

**IGBC BITTERROOT ECOSYSTEM SUBCOMMITTEE**  
**Spring Virtual Meeting**

May 28<sup>th</sup>, @ 9:30 MST (0830pst) to 4:30pm MST (1530pst)

**Welcome, Agenda Review and Introductions – JJ Teare**

**In Attendance:**

JJ Teare - Clearwater Regional Supervisor, Idaho Fish and Game, Chair

Sandi Fisher – Assistant State Supervisor, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Co-Chair

Jen Bruns – Fish and Game Communications Manager

Jason Dungan – South Zone Wildlife Bio Salmon Challis Forest, Science Sub Committee: Mackey Idaho

Jim DeMaagd – Forest Supervisor, Sawtooth National Forest

Michelle – Eco system staff Bio. Panhandle National Forest

Mike Pruss – Wildlife Program Manager, Nez Perce Clearwater Forest

Chuck Mark – Forest Supervisor, Salmon Challis National Forest

Rick Winkel – Clearwater County Commissioner

Kerey Barnowe-Meyer – Wildlife Bio, Nez Perce Tribe

Linda Jackson – Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest

Amy Baumer – I & E, Salmon Challis National Forest

Ben Conard – US Fish and Wildlife Service, Deputy Office Supervisor Montana Ecological Service Office

Cecily Costello – Research Wildlife Biologist, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks: Science team for Bitterroot

Cheryl Probert – Forest Supervisor, NezPerce Clearwater National Forest

Diane Probasco – Wildlife Biologist, Panhandle National Forest

Hilary Cooley – Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Jennifer Becar – Public Affairs, Nez Perce Clearwater national Forest

Jennifer Fortin-Noreus - Fish and Wildlife Grizzly Recovery Program, Missoula MT

Justin Martens – South Zone Wildlife Biologist, Bitterroot National Forest

Lori Roberts – Montana Fish and Wildlife

Mary D'Aversa – District Manager, Idaho Falls

Scott Jackson – National Carnivore Program Leader, U.S. Forest Service Regional 1

Wayne Kaseworm – US Fish and Wildlife Service, Libby Montana

**Food Storage Working Group Conversation Report – Scott Jackson**

- Fall meeting food storage and sanitation across Bitterroot, need to be proactive, even with Black bears
- Had meeting on 5/07 with several participating agency members. Identified some topics and objectives:
  - What implementation might look like: how, when, where, why
  - How to prioritize food storage orders and areas
  - Concerns that will come with initiating food storage orders
  - Full and complete agreement Food storage and sanitation very important topic

- Agencies need to set examples on own facilities to the public and set internal expectations
- Demonstrate progress in time
- A “Phased In” approach makes most sense
- How to prioritize areas in need first
- Information Education and outreach, how to reach targeted areas
- Public acceptance
- Funding, need to look for partnerships
- Next step to focus and prioritize: Overall needs assessment
  - What does the Public land infrastructure look like with bear resistant containers and garbage
  - What each individual area needs and has for infrastructure
  - Idaho conservation league is funding the beginnings, contracted with people and carnivores to do an inventory of bear infrastructure on the north end of Idaho and parts of Montana
  - Just a start but can hopefully expand from this conversation
  - Integrating the food storage sanitation topic into I & E messaging (having the conversation)
- What we don’t have at this time:
  - Consistency of orders
  - Local Infrastructure
  - Community awareness and understanding

### **Outfitter Conversations on the NPCNF – Cheryl Probert**

- Meet with Outfitters yearly that outfit on NezPerce and Clearwater Forests
  - Outfitters used to be big on hunting Elk and deer but with changes in wildlife numbers they have had to adjust numbers and shifted to predator hunting and fishing
  - Crowds on forest land, how outfitters can help public safely use the land
  - Need to have healthy outfitter industry for multiple reasons
  - A lot of outfitters operate where bears are present, what do you see and how can you help us
  - First focus should be the public, digging through public camp rings, getting into trash etc.
    - Most outfitters already use bear resistant items
  - Observations mostly in back country are bear aware, not as much in the front country
  - Difference between equipment that is working and having to use bear rating equipment, cost can be a huge issue
  - What will change for outfitters if a bear shows up and stays: What the future will look like?
  - Information on Kiosk: need more information on food storage, pocket size storage info for distribution

- Left them with 3 questions:
  - 1) Think about improved equipment needs that outfitters & guides need and where do they see we have equipment needs on Forest land
  - 2) What do they see as additional improvements that public can make
  - 3) Specifically where can we work together on I & E
- Outfitters will be important collaborators for this in our areas

