



Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem

WHEN: WEDNESDAY, 11/29/2017

WHERE: DOUBLE TREE HOTEL, 100 Madison St, Missoula, MT 59802
Phone: (406) 728-3100

9:00 am	Welcome	Jim Williams and Jeff Mow
9:10 am	NCDE Bear Bio Updates	Stacy Courville, Dan Carney, Dr. John Waller, Jamie Jonkel, Mike Madel, Tim Manley, and Wesley Sarmiento
11:00 am	NCDE Connectivity Paper	Cecily Costello
11:30 am	USFWS Grizzly Bear Program Update	Hilary Cooley
12:00 am	<u>Lunch (On your own)</u>	
1:00 pm	USFWS CS Comments	Jennifer Fortin-Noreus
1:30 pm	Updating the CS Chapters	NCDE Subcommittee
2:00 pm	5 Year Plan Discussion	NCDE Subcommittee
2:30 pm	Information and Education	Colleen Matt / Laurie Wolf
2:45 pm	USFS Habitat Database	Kathy Ake
3:00 pm	Passing of the Chair	Jim Williams/Jeff Mow/Randy Arnold
3:15 pm	Public Comments to Committee	
	Adjourn	



Chris Peterson Photo

11-29-2017 NCDE Fall Meeting

Jim Williams opens meeting with introductions all around. The Fall meeting is special as it is a time to catch up on the events that have taken place and see what happened during the field season.

NCDE Bear Bio Updates:

Dan Carney – Blackfoot Tribe

Dan gives summary related to his management zone. Focus on waste management and extensive outreach. Over 900 cans of bear spray were handed out to the public.

Mike Madel – FWP R4 Western/Rocky Mountain Front

Its been a record conflict year for us along with the greatest mortality for the area. Introduction of new bear management specialist for the eastern unit of the region. (east of 89). Responded to a total of 81 bear incidents which included a total of 46 grizzly bear conflicts with people, property, or livestock. A record high of 12 grizzly bear deaths of which 9 were in the East Prairie Mgmt Unit. A total of 22 livestock carcasses were removed from conflict sites & redistributed to remote sites.

The Valier Bear Aware phone tree has been a useful tool for putting out bear alerts. Implemented a similar phone tree in the Choteau area.

Wesley Sarmiento – FWP R4 / based in Conrad

-there's been more bears on the prairie focusing on bears east of HWY 89.

- 3 trapping attempts although all bears had moved on

- will continue with the phone trees, they're working great

- want to start a community apple picking day and will help build community together and build bears awareness.

- In town of Dutton, 50 miles from RMF. There's about 320 people in town and the bear came right into town to access some of the 80 grain bins. This area is the grain belt of MT. We're working on cleaning up and keeping the spills cleaned up.

- want to raise money for a really big vacuum that will be a great tool for cleaning up grain spills in the whole town of Dutton.

- Pondera Colony is not interested in electric fence. And it would be difficult logistically

- Experiments that may help are having a pack of Karelian Bear Dogs to help run them out regularly.

- using a drone to help assess damage and possibly haze the bear out of the area.

- Did over 20 educational presentations

- 17 formal & informal meet & greets in the colony

- As an alternative to cracker shells, paint ball markers can be used to deter bears from residences and it marks conflict bears as well.

- Unique ear tag color combos

- Expand bear aware

QUESTION: Do you expect to implement phone tree if a collared bear is in the area? ...The problem is that this could give a false sense of security as there are multiple uncollared bears. All should assume bears are indeed present.

Jamie Jonkel – R2 (No presentation)

Quiet year regarding conflicts however, lots & lots of bear activity. Lots of pics, & good video.

Bob Weisner is retiring next month. Brittany Johnson, our technician for 5 years is also leaving us.

Stacy Courville – CSKT

Captured a female grizzly inside town of St Ignatius

Had several depredations

Had 3 non-target captures at depredation sights.

4 grain depredations

The Moeise Valley is still full of corn and the bears have found it.

Trapped for 25 nights in a row at multiple sights, the bears are being very elusive.

Scott Waller – GNP

3.1 million people visited the park this year.

We had no grizzly bear mortalities

81 incidents where bears were shooed away from where they didn't belong

Lori Roberts – FWP R1

Objective work with land owners to identify attractants.

Bear fair in Condon ...Condon is a hot spot for bear connectivity

Working with agencies to promote food storage on public lands to prevent conflicts.

R1 is also seeing expansion into the Salish Mountain Range

Continuing to work with local governments to educate and prevent bear conflicts.

419 historic captures total in R1, 21 were this year.

Status of Mgmt Bears

- Subadult male killed near Eureka after killing domestic sheep

- Subadult male that wasn't using his front leg, euthanized due this injury. The case is still under investigation.

- Bear from the North Fork – subadult killed in the Flathead Valley from an arrow from a crossbow. This is under investigation. (same bear)

- Subadult male killed by vehicle, but walked a few miles from road before it died.

- 3 radio collars dropped from young bears

- 4 bears are still wearing their active radio collars.

Jim recaps the bear bio updates and the importance of their work with people and property owners on the ground.

Cecily Costello – NCDE Connectivity Paper

Potential Paths for Male-mediated gene flow to and from an Isolated Grizzly Bear Population

Overview

Grizzly Brown Bear Range – MT is at the southern portion

Federal Recovery Zones identified and all have established Recovery Plans (1982, 1993)

If we can facilitate genetic interchange between NCDE and GYE, all will benefit. The thought has been that the more southern most bears have less genetic diversity. The lowest diversity is in the Southern Selkirk Mountains. The GYE would benefit with interchange within the two populations. To date, we have not captured an individual that has traveled from another group. The genetic health of the NCDE population is very good. The individuals likely are around the 1250 number now.

