

BITTERROOT ECOSYSTEM SUBCOMMITTEE

~ ~ Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee – IGBC ~ ~
Spring Meeting – May 29, 2014
University of Montana Student Center – 3rd floor

In Attendance:

Michele Windsor	Kamiah, ID	Nez Perce – Clearwater NF
Ben Conard	Northern Idaho	USFWS
Stefani Spencer	Salmon, ID	Salmon-Challis NF
Mary Hammer	Salmon, ID	Salmon-Challis NF
Chris Servheen	Missoula, MT	USFWS
Jamie Jonkel	Missoula, MT	MFWP
Brittani Johnson	Missoula, MT	MFWP
Chuck Bartlebaugh	Missoula, MT	Be Bear Aware.org
Erin Edge	Missoula, MT	Defenders of Wildlife
Pat Sweeney	Ninemile, MT	Ninemile Wildlife
Christine Wilcox		Natural Res. Defense Council
Ellen Davis	Missoula, MT	USFS/IGBC
Scott Jackson	Missoula, MT	FS Regional Office
Colleen Matt	Missoula, MT	WMI
Julie King	Hamilton, MT	

ASSIGNMENTS FOR EASY REFERENCE, they are also in the context of notes in bold and italics:

- ***Chris Servheen will send out the “verification protocols for grizzly bear occupancy” and a report on Black Bear movement Recovery to share with the group***
- Create a list of “hotspots” or “key areas” where we know there is predator activity and where we would mostly likely need the help of a “Bear Aware Working Group” and perhaps even a “Bear Ranger” position. ***This was not assigned to anyone but I would ask that Erin and Jamie follow up and ask for this information.***
- ***Erin Edge will send an incentive program brochure out to the group.***
- A proposal was made that the subcommittee should recognize efforts from Felstet Disposal and Chuck Keller of the Ninemile Wildlife Movement Working Group with a plaque or something. ***Jamie and Chris have a foot print cast of a grizzly that they will fashion into an award and let the subcommittee know how we can help.***
- ***Ellen Davis will route a template for signs, they are expensive and have to order a lot so she will see if other committees want to participate.***
- ***Chris Servheen will wordsmith bullet 5 and 6 and add some language about corridor ID and linkage between ecosystems (example: Carrollton/Davis Creek to Lantern Ridge linkage).***

Assignments Continued...

- ***Ellen and Chris Servheen will look into a map with all the subcommittee territories on it and send to group or post on the website.***

NOTES BY AGENDA ITEM:

Welcome and introductions – Overview of Charter and History of Committee – Julie King Chair:

After introductions the group refreshed the charter and history of the IGBC committee, and talked in particular about the role of the Bitterroot Subcommittee. Since grizzly bears are not yet documented in the Bitterroot Ecosystem, education and outreach about “Bear aware” is a focus for our committee. Our main charge is getting the public and communities in gear to deal with present black bear issues and predators in general (use of bear proof garbage receptacles, sanitation, use of bear spray etc..) and in the mind set for the eventual natural re-establishment of grizzlies in the Bitterroot Ecosystem.

The travels of “Ethel the Grizzly Bear and mechanism/process for reporting grizzly bear sightings in the Bitterroot Ecosystem” – Chris Servheen:

Chris Servheen gave an update on “Ethel the Grizzly Bear” who was caught and released with a radio collar in the fall of 2013 in the Upper Load Creek area. She has been coming west and observed around Wallace, ID early this spring. Since then she has been coming further east and south of I-90 into the St. Regis area and south of Alberton. She was not observed with any cubs this spring and has not been in the Bitterroot Ecosystem.

Ethel is 22 years old and active, but she does not seem to be a representative female grizzly to study. Ethel is a big traveler and logs a lot of miles. She doesn’t appear to stay in any one spot and seems to always be on the go. It is interesting that she does not have cubs this year and does not make more of an average circle in the territory she is covering. Ethel’s collar will eventually drop off but she will be continued to be studied as long as it is active.

The criteria for “Grizzly Bear Occupancy” are observing two female grizzlies with offspring in the ecosystem at the same time, or one female grizzly with offspring for two seasons. So far this criteria has not been met in the Bitterroot Ecosystem. There have been transient male grizzly bears and foot prints observed in the Sapphire mountain range near the East Fork in Sula, MT. Jamie updated the group on grizzly bear activity in the Sapphire Range. Male grizzly bears have been observed and tracks recorded in the East Fork near Sula Montana. The bears are transient and so far no recorded females or offspring

Chris Servheen said he will send out the “verification protocols for grizzly bear occupancy” and a report on Black Bear movement Recovery to share with the group. Jamie Jonkel also stated that he can test tree-rub fur if any is gathered by agency folks or other trust worthy sources etc..