## **Information, Education and Outreach Sub-committee Report – Jen Bruns, Chair**

### **Priorities for the Bitterroot IEO Subcommittee**

- SAFETY of our public, partners, and staff is our #1 priority.
- Keep the public informed about grizzly bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem, including both the presence of bears in the BE as well as information on how to be safe in bear country.
- Train agency personnel in Bear Aware practices, use of bear spray, other.
- Identify bear attractants. (e.g. garbage collection sites, livestock boneyards, hunters bait sites, and anthropogenic foods) across the BE
- Research funding opportunities for IEO work

### **Bitterroot I & E Sub-Committee Projects**

- MFWP: modified FTE, Grizzly bear specialist
  - YouTube video series including removing attractants & bear spray demo workshop for staff
- Nez Perce-Clearwater NF: works closely with IDFG to combine outreach
  - Several news releases this spring reminding hunters & recreationists about bear emerging from dens
  - Distributed emails & bear ID material to bear hunters
- Salmon-Challis NF: Bear aware signs at trailheads, rec sites & bear aware campaign page
- Bitterroot NF: New bear resistant food storage lockers, signage, infrastructure improvements at front country campgrounds.
  - Camp hosts are providing visitors' information on keeping a clean camp and properly storing food to reduce attractants and minimize adverse interactions between bears and humans at forest developed campgrounds and group sites.
  - Food storage order in effect for the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness – Sula Ranger District.
- Lolo NF public affairs staff: minimizing human-bear conflicts using outreach methods
  - Event with live demos (messy-campsite, etc)
  - Social media blitz every Wed on FB & twitter
- What are Bear Smart Communities?
  - Proactive conservation initiative that encourages efforts by communities, businesses & individuals to reduce human-bear conflicts.
- 2020-21 Grant Recipients
  - Bitterroot National Forest Signs and Ed Materials - \$2,000
  - IDFG Clearwater Region Charging Bear Simulator - \$4,800

- Wind River - IEO Partnerships and Wildlife Shepherding for bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem - \$4,620
- Wind River - IEO Mapping Human-Bear Conflict Hotspots in Lolo, MT - \$1,155

### **Exploring the Human Dimension equation in G-bear Conservation in Idaho –**

**How to Effectively Outreach to our Public –** Dr. Kenny Wallen, Katie Shaw – UI JJ – Idaho Fish and Game partnership with U of I. Share a Human Dimension Specialist position, Dr. Kenny Wallen, with UI. To assist IDFG with Human Dimensions and social sciences when conducting scoping and outreach to our public.

Dr. Wallen - Katie Shaw is one of his grad students and will be doing a graduate project on the public and agency views and values of Grizzly Bears in the Idaho part of the Bitterroot Ecosystem to enable agencies and organizations to better understand their values and enhance future public outreach. This is an independent UI project, not associated with IDFG. Key components of project:

- Exploring the public knowledge, tolerance and trust of the public in g-bear conservation efforts within the Idaho portion of the Bitterroot
- Methodology will be a Participatory Research Framework
- Study Area: Grangeville, Elk City, Orofino, Kooskia, Kamiah
- Individual public and agency interviews 25-35 key informants
- Interview Questions: Background, Tolerance, Management with Grizzlies
- Focus Groups form local communities will be formed and interviewed after
- Follow-up reports will be completed and shared with all

Kenny: Katie may be reaching out for interviews please help Katie if she reaches out to you. JJ will send our Katie’s information to the group.

### **Science Sub-committee Report – Mike Pruss, Chair**

- **Members:** Mike Pruss (co-chair) (USFS), Katie Oelrich (co-chair) (IDFG), Jamie Jonkel (MFWP), Jason Dungan (USFS), Justin Martens (USFS), Wayne Kasworm (USFWS), Alicia Parlette (USFWS), Hilary Cooley (USFWS), Lydia Allen (USFS), Cecily Costello (MFWP), Jennifer Fortin-Noreus (USFWS), Kerey Barnowe-Meyer (NPT). Dave Ausband (UI Coop Unit-new)
- Science subcommittee formed last summer
- Objectives: Have Short-term and long term goals
- Short term:
  - DNA/camera survey (USFWS) – initiate, then continue
    - Status – initiated
    - Future – continuing in MT
  - Verified location database – finalize, populated, keep updated
    - Status – in progress
    - Future - continuous
  - Conflict database – finalize, populate, keep updated

