

NCDE Spring 2014 Meeting Minutes

April 23, 2014

Meeting called to order at 10:30

- Gary Bertellotti FWP Chairman- Discussion of additions or changes to agenda.
- Introduction of Chip Weber, FS FNF Supervisor. Will not be able to act as vice chairman. Deb Mucklow will take on duties. Gavel was passed to Deb.

General Business

Conservation Strategy Plan

- **Chris Servheen** - Document 4 years in progress, out for public comment last year (2500 form , 50 with content) , incorporating comments document should be out this summer. Adequate regulatory management.
- **Joe Krueger** – Flathead National Forest Plan Revision Team Leader. FS is planning on including the Conservation Strategy Plan as part of its proposed action on revising the FNF forest Plan as well as amending the KNF, HNF, LNF and L&C NFs. Scoping will occur in late 2014 and then approximately 1 year (late 2015) to a draft EIS with a late 2016 completion. Public participation will be included in the Amendments. Obtaining baseline of affected environments, challenges include how other forests (Helena) are now working on the travel plan. Habitat base management criteria discussion, there will be a habitat workshop before the conservation strategy is finalized.

Five Factors Threat Analysis

- **Chris Servheen** - Habitat population threats and the adequate regulatory framework that is needed. Threats analysis will begin 2015, will show if species are at threat, if no effects then propose to delist and would be completed by late 2015. Decision to delist would not be made until 2016. All players would have to sign the Conservation Strategy Plan to show they would follow management and that would be considered as adequate regulatory framework.

New High School Grizzly Bear Lesson plan

- **Laurie Evarts** - Allowing students to make their own decisions from looking at data sets and science from the Yellowstone Ecosystem. They would watch power points and let them come to a conclusion of what it will look like when the states take back management. Information sheets on Bear Trust International. Working on a Bear Trailer for the SW. Working on graphics and what was learned from IGBC and what the message to get across is. Trailer donated by Counter Assault, their logo will be on it. Question on how this program be disseminated. List of principals and follow up talks.

IGBC products

- Colleen Matt- New bear spray videos have links for videos for presentations. Brochures that are updated are available and are downloadable from the IGBC website. GBOP comprehensive bear

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safety handout also available or call Ellen. Discussion of probable budget cuts and what they might affect. Upcoming interviews for evaluations to present to the IGBC committee. Recommendations from 2012 included funding full time seasonal field staff through grants; securing attractants through grants and websites, testing and certifications; working with communities, science based curriculum, website; increase hunters use of bear spray and PSA 30/1 minute videos. Executive committee to meet in June so please communicate importance of these programs to a representative of the committee. Interviews and survey monkey sent through email will be used.

NCDE Information, Education and existing opportunities

- SEC, Jamie Jonkel, Tim Manley have started an informal work group on Sanitation I and E. Discussion on effectiveness of bear spray and any anecdotal evidence of success. O and G are promoting it within the backcountry. Hunter education seems to be successful at getting the word out about bear spray and knowing how to use it. Increase in awareness and accessibility. Forest Service shared how 'living in bear country' is being used at school programs and environmental education center and has been successful from a young age. Bear ranger program is also successful. Most incidents on the RM Front have been from hunter carcass retrieval and using guns and not bear spray. Backcountry issues with carcasses are still an issue so more education with hunters and carcasses. How to reach the different generation and education on proper meat processing and how bears may be keying in on food source. Food storage dates have changed on RM Front from Dec 1 to Dec 15 to deal with more attractants. More research on science communication is needed, just sharing info doesn't work. Success stories may help get information across better. Is the reliability of bear spray and expiration dates being discussed? Forest Service bear rangers are educating and working with campgrounds and hosts to prevent problems before they occur. Counter Assault is now contracting out Gary Moses (retired GNP) to go to sports shows to discuss effectiveness. Bear resistant cans (Kodiak), how do people get them if they want them? Electric fencing provides instantaneous solutions for people with encounters. Tribal lands working on education at science fair and booths, and gaining more public acceptance. On the reservations it seems that affordability is the limiting factor, people like things that are free. Sanitation is in the regulations now. Bear cans are approximately \$300 with BFI, extra \$10 for replacement and maintenance. Bear spray education does not appear to be effective at this time. Would like more help nationally with chicken issues. Electric fencing is working but problems being moved elsewhere. Regulatory question that if people are being educated and they are not in compliance should they be fined, especially with many agencies involved. Grey area with livestock versus chickens. Mandatory tax but not enforced for some livestock or commercial entities. Wardens can issue citations but there is no backing from county attorney. Recognition could be given to garbage companies and places like Murdochs to show appreciation. Rattlesnake garbage compliance is taking effect this year, previously just warnings. GNP's food order, has work force to have public contact with all campers and is showing to be effective, but

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also have enforcement authority. Also there is no dispersed camping in the park so makes things easier. Annual budget of \$1.8 mil versus \$180,000 goes to I and E and the majority going to the park so not a lot left to go to hunters, ranchers etc. Maybe looking into non-profits to help with I and E. Full page advertisement for electric fencing is upcoming and a reimbursement coupon will be available.