Chris talked about the ability to put out some hair snare bait stations in order to do some DNA sampling and see if any grizzly bears show up in it. If there was a positive sample collected the next steps might be to put out some motion sensing cameras and bait.

New “Bear Aware” working group update in Bitterroot Valley – Erin Edge and Jamie Jonkel

Sanitation issues and working with Bitterroot Disposal - Examples of sanitation efforts and progress:

- **Felstet Disposal and Republic Services and possible recognition?**
- **Ninemile Wildlife Movement Working Group and RAC grant for Sixmile Drainage Area.**
- **Status of bear-resistant dumpsters placed along hwy 12 in 2005**

Erin and Jamie talked about local “Bear Aware groups” coming together to address problems in communities to educate and address issues with bird feeders, small livestock, and garbage cans. The State Game Wardens do not have the time and resources to address all the issues. A group called “Bitterroot Bears” has tentatively come together and a website called “Five Valley Bears” is being launched to cover several of these efforts. The focus will be on information and education for all predators and how to live with them and keep ourselves and them safe. Erin is sending out some emails and seeing who would like to join.

The group had a discussion about the benefits of asking the agencies in our subcommittee to create a list of “hotspots” or “key areas” where we know there is predator activity and where we would mostly likely need the help of a “Bear Aware Working Group” and perhaps even a “Bear Ranger” position. ***This was not assigned to anyone but I would ask that Erin and Jamie follow up and ask for this information.***

Felstet Disposal is an example of a trash disposal company partner who has embraced the idea of bear proof trash disposal. The company was dumping trash on a large concrete surface and then using a backhoe to put it in a truck. After talking about how to make that more viable in predator ecosystems Felstet took the idea and ran with it and came up with a better system as well as a design for bear proof trash cans. A proposal was made that the subcommittee should recognize these efforts with a plaque or something. ***Jamie and Chris have a foot print cast of a grizzly that they will fashion into an award and let the subcommittee know how we can help.*** We discussed the same for Chuck Keller of the Ninemile Wildlife Movement Working Group for his efforts in Conservation education/information.

Erin Edge will send an incentive program brochure out to the group.

Grizzly Bear Activity in the Ninemile Valley and Sapphire Range – Jamie Jonkel

Jamie updated the group on grizzly bear activity in the Sapphire Range. Male grizzly bears have been observed and tracks recorded in the East Fork near Sula Montana. The bears are transient and so far no recorded females or offspring.

In 2001 MFWP trapped and radio collared a young adult male in the Ninemile Drainage. Toward the end of the summer that bear began breaking and entering buildings and was removed. Since that time the department has fielded several verified reports of lone bears and at least one reproducing female. Several radio collared bears captured by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribe have spent some time along the Ninemile/Reservation Divide.

Information, Education, and Outreach tools available through the IGBC – Colleen Matt

Colleen Matt, “Wildlife Management Institute” (WMI) subcontractor, updated the group on IGBC information, education and outreach (IE&O). During 2012 Chris Smith and Colleen helped IGBC subcommittees write IE&O plans. The Bitterroot Ecosystem plan included continued focus on sanitation and bear proof trashcans/dumpsters, as well as developing a strategy for establishing connectivity between ecosystems and “bear safe passages” using sanitation efforts.

Tod McKay, Bitterroot Public Affairs Officers will be the “Information and Education” (I&E) lead for the Bitterroot Subcommittee but was unable to join us for the meeting. Colleen is meeting with Tod and the new West Fork Ranger Ryan Domsalla to get them up to speed on what will be needed for the committee.

The IGBC Executive Committee grants \$36,000 every year for IE&O, and the Bitterroot Subcommittee has not submitted any requests for three years. The grant program announcement will be out in October, and proposals should be submitted by November 1, 2014. The group discussed some items that would qualify for grant money; I&E materials, staffing such as a “Bear Ranger,” project possibilities like electric fencing etc...

Colleen talked about the effectiveness of our messaging and how personal contacts go a long way. Sharing a Bear Ranger position may be the most effective thing we could fund with grant money.

