

Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

**Nov. 16/17, 2016**

**Cody, WY**

Members present:

Mary Erickson, Custer Gallatin National Forest

Melany Glossa, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Dan Wenk, Yellowstone National Park

Brian Nesvik, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Tricia O'Connor, Bridger-Teton National Forest

Frank van Manen, USGS Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team

Delissa Minnick, BLM – Wyoming

Jeff Gould, Acting, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Jodi Bush, USFWS, MT

Jennifer Fortin-Noreus, USFWS

Garth Smelser, Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Loren Grosskopf, Wyoming County Commissioners Association - Park Co

Joe Alexander, Shoshone National Forest

Tom Rice, Montana Association of Counties - Beaverhead County

Sue Consolo Murphy, Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway

Rick Hotaling, BLM, MT

Lee Miller, Fremont County Commissioner, ID

Gregg Losinski, ID Department of Fish and Game (I&E Chair)

Wayne Kasworm, FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Acting Coordinator

Mary D'Aversa, BLM – Idaho

Sandi Fisher, USFWS, ID

Sam Sheppard, MT FWP

Leander Watson, Shoshone Bannock Tribes

Jim White, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

**Welcome and Introductions: Mary Erickson**

Introductions and roll call

**Review Past Meeting Minutes: Mary Erickson**

*Brian Nesvik*-motion to approve draft meeting minutes from Spring 2016 meeting and Conservation Strategy Meeting minutes from Sept. 8, Oct. 3, Oct. 28, Nov. 4.

*Loren Grosskopf*-Second

Passed

All notes will be posted on the IGBC website.

**Conservation Strategy Edits: Jodie Bush**

This has been a long process, a tremendous, joint effort and we have come a long way. We had a couple outstanding issues we have been able to get to. We have reached agreement on the thing we have really struggled with. That is our collective goal that we are maintaining a stable population while using Chao2 as a long term average for the population estimate for the foreseeable future. FWS and the states have collectively worked on these edits and we've talked to our federal partners. I would like to go through those changes.

- Page 11 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet the change we are talking about is change to demographic criteria 1.
- Page 11 bullet 4, demographic criteria 1 should say 2
- 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet-managing for a stable population within the GYE DMA around 2002-2014 model average Chao2 estimate per demographic criterion 3
- Page 50 Conservation Strategy Population Standards-added this sentence," The goal of the strategy is to insure the population remains recovered in accordance with the recovery criteria by managing the grizzly bear population within the GYE DMA to at least within the confidence associated with the 2002-2014 model average Chao2 estimate for demographic criteria 3
- Page 53/54-This is a new one. At the bottom of page 52 it says "the foreseeable", and continues to the top of page 53, "future." That needs to be removed because the next sentence has that in it. The next edit is, "the IGBST may continue to investigate new methods for a population estimate as appropriate; however, the model average Chao2 will continue to be used for the foreseeable future.
- Page 61, table 4-the change is under number 3, population estimator-"the model Chao2 estimator will be used as a population measurement tool for the foreseeable future.
- Page 125 first paragraph "including adoption of a new population estimator without recalibration of the associated demographic objectives and standards that are based upon the estimator" ....will be deleted.
- Page 133—made no reference to Appendix H, in-depth description-did not reference it here and intend to
- Page 134 after tri-state MOA, add "and refer to Appendix H"

*Jeff Gould*-One of the key changes we made because of an issue with the longevity of our commitment, we made a change that says foreseeable future. New edits were based on best available science. We had a conversation on recalibration and decided that Chao2 is based on best available science. We wanted to make a commitment to use that for the foreseeable future and not change midstream. We dropped the notion of recalibration and inserted the notion of using Chao2 for the foreseeable future. It doesn't preclude best available science in future. The second topic was stability where we talked about population standards and managing for a stable population. We're not precluding the use of finding better science in the future. In Chapter 2, the population standard section there's a phrase, "The goal of the strategy used to be to maintain 500 grizzly bears. We went well beyond that to reflect what this group wanted to have commitment for, and that is for this period of time when population trajectory was relatively flat from 2002-2014. We have commitment to continue to manage that range to at least within the confidence interval of the 2002-2014 Chao2 estimate. It also relates to demographic criteria 3. This wording "at least" gives frame for the lower end. We have solid commitment about safeguards to make sure once a population does move downward that

there are safeguards to bring it back up. We wanted to make sure we were consistent with the recovery plan, use best available science, and a conservative management approach.

*Mary Erickson*-These are changes being proposed within the CS. This group had already approved the Conservation Strategy as it was written in its entirety, in order to have this conversation on the CS, we need a motion to open that up for consideration.

*Brian Nesvik*-I move we reopen the main body and all of the chapters of the CS in order to consider these additional edits.

