



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

## ***2018 Region 4 East Area Grizzly Bear Management Efforts***

Period Covered: 01/01/2018 – 11/14/2018

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### **Synopsis**

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Region 4 hired a new bear management specialist and technician to cover areas where grizzlies are expanding. These positions are based in Conrad and began at the end of July 2017. Below is a summary of efforts for the first full calendar year of this position (2018).

### **Conflict Prevention Efforts**

- Conducted 12 bear aware school presentations (> 537 students and school staff)
- Conducted 14 bear aware presentations for adult communities (> 595 adults)
- Conducted 22 bear spray training to over 440 people
- Erected 5 permanent electric fences totaling 12,939 perimeter feet (97 acres)
- Erected 3 temporary electric fences
- Obtained a vacuum trailer to help producers remove attractants
- Removed 6,600 pounds of spilled or spoiled grain
- Removed 26 deer carcasses and 3 livestock carcasses
- The carcass removal driver picked up at least: 36 cows, 187 calves, 16 sheep, 38 lambs, two pigs, and one horse
- Removed 504 pounds of apples
- Reinforced 2 grain-bin doors and designed a bear resistant grain bin door
- Deployed 6 wildlife scare devices
- Designed a new grizzly bear deterrence method – a bear spray trip-wire trap
- Installed 9 bear aware signs at key locations

- Deployed out 5 bear proof garbage cans at public park
- We gave away 23 bear sprays
- Responded to every bear call, including non-conflict grizzly bear observations
- Conducted more than 80 proactive patrols after grizzly bears were observed
- We hazed 12 bears away from people, residences, and towns
- We posted all reported grizzly bear sightings to a facebook page
- Conflict prevention outreach on facebook and popular articles
- We initiated call trees whenever a grizzly bear was reported for an area
- Obtained 9 grizzly bear DNA hair samples to help determine conflict individuals
- Facilitated over 34 popular media products (TV, newspaper, press releases)
- Working across FWP Divisions to create an Agricultural Brochure aimed at preventing bear conflicts

### Grizzly Bear Mortalities

1. A yearling female grizzly bear ate insecticide north of Fort Benton (6/11/2018)
2. A cub-of-year female was struck by vehicle west of Valier (6/24/2018)
3. An adult male was removed because it was severely wounded by gunshot and was a conflict grizzly (8/13/2018)

### Conflicts

We responded scores of calls regarding grizzly bears during the 2018 reporting period with 43 of those calls being classified as a human-grizzly bear conflict (Table 1). The primary conflict type for the prairie area is grizzly bears coming too close to human homes – which occurred in 18 occurrences (41% of conflicts). For these 18 occurrences of “bears near dwelling” there were no obvious attractants bringing the bear to the area. In many of the other cases where grizzlies were close to the homes the bears were using shelterbelts as a daybed. In an additional 13 instances bears were drawn close to homes due to unsecured attractants – with grain spills being the primary attractant, followed by livestock feed, pet food, fruit trees, and birdfeeders respectively. Grizzly bears caused property damage in ten instances, which averaged about \$246 per incident. A bum cattle calf lost represented the highest loss of about \$500, while bee hives were about \$300 each. Two sheep ewes were also killed by a grizzly bear. Damage to two grain bin doors were fixable, which we helped with. Monetary damage to fruit

**Table 1:** Table summarizing the number of different human-grizzly bear conflicts on the prairie during 2018 reporting period.

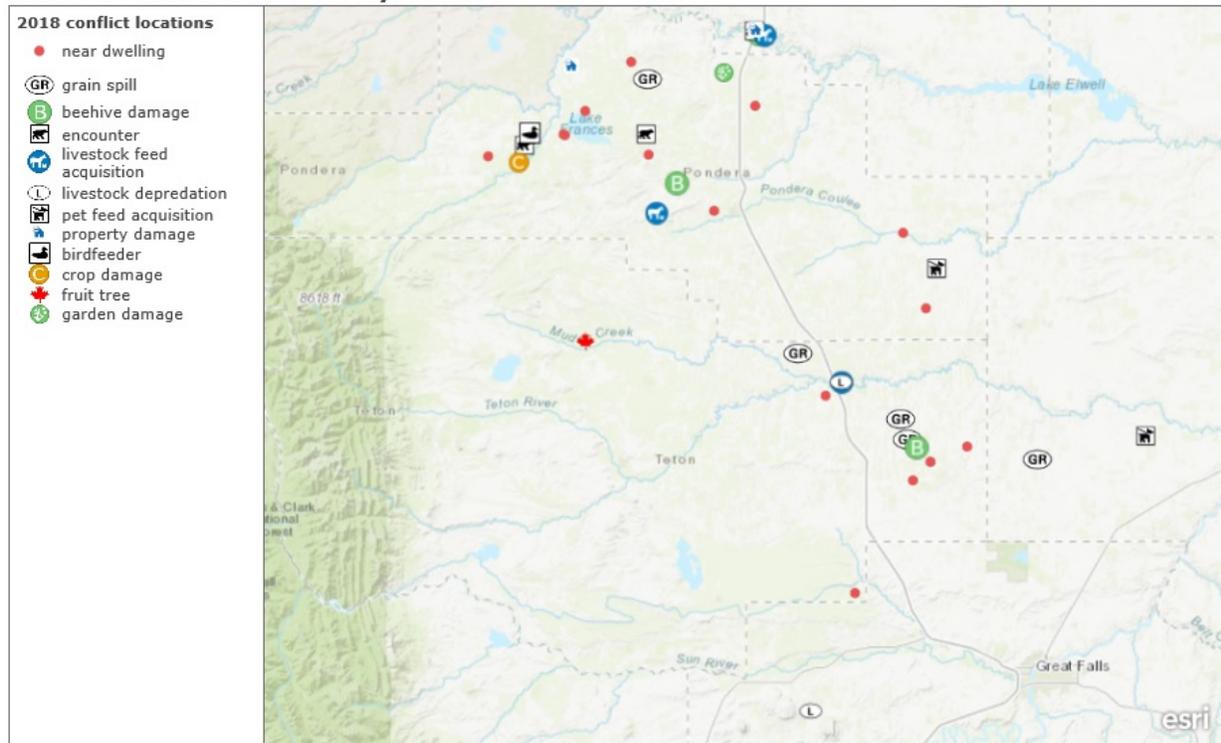
<b>conflict type</b>	<b>number</b>
grain spill	5
fruit tree	1
poision acquisition	1
birdfeeder	1
livestock feed acquisition	3
pet feed acquisition	2
encounter	3
near dwelling	18
property damage	2
livestock depredation	2
beehive damage	3
crop damage	1
garden damage	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

trees and agricultural crops was also minimal, probably costing less than \$50 on average. A golf course flag was destroyed costing \$80.

There were three human-grizzly bear encounters, where people met a grizzly while on foot. In two of those cases the bear walked away. In one case a person made rodent distress calls at the bear, which promoted the female bear with young to bluff charge.

Conflicts were concentrated along Teton River and the Marais River watershed, which is comprised of several waterbodies including; Dupuyer Creek, Birch Creek, Lake Frances, Dry Fork and various canals or coulees (Figure 3). Thirteen of these conflicts (30%) were caused by one yearling grizzly bear, which ranged widely south of the Teton River from the Collins area to north of Carter. Trapping attempts for this yearling bear were ineffective because the bear jumped from farmstead to farmstead without any predictable pattern. Trapping efforts in general are very challenging on the prairie because bears rarely return to the same location within the same week. Conflicts associated with yearling bear ended when the berries ripened in 2018.

### 2018 Prairie Area Human-Grizzly Conflicts



### Captures

1. A 373 lb. four-year-old male grizzly was captured and collared because it was too close to Conrad city limits. It was relocated to Coal Creek near the north fork of the Flathead River.

2. A 264 lb. four-year-old female grizzly was captured, collared, and ear tagged because it was being observed by concerned residents on the west side of Lake Francis. The bear had not caused any conflicts, and this was considered a pre-emptive management capture. The bear was released on-site with landowner permission and was monitored thereafter.
3. A yearling grizzly was captured and immediately released without handling at the Marais Valley Golf Course. The bear was released without handling because golf course staff described a large male as the conflict bear to target and we did not know if this yearling individual had a mother present, which can be a very dangerous situation at a public location. So, we released this young bear immediately on-site due to potential public safety concerns.
4. A ~900 lb. eight-year-old male was captured on the Birch Creek Colony because it was chased into an open garage and was cornered by members of the farm. We collared and ear tagged this individual which we relocated to Pike Creek.