Having genetic interchange is one of the long-term goals of MT FWP. Males typically move out away a bit from their mother's home range. The study approach is to take advantage of the collared male management bears. We had 124 different individuals / 199 unique bear years, and 126,000 steps, and looked at several different spatial layers such as distance to forest edge, greenness, ruggedness, primary vs secondary roads, distance to road, home density.

Randomized Shortest Paths – NCDE to Yellowstone...how they might move south.

Ad-hoc validation – high correlation with path predications

Rare Events – no successful "immigration event" for 20k simulations of correlated random walks. ...This suggests that perhaps the populations are far enough away still that this may not happen naturally or for a long time.

Informing management – Path layers are available online (USGS Science Base)

Question: Do you think there any real differences in movement between management bears vs research bears?

Question: Any differences between subadult vs adult male bears.

Question: Will there be a study on female movement?

Suggestion: to overlay the recovery zones over this data.

Key Point to remember is that this study is not to help determine where bears will live...instead where bears will move through.

Hilary Cooley – Recovery Coordinator/USFWS

Thanks everyone that she has worked with over the last 7 months.

Evaluate whether or not recovery goals have been met. Evaluate how we're doing on threats.

Secure core, road density, developed recreation sites, livestock.

We will finalize that Draft Conservation Strategy – the sub committee as a whole will be working on that during 2018.

Formal evaluation of our recovery goals and threats must be completed, all through a very public process.

Jennifer Fortin-Noreus – USFWS CS Comments

59 unique letters received

Summarized into 138 discussion topics

General concerns

Duration of the CS, the Science

Go into effect immediately, do participants, funding, etc.?

Mortality Limits

Want them to be more conservative

Confusion with the use of criteria & goals – received some suggestions on how to possibly make them clearer. We should have a mortality database in real-time.

Connectivity

Some people were concerned for allowing for connectivity

How will connectivity be managed & monitored between GYE & NCDE

Hwy 3 is potential barrier for bears for lower 48 / Canada

Habitat management

Lag time between habitat decline and grizzly bear population decline

Questions as to why the Cumulative Effects Model is no longer used to assess impacts on habitat

What is justification/rationale of 2011 baseline, many suggestions made.

New roads and anticipated usages

Over snow use should be part of forest plans

Analyze effects of wild fire not only on berry crops but also other things

Motorized Access management

Temporary roads should have a time limit, etc.

Developed sites

Felt that these were not stringent enough

Restrictions should be included for examples of acceptable use.

Livestock Allotments

Clarify terms when discussing this topic

GRIZZLY BEAR should not be punished if they predate on livestock on federal land.

Energy Development

Need protections here

Vegetation Management

Should account for a secure core around highways, etc.

Public access should not be able to use roads that are only for timber harvest

Habitat mgmt. – DNRC

The HCP is not adequate and should be improved

Zone 2

How should protections be increased?

Connectivity

Support for wildlife crossing structures

Regulatory

Need triggers to mandatory relisting

Jennifer recommends that USGS should be a member of the Coordinating Committee

Review of all 3 CS handouts.

NCDE CS Team -

Assignment of NCDE Subcommittee Chapter Update Editors – Needs to be done by 4/1/18
Subcommittee members volunteered for chapters.

Bill Avey seconds motion to accept Dillon Tabish as the NCDE IE

USFS Habitat Database – Kathy Ake

Position is multi agency funded, gives overview of the tasks she completes on even and odd years to support the NCDE. The CS will need tracking of the baseline over time.

Gary Bertellotti presents Chairman Award to outgoing Chairman, Jim Williams

Gavel and chairmanship passed to Eric Smith/Glacier National Park, and Randy Arnold/FWP as Vice Chair

Public Comments:

Big concern is “pre-mature” delisting. We’re concerned of the final CS will not maintain important habitat protections and maintain A19---will like to see hard stances in there. These protections have been important to grizzly bear recovery. Hoping that all these items are strengthened but do not feel confident in the process as it seems that the committee & process is a black hole.

Friends of the Bitterroot – how do you get from the original recovery plan to here? It seems like a management fragmentation. I don’t believe the population has changed...I believe it’s the politics that have changed.

There are more ways to fund (benefit the grizzly bear) there are more ways to make money than hunting. Just ask the folks that love grizzly bears to pay for some grizzly bear work.

Ponderay Colony - Thankful for more personnel on the ground in his area. It’s supposed to be a population of bears in the lower 48. Bears are still confined to about 2% of all the habitat.

Bill Beck – Bear Creek ----reads a letter suspecting that the heart & soul of the matter is conflicting cultures instead of recovery alone.

Livestock Association – the ranching community feels like they are forgotten so much that they don’t even come to these meetings anymore. From a ranching stand point habitat conservation is of paramount concern. We want to know that you care for us. If FWP had a better relationship with ranchers on the RMF. We’re grateful for the improvements of Wesley & Sarah and their efforts. There’s just not enough staff. Hilary met with ranchers a few months ago and everyone was valued.

Lee Metzger – true recovery of a grizzly bear has viable populations between the sub groups and genetic diversity. This is not the case. It is much too soon to delist

Jack Gladstone – Blackfeet Tribe ----prior to men gaining consciousness here, there were bears. People can adapt themselves in a wider margin than the bear can. Let us continue to find ways to be neighbors and allies on this shrinking earth as the bears have been our constant companion since we were placed here.

Wants more transparency

Small business owner in Missoula – feels delisting is premature

Wildlife Guardians – encourage that you ask an attorney. It's been approximately 5 years since the DRAFT CS came out and many retirements, no continuity. This committee should not consider moving forward without putting CS back out for public comment. Also impacts to the remnant populations will be decimated. The law is clear on these matters.