



Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Summer Meeting Notes

June 25, 2019

(1pm-5pm business/public meeting)

Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown, Missoula, MT



Welcome & Introductions: - IGBC Chair Matt Hogan asked for introductions around the table and the room and welcomed Executive Committee members and the public to the IGBC summer meeting at the Holiday Inn, Downtown Missoula. He noted that the executive committee was heading up to Seeley Lake following the public meeting for 1 ½ days of a strategic planning session to help shape the direction and purpose of the IGBC for the next five years.

Members and those representing Executive Members and Ecosystem Subcommittee Chairs present at the meeting include the following:

Eric Johnston, Rodney Smoldon, Tim Woolley, Tricia O'Connor, Chuck Mark, Chris Savage, Matt Hogan, Randy Arnold (for Martha Williams), Mike Philbin, Pat Walsh, Penny Becker, Ann Froschauer, Rollie White, Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Toby Boudreau and Jacque Buchanan.

IGBC Advisors Hilary Cooley, Scott Jackson, Frank van Manen, IE&O Chair Kim Annis and IGBC Executive Coordinator Ellen Davis were also present.

DECISIONS/ACTION ITEMS (see additional discussion & background in agenda topics below)

Decision/Action: Food Storage Order Consistency – Scott Jackson

Karen Taylor-Goodrich made a motion to formalize a food storage order working group (technical group), Jacque Buchanan made a 2nd motion. Motion carried by executive committee vote.

Scott Jackson will follow-up with the executive committee via email and propose a working group of interagency members to examine and resolve some of the remaining issues (including electric fence use and attended storage), with the goal of working towards consistency of food storage orders across ecosystems.

Scott will provide an update to the IGBC once the working group has completed its work.

Decision/Action: Development of a Yellowstone Ecosystem Charter – Tim Woolley

Tim will provide a Draft of the YES Charter to the executive committee for review and approval at the winter meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

Reducing Future Grizzly Bear Conflicts/Mortalities

The NCDE, YES and SCY subcommittees produced and presented a preliminary list of priority issues for discussion at the 2019 summer meeting. They will prepare a list of recommendations by the 2019 winter meeting that addresses those issues, and a final implementation strategy will be presented to the IGBC executive committee by the summer of 2020.

Recreational Running in Bear Country

Chip Weber, Forest Supervisor, Flathead NF, read a statement in support of his decision to issue special use permits on the Flathead NF on two proposed race events in Flathead County and a mountain bike shuttle service.

He also read a statement from Somer Treat, Brad Treat's widow.

Chip asked if the IGBC was willing to convene or participate in a broader forum to examine the risks that occur for both when humans and wildlife intersect. Such a forum could be broad and inclusive of all viewpoints on the subject and would feature environmental ethicists, experts on relative risks and risk normalization as well as managers and the public. The goal would be a thorough examination to promote public understanding and through that, well-informed conservation efforts.

The IGBC has not made a decision on this request and will get back to Chip with an answer.

AGENDA TOPICS

Food Storage Order Consistency – Scott Jackson (see PowerPoint presentation)

This agenda topic is a follow-up to a previous presentation to the IGBC Executive Committee on the subject of food storage order (FSO) consistency. The previous talk at the winter meeting presented information about how much inconsistency exists amongst FSO requirements across the range of grizzly bears. While there are a lot of inconsistencies, many are relatively minor (e.g., effective dates, what items are considered attractants, etc.) with only a couple of big differences (e.g., use of electric fences, attended storage, etc.)

There is a long history of inconsistency across forests and the goal is to standardize the process as best as possible.

Scott described the process and outcomes from a recent Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee effort, whereby they addressed increasing FSO consistency between national forests within the Greater Yellow Ecosystem (GYE). Steps taken include identifying discrepancies across ecosystems and verifying with each forest, looking at standardization options and polling forest biologists. Some of the issues are relatively easy such as re-writing poorly written FSOs to provide for consistency, while others are more complicated and controversial such as the use of electric fences.

The objective is to present this same approach for executive committee consideration and to decide if this is a potential platform that could be used to pursue greater FSO consistency across the larger IGBC landscape.

The Executive Committee voted that a working group be established to further explore and work through some of the remaining issues Scott presented. Scott will provide an update and recommendation to the Executive Committee when this working group completes its task.