*Loren Grosskopf*-second

Vote: passed

*Mary Erickson*-discussion on proposed edits?

*Tom Rice*-move bring edits forward for discussion

*Joe Alexander*-second

*Dan Wenk*-I appreciate the work that's gone into this. I believe that using Chao2 estimator into the foreseeable future provides a level of confidence in terms of the grizzly bear population, and I appreciate Jeff's comments about "at least" and the flexibility it gives. I do believe it still has a level of ambiguity about the long term framework under which grizzly bears will be managed, and I'm concerned it may not be as precise as the grizzly bear population deserves.

*Brian Nesvik*-I will be voting in support of this. This agreement may not reflect exactly the precise language or agreements any one entity may have desired, but I think it does reflect an agreement across a wide set of interests, considering a significant amount of public comment, and it really is a way to honor and celebrate a tremendous success story. I encourage the other members of this committee to join in supporting this motion and improving this Conservation Strategy so that FWS can move on as quickly as possible to delist Yellowstone population of grizzly bears.

*Mary Erickson*-I know in the meeting of Nov. 4 for the Forest Service, the challenge we were having about the language was whether the CS clearly spoke to the long term objectives for managing for a stable population. We were less concerned on recalibration because we feel that the language around best science and how you apply best science over time will speak to that. What we were looking for language that spoke to objectives for that stable population, and as we've looked at it, we would vote in favor also.

*Joe Alexander*-I commend the states and the Service for staying at this. We appreciate all the work because this is such a remarkable success story to celebrate. It insures the stability of the population for the foreseeable future, as far out as we can see

*Jodi Bush*-It's a wonderful testament that our partners, the states, Forest Service, Park Service, the counties, are all as appreciative of the process. The level of work and time that has been expended is tremendous. The Service feels that grizzly bears are recovered and look forward to delisting, and getting the CS passed and signed will allow us to do that.

*Leander Watson*-I just wanted to remind everyone that I am here as technical staff for tribes, and am not authorized to vote.

*Brian Nesvik*-Call for the question-roll call vote

Vote: FWS-MT/WY-Yes/Yes  
GTNP-Yes  
BTNF-Yes  
Shoshone NF-Yes  
B-D NF-Yes  
State-ID-Yes  
Counties-MT/ID/WY-Yes/Yes/Yes  
BLM-MT/ID/WY-Yes/Yes/Yes  
State-MT FWP-Yes  
WY Game and Fish-Yes  
FWS ID-Yes  
C-T NF-Yes  
YNP-No  
CGNF-Yes  
Shoshone Bannock-Abstain  
Wind River-not present  
Total: 18 Yes/1 No/ 1 Abstain

The motion carries. We have agreement on the Conservation Strategy.

### **Appendix C Updates: Jodie Bush**

We did not finish reviewing Appendix C several weeks ago. We have added on the first page, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, “The IGBST, will for the foreseeable future, use the protocol described in this appendix to annually estimate the population size within the demographic monitoring area and then set mortality limits inside the DMA for the following year based on the sliding scale in table 1.”

On the second page, 1<sup>st</sup> full paragraph will be removed-referring to recalibration language.

The last change is a clarification of the table to make it consistent with the table that is in the CS so they are both the same. A definition was added on total mortality “Documented known and probable grizzly bear mortalities from all causes including but are not limited to management removals, illegal kills, mistaken identity kills, self-defense kill, vehicle kills, natural mortalities, undetermined-cause mortalities, grizzly bear hunting, and a statistical estimate of the number of unknown/unreported mortalities.”

*Joe Alexander*-motion to move Appendix C forward for approval.

*Loren Grosskopf*-second

Call the question—to approve the edits and changes proposed for Appendix C and adopt it.

Opposed-Dan Wenk

This mimics the same vote as on the Conservation Strategy—18 for, 1 against.

The motion carries. Appendix C is approved.

#### **Delisting Process/Next Steps: Jodi Bush**

We are addressing comments we received in the reopening and moving forward with those in response to peer review comments. We are also still proceeding with the delisting process. Next steps will be reaching out to our partners for assistance in response to those comments as we move forward.

*Mary Erickson*-We hope to get the CS on the IGBC website the end of this week. We also need to set a date to get signatures for the IGBC timeframe. The next meeting is in Missoula in December. We realize not all the executives will make that meeting, but I will reach out to every entity that signs the strategy to talk about timeframes and other ways to get those signatures. I will determine if the execs will be at the IGBC and collect signatures of those not there.

#### **Conservation Strategy – overview of all areas of agreement: Jennifer Fortin-Noreus**

These are the major changes as of the last YES conference call on Nov. 4. We will get the track changes version online.