- Status – in progress
    - Future - continuous
  - MFWP postdoc at UM (Sarah Sells) - modeling connectivity areas
    - Status – initiated, in progress
    - Future – 2 years
- U of I Montana project using existing data on grizzly bear use of habitats, we will use results to accomplish some of our goals
- Long Term:
  - Habitat modeling and monitoring (to be informed by postdoc and Resource Selection Function (RSF) as well as other new research, ex. Wayne Kaseworm efforts, as available)
    - Status – pending
    - Future – at least 2 years out
  - BMU mapping – within the Recovery Zone, this is a USFWS function, but it will likely benefit from new information provided by the postdoc analysis
    - Status – pending
    - Future – USFWS dependent, but likely at least 2 years out
  - Human attitudes survey (ex. MFWP and Cabinet Yaak Ecosystem efforts) – this has been done in MT, and the report by Costello et al. is available. It could be valuable to replicate for the BE, and should be relatively easy to replicate, if we follow a similar methodology. Powerful to evaluate effectiveness of I&E efforts are over time withing the BE.
    - Status – pending
    - Future – unknown
  - Identification of habitat outside the recovery zone (to be informed by postdoc)
    - Status – pending
    - Future – at least 2 years out
- Update from Hillary Cooley on SSA (Species Status Assessment) useful document that has current research on grizzly bears, 5 year review recommended no change in the lower 48.
- **Other discussions:**
  - Ongoing Monitoring Efforts that might document bears
  - SSA ( Species Status Assessment) complete – current science
  - UM/MFWP predictive conflict map. Will have a predictive conflict projection for the Bitterroot valley, riparian areas and the foothills are particularly important.
  - IEO subcommittee collaboration opportunities.
- Next meeting will be early October

### **SW MT DNA Project – Jennifer Fortin-Noreus**

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Partners Conducting Genetic Sampling for Grizzly Bear Research in Montana
- Objective to Document presence of grizzly bears in SW Montana outside current distributions

- This project aims to collect data that will assist biologists in understanding more about the grizzly bears that have been dispersing throughout southwest Montana over the past decade.
- Crews from project Partners: USFWS, Defenders of Wildlife, Lolo NF
- Will complete 2021 DNA/Camera Survey
  - Non-invasive survey will use temporary barbed-wire corrals and remote cameras, with a scent lure to attract bears to the sites
  - The hair samples collected are then used for genetic analysis.
- Time Frame will be Mid may-end of August
- Proposed sites for 2021 will occur on National Forest System lands in southwest Montana, between the Bitterroot recovery zone and the estimated current distribution of populations in the Northern Continental Divide and Greater Yellowstone ecosystems.
  - The primary study areas include the Beaverhead Mountains, Pioneer Mountains, Pintler Range, Anaconda Range, Flint Creek Range, John Long Mountains, Sapphire Mountains, Lower Clark Fork, and Ninemile Divide. Big Hole
- Future Actions:
  - Coordination Needs
  - Outreach Needs

### **G-bear Habitat Mapping, Concept, and Discussion – Wayne Kaseworm**

- Habitat mapping directly related to grizzly bear habitat in the bitterroot
- Presentation to conservation organizations, talked to major foundation that may have interest in this as well. From stand point of foundation we didn't hit the funding cycle right, they will be looking for new project this summer or this fall, was some interest. Hopefully later this summer they will be asking for a more detailed proposal. Basically consistorial presentation. Concept is to develop a remote sensing based grizzly bear habitat map for the bitterroot this would be done by a graduate student not an agency.
- Mapping would be similar to something we have already done here and essentially extending further south and developing new mapping. Questions is where do you "stop".
- Looking for funding for project.

### **Discussion on the Proposal for Change to the IGBC – JJ Teare and Sandi Fisher**

- Winter meeting discussions of being more affective and help conservation affects to delisting and recovery
- What can we do within sub-committees, increase agencies, public and partners
- How can we work together with research projects and science and fill the gaps we all have to do a better job managing grizzly bears.
- No need to directly change
- Need to keep local, best way to communicate and share

Sandi:

- All sub committees had similar comments

- Suggestions in room for improvements in some aspects with communication and coordination's across all eco systems
- Consensus, a lot of value with local connections with communities and with some changes we could lose that
- Decision makers that attend these meetings and there was concern if we re-categorize how we tackle these subject we might lose some of these decision makers and lose some of the momentum we have.
- One size fits all doesn't always work, different landscape and different communities some things may work for some and not for others.
- Wasn't a lot of clarity on what the goal is for making the changes, what exactly is broke that needs to be fixed.
- Next meeting in June, need to circle around and discuss what needs to be addressed and what better that might be accomplished and restructure that might be proposed.

JJ:

- One of the restructure comments overall was just to take a look
- Concept was instead of a sub-committee approach have teams across each eco-system with local representation per area. Smaller groups.

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 May 28<sup>th</sup>, @ 1:10 MST (12:10 pst) to 4:30pm MST (1530 pst)

**Public Session – Welcome and Agenda Review – JJ Teare, Chair**  
 Public can type any questions/comments into chatbox and we will get to those...