Development of a Yellowstone Ecosystem (YES) Charter – Tim Woolley

The last two YES meetings have had discussions on the subcommittee developing their own charter as opposed to just being part of the overall IGBC charter. In 2017 the YES subcommittee transitioned to the Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee (YGCC) upon delisting of the grizzly bear and developed their own charter which was well defined on a subcommittee level with specificity on voting. When the bear was re-listed, the subcommittee went back under the YES subcommittee title and the IGBC charter.

There is nothing in the IGBC charter that precludes subcommittees from developing their own charters. The YES subcommittee recently unanimously voted to develop their own charter consistent with the above reasoning.

The objective of Tim's presentation was to field any thoughts or concerns ahead of time from the executive committee. Tim will send a draft copy of the YES charter to Ellen to distribute to the executive committee prior to the winter meeting for further discussion and approval.

Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) – Challenge Cost Share Agreement – Chris Smith (see PowerPoint presentation)

Chris gave an overview of the WMI Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the FS (IGBC)/WMI. The current annual funding for the WMI agreement is \$51,400. The five year agreement expires in 2022. Chris briefed the executive committee on the role WMI plays to support the IE&O subcommittee and IGBC such as helping to produce, print and distribute materials; coordinating/providing information, education and outreach in SW MT and parts of the Rocky Mountain Front, managing I&E funding awards to non-federal entities, and managing the bear-resistant container testing program.

Chris brought forward a concern currently affecting the bear-resistant container testing program. After several years of growth, testing fee revenue generated by this program (paid by product manufacturers) appears to have plateaued at best and is potentially declining. This program is currently funded by a combination of testing fee revenue and IGBC funds. The intent has been for testing fees to provide the majority of funding for this program, with IGBC funding kept relatively low. Toward that end, we have been fairly successful over the past few years; however, with declining testing fee revenue, WMI is having to use more of the IGBC funding in its agreement to maintain this program (with fewer funds than available for other needs).

Chris is looking for some direction from the executive committee. Does IGBC continue funding at the current level, increase testing fees, decrease the program, and/or add new fees?

Scott will continue discussions with WMI on future options.

IGBC IE&O Update – Kim Annis (see PowerPoint presentation)

Kim gave an update on the IGBC IE&O subcommittee five year action plan goals. Kim is the IE&O chair for 2 years, her term is up in December, and Lori Roberts is the vice-chair. Lori will rotate to the Chair in December for 2 years and Kim will become the vice-chair. They have set up this process to allow some continuity as this new subcommittee develops momentum. After that, the subcommittee will elect both a new chair and vice chair for 2 year terms.

Kim reminded subcommittee IE&O chairs to update their respective subcommittee membership lists and get those to either Kate Smith or Dillon Tabish to add to the IGBC website.

Kim also reminded folks that the Requests for Proposals (RFP's) for IGBC 2020 funding awards (\$36K) will be coming out October 1. The selection committee will meet and select proposals by November 30. The funding awarded will be announced at the IGBC winter meeting in December.

For FY2020, we will be asking awardees to submit both a mid-progress report by the **end of June** and a final report by **November 1**. The reporting will allow the IE&O subcommittee to monitor progress and completion of projects which will determine eligibility for subsequent funding requests.

The IE&O subcommittee is looking at a redesign of the IGBC web and to fix existing issues and make the web site more user friendly.

Kim also stressed the top IE&O goals of consistent messaging across all IGBC I&E agency partners and the continued effort to increase the use of bear spray by folks who live, work and recreate in bear country.

IGBC Five-Year Plan 2018-2022 – Chris Smith (see PowerPoint presentation)

Chris gave an overview and orientation on why and how the current IGBC 5-year plan was developed, what's in the plan, development of the goals and objectives, where progress is being made and some of the challenging areas.

The 5-year plan was developed to:

- Improve coordination
- Provide clear direction
- Measure progress
- Improve accountability
- Inform the public

Estimate Methodology for Grizzly Bear Population in the S/CY Ecosystems – Rodney Smoldon

Rodney shared with the committee the progress being made in B.C. Canada on population estimates for grizzly bears and the discussion the SCY subcommittee recently had. Funding has been secured to survey populations of the B.C. side of the Selkirks. The SCY subcommittee discussed in detail if they should pursue the same or a similar survey protocol on the US side of the border. The subcommittee has great confidence in the sampling currently occurring in the US, and are not convinced a full survey is worth the expense at this time. They are currently looking for funds to help Michael Proctor with purchase of cameras. His project will result in a population estimate and is about a 2-year project.

