

Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems (SCYE) Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC)

Notes from the May 7, 2020 Microsoft Teams meeting (virtual meeting due to Corona virus pandemic concerns)

Subcommittee Members calling in:

SCYE CHAIR: Rodney Smoldon (USDA Colville National Forest)

SCYE VICE CHAIR: Ben Conard (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service)

SCIENCE ADVISOR: Wayne Kasworm (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service)

I&E TASKFORCE CO-CHAIRS: Kim Annis, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Kirsten Kaiser, USDA Kootenai National Forest

GUEST PRESENTOR: Hillary Cooley (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service)

Members: Chip Corsi (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Eric Besaw (Idaho Department of Lands) Ray Entz (Kalispel Tribe of Indian), Scott Soultz (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho), Neil Anderson (Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks), Jeanne Higgins (USDA Idaho Panhandle National Forests), Jeremy Anderson (for Chad Benson, USDA Kootenai National Forest), Cynthia Weston (for Kurt Pindel, USDI Bureau of Land Management), Christy Johnson-Hughes (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service), Greg Kurz (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service), Steve Pozzanghera (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Grizzly Bear Monitoring Update: Wayne Kasworm

2020 Collared Bear Monitoring

- 3 bears collared in the Selkirk Mountains (2 females, 1 male)
- 6 bears collared in the Cabinet-Yaak (2 females, 4 males - of which 3 are augmentation bears)
- 6 Iridium collars placed on male bears (whose movements are harder to keep up with) provide tracking for 5 males and 1 female. GPS point locations provided every 2 hours through the internet.
- Bears emerged from the den in late March – early April.
- Wayne has *not* been authorized to conduct flights so far this year due to COVID-19 concerns.

Bear 1006

- Born in the Selkirks in 2016 to a collared female bear (1003) and a collared male (144). Father moved into the ecosystem from the Purcells, providing evidence of gene flow between ecosystems.
- Wayne can trace the lineage of bear 1006 back to his great-grandparents.
- Bear 1006 was a 102-pound yearling when captured and collared in Boundary Creek, ID in 2017. This was a research capture, not a “management bear.”
- Dened in Boundary Creek in 2017-2018.
- Traveled southeast from the Selkirk Ecosystem through the Yaak and into Cabinet Mountains, where it lost it’s collar in October 2018.
- Photographed at two separate sites south of Grangeville, ID with no collar and “hooked” claws, in 2019. Identified as Bear 1006 from DNA sample collected at one site.
- Bear 1006 traveled approximately 260 miles from its last radio location in the Cabinets in MT to Whitebird Creek, ID. Moved about 30 miles in 2 months between Whitebird and Newsome, ID in 2019.

- Tracks of an unknown grizzly bear found south of Grangeville in late April of 2020.

BC Selkirks Population Estimate

- Dr. Proctor will conduct DNA sampling east of Hwy 6 / 31 in 2020, west of the highway in 2021.
- Sampling will include hair snag corrals checked and moved every 2 weeks.
- This will be a spatially explicit mark-recapture effort.

2020 Capture and DNA Collection Effort

- Wayne's crew is presently not cleared for trapping. Only allowed to assist in anesthetization and collaring of conflict animals.
- Still possible to have capture and hair snagging work in the Selkirks, but probably not until June.
- Hair snagging work in Cabinet Yaak cancelled for 2020.
- Hair snagging work in for the MT portion the Bitterroot cancelled for 2020.

Discussion: COVID-19 Field Limitations

- Kalispel Tribe, Kootenai Tribe, IDFG, WDFW: Mostly working at home. Direction for field work includes limit of one person / vehicle, proper PPE, sanitize touched surfaces, maintain social distancing. Only limited, essential field work presently being completed. KTOI already putting out corrals.
- USFS Region 1 (ID, MT): Similar restrictions as above. Employees mostly teleworking. Field work mostly limited to mission-critical work at present (e.g., fire suppression).
- USFS Region 6 (OR, WA): A bit more discretion. More than one person / vehicle allowed. Risk assessments completed for individual tasks. Delayed hiring of temporary employees. Following state guidelines for re-opening. Low population counties in WA may petition the state for a waiver for phased re-opening. Overnight camping may be reopened.

Bog Creek Road Monitoring Update

- This is a presently undrivable road in the Selkirk Ecosystem that the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection requested to be made drivable but closed to public use, to facilitate law enforcement efforts along the U.S. – Canadian Border.
- Ongoing litigation around the potential effects to grizzly bears from opening this road, and how to make up the loss of core habitat elsewhere within the affected Bear Management Unit.
- In 2019, Wayne placed cameras on a section of the road for baseline monitoring of grizzly bear use.
- Funding should be available for monitoring in 2020.
- Wayne is committed to monitoring "as best we can this year" recognizing present limitations on hiring due to COVID-19.

