

22 November 2016

North Cascades Ecosystem Subcommittee Meeting North Bend, WA

Subcommittee:

Bob Everitt (WDFW, vice chair)
Wayne Kasworm (USFWS)
Dianne Freeman (USFS)
Mark Miller (USFWS)
Jason Kuiken (USFS)
Jack Oelfke (NPS)
Tony Hamilton (BCMoE)

Technical Team:

John Rohrer (USFS, chair)
Anne Braaten (NPS)
Jesse Plumage (USFS)

Other participants:

Lorna and Darrel Smith (Western Wildlife Outreach)
Chris Morgan (Chris Morgan Wildlife)
Vanessa Lopez (Defenders of Wildlife)

Information/Education/Outreach:

Ann Froschauer (USFWS)

Audience:

Rob Smith (National Parks Conservation Association)
Graham Taylor (NPCA)
Julia Tesch (NPCA)
Bren Phillips
Eric P.

EIS Update: Jack Oelfke and Mark Miller

We hope to release the Draft EIS on January 13, 2017 for public review. Eight public meetings (open house format) are planned, four on each side of the mountains. They will be scheduled once the notice has gone out in the Federal Register, but we anticipate they will be held during February.

Outreach has been extensive, to a broad range of stakeholders. Jack and/or Mark are available to speak to groups on request.

Outreach update: Ann Froschauer

There were two proposals for this year's IGBC I&E funds:

- Fourth grader Bear Ambassadors on east side of Cascades. Selected fourth-grade ambassadors would work with the NPS and USFS to put together bear education for their classrooms.
- Bear Smart King County. Uses black bears as surrogates for grizzly bears. Human-bear conflict is growing in Seattle's exurbia, as development continues to grow into superb low-elevation bear habitat. They are working on gaining ownership among people new to the area, to prevent conflict.

During the discussion there was consensus that both are worthy projects. One targets fourth-graders on the edge of the east side of the ecosystem, the other addresses urgent needs for public education in the fast-growing Seattle-Bellevue metropolitan area. It was agreed to put both proposals forward, to support the EIS process.

Grizzly Bear Recovery Office update: Wayne Kasworm

To date there are over 100,000 comments on the revised recovery strategy, released for public review in March. The revised strategy is focused on the maintenance of a stable population, the range in numbers comprising the stable population, and updates to methods for monitoring.

Western Wildlife Outreach Program update: Lorna and Dale Smith, Chris Morgan

The Seattle exurbs are growing at an astonishing rate, with approximately 65,000 new people/year moving into King County. They come from all over the US and India, and very few have experience of living with wildlife, much less bears. During 2014-16, the WDFW fielded over 2,700 human-black bear conflict calls. (The WDFW believes roughly 40 bears were responsible for the calls). The need for public education is burgeoning along with the human population.

The WWO has worked with the USFWS, WDFW, Cabela's and IGBC to equip the new bear education trailer. During 2016 the WWO has done 41 events, using their bear trailer for 26 events. Some of the venues include Earth Day in Sequim, the Bangor Navy Base, Cabela's, Edmonds College Pow Wow, middle schools, Issaquah Highlands Day, Redmond Microsoft Campus and Hispanic outreach in southern Washington orchard country. They have worked with the WDFW's Karelian Bear Dog program and provide education at the Bear Week events at Woodland Park Zoo.

The BearSmart King County website is up and with help from the USFWS, bear and wolf safety brochures are available in Spanish.

Chris Morgan's "Wanted: Grizzly Bears?" video has thus far been seen over 150,000 times on Vimeo and is on National Geographic's website. It was seen by 12,000 people at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center this year. He integrates it into talks he gives about the North Cascades. His next movie short will highlight the augmentation effort in the Cabinet Mountains, with respect to the North Cascades. It will include some advocacy for grizzly bears and recovery in the NCE.

Update on various non-governmental organization activities with respect to grizzly bears: Vanessa Lopez, Defenders of Wildlife

The Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Coalition was started in early 2015. Their aim is to work with the public, highlight the EIS process and get people engaged. They have created/disperse materials to help increase awareness, including bear identification cards, fact sheets and coloring pages. They have done 19 events, some of them in conjunction with the WWO. These include community meetings, fairs, Northwest Trek Bear Camp and the Sultan River Return of the Salmon Festival. Their outreach is primarily the west side of the mountains, and primarily urban.

In May 2016 the Friends group commissioned a public opinion poll by Tulchin Research. The poll of 800 registered Washington voters found support for grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades as follows: 84% among Democrats, 70% among Republicans and 74% among Independents.

Public comments/discussion:

Rob Smith: the importance of public education can't be overstated. The question is not which of 2 funding proposals to put forward, but where are the other 5?

ⁱ Agency acronyms: National Park Service (NPS); US Forest Service (USFS); US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW); British Columbia Ministry of Environment (BCMoE)