Priorities of the Subcommittees for Reducing Future Grizzly Bear Mortalities

At the last IGBC winter meeting, Hilary Cooley made a presentation highlighting the increasing grizzly bear mortality and conflict trends in both the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). Although the trend was expected and mortalities have not exceeded sustainable levels to date, these issues have generated interest among a wide range of stake holders and warrant further attention. The executive committee determined that a review of grizzly bear mortality trends would be useful for the 4 occupied ecosystems and tasked these subcommittees with undertaking such a review.

The working group (Hilary, Frank and Kim) examined a 2009 report prepared by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) for the Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee (YGCC) that reviewed mortalities and conflict resolution efforts and developed recommendations for reducing mortalities in the future.

The working group concluded that a review of grizzly bear mortalities and current reduction methods would be useful for the 4 occupied ecosystems, as well as a good exercise for the Bitterroot and North Cascades ecosystems if interested, and the working group suggested these subcommittees undertake such a review.

Rodney Smoldon – SCY Chair (**see PowerPoint presentation**) - Rodney presented a preliminary list of priority areas produced by the SCY subcommittee for reducing grizzly bear mortality and conflicts. In his slide presentation, he showed graphs and categories for the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains for grizzly bear known and probable caused mortality from 2000-2018. His list included:

- Defense Life
- Defense Property
- Management
- Mistaken ID
- Poaching/Malicious
- Train/Auto Collisions
- Under Investigation.

Randy Arnold – NCDE Chair (**see PowerPoint presentation**) – Randy addressed the 3 top priorities identified by the subcommittee.

1. Shooting Related
 - hunter related, defense of life, poaching, malicious
2. Automobile Strikes
 - Signage, continue road kill pick up, add compost sites (Swan Valley/Flathead Reservation)
3. Site Related Conflict

Tricia O'Connor- Yellowstone Ecosystem Chair - During the Yellowstone Ecosystem subcommittee meeting this spring, the YES subcommittee discussed the need for prioritizing grizzly bear mortality and conflict trends. They asked for public feedback and discussion and stakeholder support. After reviewing the 2009 mortality report that listed 11 recommendations, the YES subcommittee identified 5 topics to further explore as follows:

1. Backcountry users, hunters/recreation and the gap in bear spray use
2. Front country/community planning
3. Outreach programs/local visitors; how well are they working
4. Livestock production outreach (there is work to be done)
5. Targeted community outreach; specifically where are bears expanding to?

Additional discussion included “What else can we do and where are the gaps?” “Where is our energy best spent?” Other topics included issues with connectivity, other ecosystems and the land in between. We need a better process with our NGO community on bear conflict reduction.

ACTION:

The NCDE, YES and SCY subcommittees produced and presented a preliminary list of priority issues for discussion at the 2019 summer meeting. They will prepare a list of recommendations by the 2019 winter meeting that addresses those issues, and a final implementation strategy will be presented to the IGBC executive committee by the summer of 2020.

Special permits on Flathead NF for Ultra Marathon – Chip Weber, Forest Supervisor, Flathead NF

Chip read a statement in support of his decision to issue special use permits on the Flathead NF on two proposed race events in Flathead County and a mountain bike shuttle service. He also read a statement from Somer Treat, Brad Treat’s widow. Brad Treat, a FS law enforcement officer was killed by a grizzly bear while off duty and mountain biking when he hit the bear on the trail. Somer Treat wrote that she still runs every day on the very trail her husband was killed on as part of how she chose

to live her life and honor him. She stated that she has fought against any association or focus with an agenda that attempts to limit recreation on public lands.

ACTION:

Chip asked if the IGBC was willing to convene or participate in a broader forum to examine the risks that occur for both when humans and wildlife intersect. Such a forum could be broad and inclusive of all viewpoints on the subject and would feature environmental ethicists, experts on relative risks and risk normalization as well as managers and the public. The goal would be a thorough examination to promote public understanding and through that, well-informed conservation efforts.

The IGBC has not made a decision on this request and will get back to Chip with an answer.

Winter Meeting 2019

**Monday, December 16 starting at 1pm – Wednesday, December 18 ending at noon.
Location, Missoula, MT (additional details will follow as time gets closer)**