I&E Subcommittee Update: Kim Annis

Conflict Bear

- Male bear 892 climbed up someone's back deck at a house south of Troy, MT. He was scared off by the homeowner.
- This bear visited yards last year and demonstrates an ease around people.
- Kim has had a trap out for a week with no success, will pull it tomorrow.
- If bear 892 is documented accessing human-related attractants (e.g., garbage, small livestock, outdoor freezer), MFWP will likely recommend removing this bear from the population. As it stands now, the bear has not accessed any attractants, but has shown a curiosity and familiarity around homes. Kim

welcomes a discussion on a possible relocation site if he is captured before he gets into further “trouble” around people.

I&E Work

- There is available funding for an overhaul of IGBC websites. Need Executive Committee permission to use those funds for the websites. Bids for what a total cost might be are being sought now.
- There is a hold on re-printing handouts (coloring books, bear spray brochures).
- MFWP held an education summit in January 2020. Lots of I&E materials passed out to partners (21 boxes).
- The \$5,000 minimum on agency / cooperator project submissions is gone (again). We will have some new language and information for FY 20-21 project submissions.
- The fast-paced recreation signs and brochures are completed and available. There are a few previous projects proposed to the I&E subcommittee that Kim, Kirsten, and Felipe will discuss. If you have any new ideas for the I&E subcommittee, contact them.
- Question: How about getting some materials out to kids who are out of school due to COVID-19?
Answer: Coloring books and other materials are available on the IGBC website. Ideas on this topic are welcome.

Kootenai Valley Res. Initiative Grizzly Bear Subcommittee Update: Scott Souls

November 18, 2019 meeting

- Media Release – Kootenai Tribe of Idaho installed animal-resistant trash receptacles at local boat ramps.
- Discussed regional grizzly bear conflict prevention examples
 - Colville NF human / large carnivore conflict guide
 - MFWP conflict grizzly bear management process
 - Valier area Bear Aware phone tree
- Boundary County notification options
 - Phone tree
 - Hotline
 - KVRI Facebook page
- Local grizzly bear conflict considerations
 - Current support from local agencies (Federal, State and County)

January 23, 2020 meeting

- Presentation by Kim Annis, Grizzly Bear Specialist with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Grizzly bear notification process
 - Phone tree / hotline (Boundary Sheriff – NIXLE: emergency notification system)
 - Facebook (I&E)
- Community liaison / conflict specialist
 - Local grizzly bear conflict assistance needs (what, when and where)
 - IDFG personnel and human / bear conflict management

February 20, 2020 meeting

- Grizzly bear notification process – phone tree
 - MFWP and Kootenai Valley Bear Aware phone tree protocols
 - NIXLE system for Bear Alert program

March 17, 2020 meeting: cancelled due to COVID-19

Update as of late March, 2020

- Update on NIXLE system and Bear Alert program
 - Sheriff Dave Kramer and IDFG (Brian Johnson) work on NIXLE system logistics
 - Possibility of incorporating a telephone calling system into Bear Alert program.

Grizzly Bear Conflict and Mortality Review: Hillary Cooley

Executive Committee Mortality Review Tasks for Each Ecosystem Subcommittee

- Produce a preliminary list of priority issues for discussion (June 2019).
- Develop a list of recommendations that address issues (Dec. 2019).
- Develop a final implementation strategy (June 2020).

Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) Priority Issues & Recommendations

- Backcountry recreation and hunting-related mortalities
 - **Recommendations:** targeted training, outreach, food and game storage
- Front country conflicts and community planning
 - **Recommendations:** waste management, signage, enforcement, orchards and small livestock
- Livestock conflicts and producer outreach
 - **Recommendations:** Be proactive, engage producers, evaluate practices, education / communication
- Targeted community outreach in grizzly bear expansion area
 - **Recommendations:** Signage in expansion areas, USFS permittees in expansion areas

Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Priority Issues & Recommendations