#### Conservation Strategy Revisions

- The Conservation Strategy will remain in effect for the foreseeable future, well beyond recovery and delisting. [Executive Summary, MOU, Chapter 1]
- The YGCC may recommend that the Service conduct a status review instead of submitting a petition for relisting. [Executive Summary, Chapter 6]
- The description of current population growth was changed from ‘stable to slightly increasing’ to ‘no statistical trend’ or ‘relatively flat population trajectory,’ to reflect recent data analysis by the IGBST. [Chapters 1 and 2]

#### Demographic Recovery Criterion #1

- Maintaining at least 500 bears in the GYE to assure the short-term genetic health of the population (Miller and Waits 2003). [Executive Summary]
- Maintain a minimum population size of 500 animals and at least 48 females with cubs-of-the-year within the DMA (Figure 1), as indicated by methods established in published, peer-reviewed scientific literature and calculated by the IGBST using the most updated Protocol, as posted on their website. A minimum population size of at least 500 animals within the DMA will assure short-term genetic health (Miller and Waits 2003). The estimate of total population size cannot drop below 500 in two three consecutive years or 48 females with cubs-of-the-year in three consecutive years. This estimate will be calculated using data obtained within the DMA shown in Figure 1. The 48 females

with cubs-of-the-year metric is a model-averaged number of documented unique females with cubs-of-the-year (see Monitoring Protocol section). [Chapter 2]

Mortality Rates Table

**Table 2. Total mortality rates used to establish annual total mortality limits for independent females, independent males, and dependent young<sup>[5]</sup> inside the DMA. For populations less than 600, there will be no discretionary mortality unless necessary for public human safety or management of bear-human conflicts.**

	Total Grizzly Bear Population Estimate*		
	≤ 674	675–747	>747
Total mortality rate for independent <u>FEMALES</u>	≤< 7.6%	9%	10%
Total mortality rate for independent <u>MALES</u>	15%	20%	22%
Total mortality rate for dependent young.	≤< 7.6%	9%	10%

using the model-averaged Chao2 population estimator

[5] Sustainable mortality estimates are based on the sustainable mortality percentage of the respective population segment relative to the population estimates

Management of Mortality Rates

- Mortality rates were changed in Management Framework (Table 4) as they were in Table 2.
- As per the States’ Memorandum of Agreement, they will conduct an annual meeting to evaluate the status of the population and develop allowable discretionary mortality by state. The Parties will confer with the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) annually and will invite representatives of both GYE National Parks, the NPS regional office, the GYE USFS Forest Supervisors, and a representative from the BLM to attend the annual meeting.

Biology and Monitoring Review

- Failure to meet the model-averaged Chao2 estimate of 48 females with cubs-of-the-year for any 23 consecutive years.
- Moved from Appendix C to Chapter 6.

- Changed from 2 to 3 consecutive years.

#### 1998 Baseline [Chapter 3]

- Increased visitor use to National Parks and National Forests since 1998
- An increase in administrative infrastructure may be necessary to responsibly account for the increase and to continue to protect grizzly bears and their habitat.
- Proposed modifications will minimize deviations to the 1998 baseline. A multi-agency planning group will be established to complete this re-evaluation effort on or before the end of calendar year 2018. Production of a draft document enumerating proposed revisions to the 1998 habitat standards will be released for public comment and approved by the YGCC. The final revision document must be agreeable to each of the affected federal land management agencies represented on the YES, including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### Application Rules for Developed and Dispersed Sites [Chapter 3]

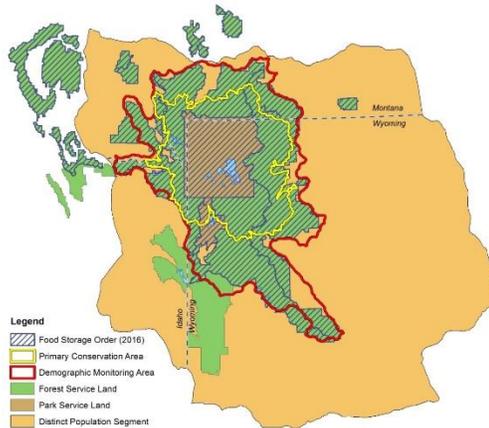
- Modifications to dispersed campsites that reduce resource damage, detrimental environmental impacts, and/or the potential for grizzly bear conflicts are allowed (e.g., installing bear-resistant storage structures and limiting parking expansion). Such modifications do not require mitigations as long as they are not permanent or irretrievable.