**Agency Reports – G-bear Conservation Plans for 2021**

**Salmon Challis NF**

Chuck Marks:

- About a year ago, grizzly bear observation a year ago, east of Leadore, ID near Grizzly Hill off of Continental Divide trail, 75 miles southeast of 'may be present' map
- Increasing information & outreach efforts along Continental Divide trail, informing folks that bears are in the area
- Paused forest revision process a year ago due to controversy of identify list of species of conservation concern. Work on relationship with stakeholders. This has been halted by COVID.

**Bitterroot NF – no updates (Matt Anderson not present)**

**Nez Perce Clearwater NF**

Cheryl Probert:

- Talking to guides to work on food sanitation around bears, identifying needs of bear resistant containers
- The forest now has a 'may be present map'
- Currently updating and finalizing forest plan revision. Working through consultation process. Hope to have EIS out this fall. Hoping that this time next year, we will be making a final decision.

### **Lolo NF-**

Greg Gustina, Planning Staff Officer:

- New forest biologist, Chad Bell
- Longtime biologists helping with bear snare work with US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Reconsult on forest plan, biological opinion later this summer
- Chad Bell is working on relocation plan for Lolo. Up to this point, the Lolo did not have a plan for relocating grizzly bears in the forest. Legislation approved in Montana to inform communities of bear movement.

### **Sawtooth NF**

Jim DeMaagd:

- Do not have grizzly bears yet. Sawtooth recreational area issued a bear food storage order last year as educational order. Issues with nuisance bears in campgrounds & dispersed areas. Visitor use have increase 500% in the last 10 years. Many users may not have right etiquette about how to store their food. This year we will start citing. Metrics will come later of how the food storage order is going.

### **Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks**

Jamie Jonkel:

- No recent bear activity in Bitterroot this year, last year we sure did! Grizzly showed up in town of Lolo, bow hunter ran into the same bear. Bear report outside of Missoula in Miller Creek area. Grizzly working north hills out of Missoula. Several bear reports, were not able to verify.
- Closest to Bitterroot in Rock Creek area in the Flint range. Busy doing education & outreach. Successful education programs with Corvallis, Victor & Lolo Schools.
- Work group with Bitterroot disposal, a couple agency folks & community members. We got 6 bear resistant containers donated to Bitterroot disposal for high school students to test out of Corvallis/Victor HS.
- Working on mapping to identify bear buffer zones. Busy documenting relocation sites. Need to approve this proposal with FWP commission.

### **Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game- Jen Bruns, JJ Teare**

Jen Bruns:

- Bear aware message- bear ID brochure, hunting in Grizzly country, last confirmed grizzly bear activity in 2019. No confirmed sightings in the Clearwater in the last year. Several press releases on our website reminding hunters & recreationists that bears are



emerging from their dens in March/April. Emails sent out to bear hunters reminding them to be bear aware.

JJ Teare:

- We are dedicated to following up on potential grizzly bear sightings. We have a new trap that can handle a grizzly bear if we need to address grizzly bear issues in a safe manner. We will be in touch with the USFWS if/when we do have grizzly bear confirmations. We have a wide camera grid for wolf cameras. We put out 150 cameras, saw over 2,000 black bears on our regional cameras last year. We place cameras in June and pick up in October. Two years ago we picked up grizzly 927 on 3 of our cameras.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** – Sandi Fischer/Ben

Jennifer Fortin-Noreus:

- SW Montana DNA project
  - We are opportunistically putting out hair snares & cameras. Hoping to get DNA off bears to find out where the bears are coming from. Public reports are helpful. We are not going into wilderness, we have stations set up on USFS property. We will have reports at the fall meeting regarding camera information. The DNA will take longer to get results back.

**Nez Perce Tribe** – Kerey Barnowe-Meyer - No Updates, 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

**County Perspectives** – Lemhi, Ravalli, Clearwater/Idaho

Rick Winkle from Clearwater County:

- No report

Brad Smith:

- Contract with People & Carnivores (P&C)
  - The goal is to have P&C reach out to state parks, solid waste and other agencies to minimize conflicts with people and wildlife. Identifying what needs to be done and how much is it going to cost? Develop funding and a plan to move forward.

**Public Q&A and Comments** – Jen Bruns moderator

- Notes will be available on IGBC website
- Where is the lawsuit going regarding to bear baiting? JJ Teare - Still in process.

**Other Business**

**Vice Chair:** Sandi Fischer nominated, Chuck Marks second nominated, all were in favor.

- Sandi Fischer elected as Vice Chair

**Next Meeting:** We hope to meet in person up on Lochsa this fall (September or October). Possibly an overnight or one-day meeting. Less than one-mile from Lochsa Lodge along river.

**Wrap up:** Will send these notes out to the group.

**Adjourn**