist with them. The WWO is working with WDFW on Bear Smart King County to promote proper attractant management, often working with homeowner associations to increase compliance.
- Each year the governor proclaims Bear Week in early May, and the WWO and WDFW work together on Bear Week events at the Woodland Park Zoo.
- While much of their time is spent in east King County they have also spent considerable time on the road in south central and northeast Washington. They have found in the latter that many residents are unaware they live in grizzly bear country. WWO provided education about attractant management and bear spray, as well as confirming for residents that grizzly bears have always existed there (and have not been moved there by the federal government).
- WWO is seeking funding to expand broader grizzly bear/carnivore outreach to the Washington Selkirks.

Public comments/discussion:

- Thank you for your efforts on the EIS.
- It is all about the ecosystem: if it is good for a grizzly bear it is good for the entire ecosystem.
- The Endangered Species Act is on our side, as is science and the public.
- With regard to core area, put habitat quality as a priority; it's about more than simple distance to roads. Bears need high quality, secure habitat.
- CNW hears a lot about people's fears of trails being closed, no new trails being allowed. People need to understand habitat quality is crucial for bears, and to understand conflicting uses have to be taken into consideration in the making of decisions.
- A question about a project in the BC Selkirks with respect to huckleberry use by grizzly bears. Answer: the project is developing a predictive model looking at what parameters define where grizzly bears are using huckleberries most extensively. The project is collecting data from bears in the BC Selkirks, then they'll move south to validate the model: do bears use huckleberry habitat there as predicted by the model? Ultimately, following testing in southern BC and the US Selkirks/NW Montana, this could be a tool used in the NCE to aid in predicting what huckleberry habitat would likely receive the most extensive use.
- A suggestion that county commissioners should have a seat on the Subcommittee. They do in some other ecosystems, in an information-gathering role.

ⁱ Agency acronyms: National Park Service (NPS); US Forest Service (USFS); US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW); British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (BC MoE); Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC)