IGBC Update
Dec 2020
Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem
NCDE UPDATE

• Conflict Specialists highlights by area
• Workplan Accomplishments from 2020
• Work Planned for 2021
Glacier National Park

• East side of the park closed- BIR COVID 19 closure
• Managing the park with a lot of transplants or COVID refugee to recreate on public lands.
• Reducing bear conflicts will be a “Leave no Trace recreation 0.5”
Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribe

- Fewer conflict calls overall
- 130 grizzly bear crossings along highway 93 without documentation from the crossing cameras
- 50 grizzly bears documented along highway mostly subadult males
- Tribal Wildlife Incentive Grant: highway crossing
Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife

- Closure of the Reservation - all east entrances to GNP
- Less tourist and recreation to the reservation
- Experienced less bear human garbage issues
- Help from WS with funding from FWS for electric fences
- More bear resistance garbage containers needed
- Need more coordination with MDT on vehicle-struck livestock
East Front

- Grain continues to be difficult attractant
  - Grain piles the size of warehouses stored out in the open
  - Removed 27,000 pounds of spilled grain, which was just a dent
  - Researching ways to resolve grain conflicts more permanently - scare devices, guard dogs.

- Bone yards continue to be a source of bear conflicts. Interest in carcass removal program continuing to grow.

- Human encounters with bears was up this year.

- Education and outreach efforts were severely curtailed this year due to COVID.
Northwest NCDE

- Over 200 reported conflicts
- Many involving the same bears
- Yards, garbage, bird feeders, livestock (pigs, llama, chickens), fruit trees.
- 19 Captures
  - 16 Relocated
  - 3 recaptured and euthanized
Dispersed Public Land Camping
South Side – NCDE

• 1 Research capture on NE side of the Rattlesnake Wilderness
• Euthanized male in Blackfoot in April. WS captured after it killed calves
• Relocated two males in Blackfoot possibly involved in calf depredation
• Relocated male grizzly in Seeley Lake connected to summer garbage
• Relocated a male grizzly in October from south of Interstate 90 in the Jens area after killing ducks and chickens.
• Had two additional grizzly bear mortalities that are under investigation
Expanding Grizzly Bears

- Grizzly bears were photographed:
  - North of Missoula in Lavalle Creek
  - SE of Missoula in Miller Creek
  - South of Missoula on the fringes of Lolo
- Received other reports of grizzlies in the Deer Lodge Valley, Sapphire Range, Big Hole Valley and the Ninemile Valley.
South Side – NCDE
Expanding Grizzly Bears

• Lots of good preventative management and education related efforts on the south end of the ecosystems----multiple electric fence projects and sanitation projects.
NCDE Workplan 2020 Accomplishments

- FWP hired a new specialist in Deer Lodge
- FWP Hired new statewide G. Bear IEO
- Wildlife Services hired two specialists on Rocky Mountain Front
- HCP for Railroad nearing completion
- Transportation and crossing coordination
ADVANCEMENTS - Electric Mats and Shipping Containers
EXPERIMENTING - Grain Bin Protection (Electrified Screen on Pallets)
NCDE Workplan 2021 Planned Actions

- Proposed Research:
  - FWP with U of M Post Doc Sarah Sells to map potential connectivity routes between NCDE and Bitterroot using female data
  - Grizzly Bear use of grain bins on eastern front
  - Effectiveness of deterring bears from grain bins using critter-getters and remote cameras
  - CSKT Working with ecologist to further study highway crossing on Hwy 93
NCDE Workplan 2021 Planned Actions

• Focus on Mortality Subcommittee Priorities:
  • Shooting Related (IGBC coordination role)
  • Automobile
  • Site-Related

• Support ongoing habitat protection in landscape between NCDE and CYE (Montana Great Outdoor Project). Between Flathead and Kootenai National Forests west of Kalispell.
FWP’s Lost Trail Conservation Easement

- FWP is proposing to purchase a conservation easement to protect 7,256 acres of timberland near Marion west of Kalispell.
- Land shares nearly 7 miles of border with the 7,876-acre U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge and 4,093 acres of Wetland Reserve Program easements held by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Part of the ~630,000 acres purchased by SPP Montana, LLC from Weyerhaeuser in December 2019.
- Decision notice signed Nov. 19. Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission to review at Dec. 10 meeting.

FWS Lost Trail Conservation Area

- Surrounds Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge and FWP Conservation Easement project area.
- This potential project involves ~100,000 acres of private land, including ~70,000 acres owned by SPP Montana, that would be targeted for conservation easements with willing landowners.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would hold these easements.
- Public input collected in summer-fall 2020.

The Montana Great Outdoors Project

- This potential project would involve TPL working with SPP to acquire a conservation easement on ~130,000 acres.
- FWP would hold this easement.
- This potential project is still early in development. Any FWP easement acquisitions would be open for public comment at a later date and subject to Commission endorsement.
Questions?