- **Action item - By fall meeting, recommendations for nominations for people who are successfully implementing use of grizzly control.**

Spring Activity update

- **Mike Madel**- Snowmobiling in Badger 2 Medicine River Drainages. Illegal activity from Forest Service lands, over ridge into the Badger Two Medicine area. Area that is used by female grizzly bear and young. Discussion of hibernating grizzly bears and snowmobiling activity. Den abandonment, displacement and physiological stress may be issues. FS Amendment 24, groomed to May 15 so late use is expected. If den site is identified should be protected. Travel plan for RM Badger 2 Med is in effect and enforcement is occurring. Look into using aircraft, saturation patrol and pre planning to help with enforcement. Sharing of den sites needs to be shared within agencies
- **Kraig Glazier** -Wildlife Services – NCDE fringes, grizzly bears in areas feeding on carcasses, more education is needed.
- **Dan Carney** – Two depredations this spring, calf and cow. One bear euthanized. Hiring one full time employee for conflict prevention. Working with landowners for garbage etc.
- **John Waller** (GNP). Took in grizzly that killed calf in Eureka released into North Fork drainage.
- **Tim Manley** - Grizzly North of Columbia Falls killed guinea hens. Traps and cameras set up, sheep killed ½ mile north of location. Large adult male no collar. Two other calls in Star Meadows in trash and there was an encounter in the Many Lakes area. One flight in Whitefish range, only 1 out of 6 had come out. Request for garbage cans and fencing. Five wire fencing for 1000 feet with Defenders of Wildlife in Salish range in Pinkham area at a pig farm. Augmentation and trend trapping starting in June.
- **Jamie Jonkel**- Carcass disposal and pick up in affect and being brought to composting site in Drummond. Agricultural bears there all season. Bear Aware events recently were successful. In Blackfoot, there are 4 collared bears. Issues with two sub-adults in the Helmville area. In summer, area has a range rider to deal with issues.

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- **Stacy Courville** – Many bears in valley but no captures. Flew trend bear captured in fall, still in den in Missions, now on the move, should have two yearlings. No plans to research trap this year. Received money for 4 more research collars this year or next.
- **Mike Madel**- Flights for Rocky Mountain Front (RMF) show bears are out in agricultural areas even though not green yet. Currently bear proofing chicken shed, calving grounds, and sheep bedding areas. No correlation between carcass (**redistribution**) versus depredation areas. Redistribution from boneyards is working as there are no encounters and proper signing is occurring. Nitrogen is related to protein or meat, and data from tissue samples (hair and blood) from captured bears show this. Highest levels are found outside of the NCDE, which is why RMF bears are the largest because of high nitrogen component. Infanticide was occurring on RMF, some females having litters every two years not three and may be missing out on a year of mother learning time. Alberta has high ungulate road kill (elk and deer) and removed them by helicopter to other public areas that were not closed. Has ceased the program.

Livestock Reimbursement

- **George Edwards**– 444-5609. Grizzly bear loss compensations board program. Ranchers can be reimbursed. Fowl and bison, crop damage, beehives and feed are not covered. \$200000 each year and restricted to death loss only. Investigations are required by USDA Wildlife Services. FWS is not covered under state law. Defenders of Wildlife are supplying a grant for areas where high depredation is occurring. Can work on projects of livestock prevention such as electric fencing. Redistribution program only works with private land owners buy in. 135,000 cattle are in habitat in NCDE (not just recovery) and only 23 confirmed losses (could be a lot more, some kills are from wolves).

Summary of captures and distribution of radio collared bears in 2013 and current analysis on survival with known fate data.

- **Rick Mace** - Update on population monitoring, research and management captures. Research shows 32 (19 females, 14 males), and management 27 (11 males, 9 females), 29 radioed males, 9 management female . 78 total bears. Independent female survival rates are a major factor or criteria in determining monitoring. Should be above 90% for a stable population. Survival Unit is a once a month occurrence (alive, dead, censored). 40 females were studied in 2013. Three categories of survival estimates to show trends since 2004. Denning chronology paper will be published soon, discusses change in locations and time of denning might be due to climate change. Highest levels of denning exiting is occurring now (second /third week of April)

Swan Valley thesis presentation

- **Mark Ruby** - Movements and resting patterns around open roads and structures. Habitation selection using defined availability. Bears farthest away from structures and roads during the

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day (1300). Model variability for habitat selection for density of open and closed roads. Sidebars; Amendment 19 is working.

Isotope Results to date in the NCDE

- **Justin Teisberg** –Helping to understand the mechanisms that help contribute to healthy populations is critical to recovery and persistence. Tracks the ratios of heavy to light atoms in hair and blood that will detect food sources. Hypotheses: Management status, area, age and sex class, seasonality. Diet of a 50% plant and 50% meat put them in the ideal 28% protein range. Continuing monitoring and collecting hair, blood and BIA measurement.

Projects upcoming

- **Tabitha Graves** –1. Assessment of distribution of density throughout the system. 2. Completion of draft family tree (900 bears from 1998 to 2010). Look at dispersion, in correlation to road density and riparian habitat. 3. Working with northern Alberta scientists with hair snags to design a better sampling plan. 4. Pilot project to look at huckleberries phenology and climate change effects (and post fire effects) and pollination for invasive species.
- **Action Items - Next meeting December 2, 2014, location to be determined. John Waller to visit with Kym Hall on vice chair from GNP.**
- **Comments.** Snowmobiling needing to be addressed in the Conservation Strategy Plan; Disconnect between closure dates across districts and areas/agencies; Also being aware of emerging technology in recreation; Multi-species approach for grizzly bear and lynx and wolverines; Draft Conservation Strategy does not have legal habitat based recovery descriptions; Train mortalities and BNP to reduce mortalities and a need for adequate regulatory mechanisms;

Adjourn 3:20