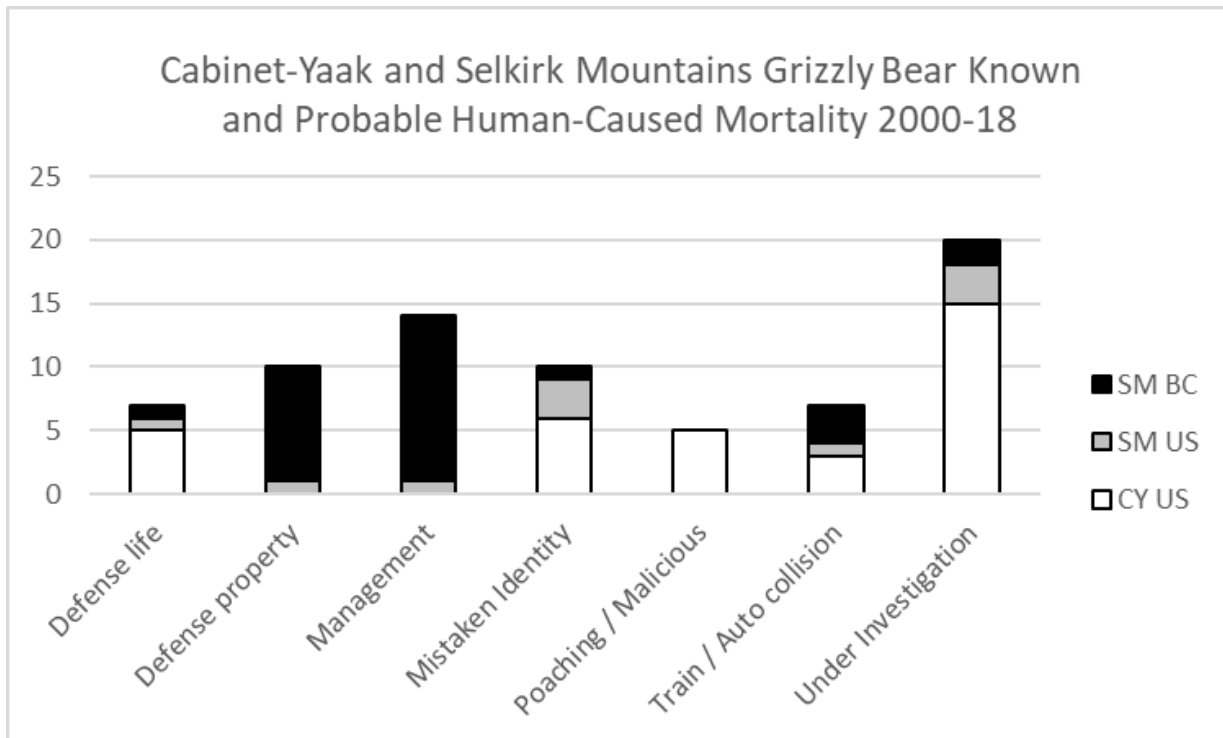
- Shooting-related mortalities
 - **Recommendations:** target I&E to black bear hunters, bird hunters, rifle hunters, recreationists
- Railroad collisions
 - **Recommendations:** review mitigation strategies, livestock exclusion fencing, involve railroads
- Vehicle collisions
 - **Recommendations:** increase engagement with MDT, highway signs, coordination with NGOs
- Site-related conflict
 - **Recommendations:** waste management, I&E related to small livestock, enforcement

Overarching Recommendations (put forward by the NCDE)

- Establish long-term working groups around each priority.
- Consider external representatives (e.g., hunters, livestock producers, railroad).
- Coordinate strategies among ecosystems where trends overlap.

Discussion: Relating this to the SCYE Mortality Review

- A lot of the issues and recommendations listed for the other ecosystems sound very familiar. Concern over different subcommittees working on the same or similar issues (doubling of effort). Perhaps the executive committee could provide recommendations related to the issues in common?
- Where should we spend our time and resources to get the most bang for the buck in the SCYE? For example, mortalities related to defense of property is more of a BC issue in the SCYE, whereas mistaken identity and poaching may be better areas on which to focus (see Wayne's following graphic).



Comparison / Contrast of Access Management Standards Between the NCDE Grizzly Bear Amendment and the SCYE Amendment: Ben Conard

Clarification Requested by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

- This topic is perhaps not appropriate for the SCYE Subcommittee to address. It is more internal management direction for the two agencies (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Forest Service) who are presently in litigation over these amendments. In other words, we don't have a good answer for this yet. Stay tuned.

Nomination of a New Vice-Chair

- This position is presently occupied by Ben Conard, who has agreed to take over the chair position of the subcommittee when Rodney's term expires this coming fall. Traditionally the positions are two-year terms, with the vice-chair assuming duties of chair.
- In the past, the chair and vice-chair positions were always representatives of a land management agency but are now open to any member of the subcommittee, similar with the other subcommittees.
- Jeanne Higgins has agreed to become the new vice-chair.

Next Meeting

- Rodney will send out an agenda and arrange a date and time for the next (likely virtual) meeting to take place.