Colleen talked about the “Bear Trust International High School lesson plan: “Grizzly Bears: Ready for Delisting?” for schools and about a BTI link online which schools can use. <http://beartrust.org/grizzly-bear-delisting-stem-lesson>.

Colleen passed out Bear Spray brochures, Grizzly Bear ID cards, and bookmarks. She also talked about a 1-minute Bear Spray Training video and a 30-second PSA about Bear Spray for hunters featuring Craig Boddington. The goal is to educate hunters to use bear spray instead of lethal means. More information on the IGBC website. <http://www.igbconline.org/index.php/safety-in-grizzly-country/bear-spray>

There is a certified list of bear resistant products on the IGBC website. Scott Jackson has contacts to perform courtesy inspections and sticker non-certified trash receptacles. Colleen can post stuff for our subcommittee on the WMI website. Patti Sowka is also working on getting a map of food storage orders on the webpage eventually.

Colleen sent out a survey monkey survey to the group, hopefully most of you had a chance to complete it.

We also talked about signage and want to consider order and posting signs such as “Know your Bears” and voluntary food storage. ***Ellen Davis will route a template for signs, they are expensive and have to order a lot so she will see if other committees want to participate.***

Review of the IGBC Five Year Plan 2010-2014 – Ellen Davis

Ellen passed out the current 5 year plan and mentioned that it has five main parts:

1. Social and Political Aspects of Managing and Recovering Grizzly Bears
2. Linkage
3. Attractant Storage/Food-Conditioning
4. Motorized Access Management
5. Population and Habitat Research/Monitoring

We looked specifically at the list under the Bitterroot Subcommittee and talked about some edits to make. Ellen Davis will head up adding:

- Report credible sightings to USFWS
- Focus on Information and Education
- We talked briefly about the benefits of getting a “Minimum Requirements Design Guide MRDG blanket authorization for grizzly bear monitoring (hair snares, camera etc..) in the wilderness for both R1 and R4 by the Regional Foresters.
- Facilitate/coordinate with Forests on Food Storage orders and consistency
- Bullet 4 add “local organizations”
- Add a bullet about I&E for living and recreating in Bear Country. PSA?
- ***Chris Servheen will wordsmith bullet 5 and 6 and add some language about corridor ID and linkage between ecosystems (example: Carrolton/Davis Creek to Lantern Ridge linkage).***

The group had some discussion on definitions of recovery and what triggers consultation outside of recovery zones. Ben Conard and Scott Jackson will share this on a future agenda.

We talked about partners and existing groups that we should make contact with such as “Vital Ground” and “Friends of Lolo Peak”.

Future of the Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee: Ellen Davis and all

- **Validation from the subcommittee on the funding and work they would like to see from our NFWF partnership agreement**
- **Review available dollars and projects that could be accomplished**
- **Brainstorm ideas for projects/programs**
- **Recruitment and retention of members.**

Ellen Davis gave out two handouts on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grizzly Bear Conservation Fund. There is a one pager for internal use and a four pager for external partners. Ellen talked about the three priorities/themes for the fund:

1. Habitat Conservation:
 - a. The Bitterroot Ecosystem has project proposals for noxious weed treatment for \$50,000 a year for three years.
2. Promoting Co-existence and Reducing Mortality:
 - a. The Bitterroot Ecosystem has a \$5,000 per year proposal mainly for I&E materials.
3. Population Monitoring and Management:

- a. The Bitterroot Ecosystem does not have any funding proposal listed.

Ellen and Chris Servheen will look into a map with all the subcommittee territories on it and send to group or post on the website.

Next we discussed the viability of the Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee into the future. For member diversity it was suggested we recruit an outfitter representative or have an outfitter on the Bitterroot I&E Subcommittee. We discussed partners we should seek out such as the Continental Divide Subcommittee since we would have similar goals and may be able to meet them jointly. Also the Lemhi Restorative Collaborative in Idaho would be a great contact. It was also thought that the PAOs on the Forests in the ecosystem may be good contacts for the I&E subcommittee. Other groups to contact mentioned previously are Vital Ground, the Friends of Lolo Peak and potentially another would be the Center for Biodiversity.

There is also a Bear Aware Trailer that can come to various events, Chuck Keller runs it. Contact Jamie Jonkel for use.

Other items mentioned were that we should have VTC capability to have more participation and member cohesiveness.

Wrap up:

- Meeting potentially the week of October 6 or 16th?
- We would have VTC capability and potentially meet in Missoula