#### Food monitoring [Chapter 3]

- Monitoring of winter-killed ungulates by ungulate herds:
  - Transects were historically surveyed each spring to estimate availability of winter-killed ungulates. However, the survey design does not allow estimation of the amount of biomass available (Cherry 2006). Additionally, ungulate herd distribution has shifted as a result of the reintroduction of wolves, and it is unclear how much of the biomass was consumed by wolves before bears emerge from their dens.
  - Annual estimates of ungulate herds, both bison and elk, are conducted by the National Park Service and the States of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming and will continue into the foreseeable future. These estimates occur by ungulate herd unit and provide a measure of availability and distribution across the landscape occupied by grizzly bears.
- Hunter numbers will no longer be monitored
  - Hunter numbers will no longer be collected because the data showed little evidence of a relationship between hunter numbers and hunting-related human-caused grizzly bear mortality (van Manen 2015, in litt.). The cause and location of each human-caused grizzly bear mortality will continue to be reported.

#### Managing for Habitat Connectivity: Food Storage Orders [Chapter 3]

- Food storage orders prescribed by land managers on federal lands throughout the GYE help facilitate connectivity by minimizing conflicts between grizzly bears and humans. Food storage orders, which require that all unattended food, refuge, and attractants be effectively stored, have been imposed on 98% of all Forest and Park Service land inside the DMA. The area of application for food storage restrictions inside the GYE include virtually all Forest Service lands in the northern portion of the DPS boundary where movement from the GYE would most likely take place (Figure 9).
- Figure 9. Area of application for food storage orders prescribed by the five National Forests within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.



## Existing Authorities [Chapter 7]

The State regulatory mechanisms include *Grizzly Bear Montana Hunting Regulations, Chapter 67 of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulations, Idaho's Fish and Game Proclamation, and the Memorandum of Agreement Regarding the Management and Allocation of Discretionary Mortality of Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (Tri-State MOA, Appendix O)*. These state laws, rules, and regulations described above and collectively referenced in the Tri-State MOA provide authority to control grizzly bear mortality, control hunters, manage grizzly bear-human conflicts, and other management activities to maintain the GYE grizzly bear population. These regulatory mechanisms include:

- Suspend all discretionary mortality inside the DMA, except if required for human safety, if the model-averaged Chao2 population estimate falls below 600 (Tri-State MOA: Section IV(2)(c)(i), Section IV(2)(a)(i); Chapter 67 of WY Game and Commission Regulations: Section 4(c); Idaho Fish and Game Commission Proclamation: Section 2).
- Suspend grizzly bear hunting inside the DMA if total mortality limits for any sex/age class (per Tables 2 and 4) are met at any time during the year (Tri-State MOA: Section IV(2)(c), Section IV(4)(a), Section IV(6); Chapter 67 of WY Game and Commission Regulations: Section 4(d); Idaho Fish and Game Commission Proclamation: Section 5).
- Prohibit hunting of females accompanied by young and young accompanied by females (Tri-State MOA: Section IV(4)(b); MT State Hunting Regulations p. 4 and 7; Chapter 67 of

WY Game and Commission Regulations: Section 4(e); Idaho Fish and Game Commission Proclamation: Section 4).

- In a given year, discretionary mortality will only be allowed if non-discretionary mortality does not meet or exceed allowable total mortality limits for that year (Tri-State MOA: Section IV(2)(c), Section IV(4)(a), Section IV(6); Chapter 67 of WY Game and Commission Regulations: Section 4(d), Section 4(k); Idaho Fish and Game Commission Proclamation: Section 5).
- Any mortality that exceeds allowable total mortality limits in any year will be subtracted from that age/sex class allowable total mortality limits for the following year (Tri-State MOA: Section IV(2)(c); Chapter 67 of WY Game and Commission Regulations: Section 4(g), Section 4(k), and Section 4(l); Idaho Fish and Game Commission Proclamation: Section 6).

#### Existing Authorities [Chapter 7]

- *U.S. Forest Service:*
  - ~~If a change of status for the Yellowstone grizzly bear population under the ESA takes place, Forest Service Regions 1, 2, and 4 will classify the grizzly bear as a sensitive species in the GYE. Grizzly bears and their habitats will then be managed as sensitive on National Forest System lands in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2670 (specifically 2670.22, 2670.32, and 2676.1–2676.17e).~~
  - Once the GYE grizzly bear is delisted under the ESA, the Forest Service will evaluate GYE grizzly bear management as a Regional Forest Sensitive Species and a determination of whether this status is warranted will be made at that time (USDA Forest Service 2005, Manual 2670). The Forest Service will consider the GYE grizzly bear as a potential species of conservation concern during any plan revision within the range of the GYE grizzly bear as required by FSH 1909.12 Ch. 10, 12.52(d)(2)(b). This paragraph requires consideration of species that were removed within the past 5 years from the Federal list of threatened or endangered species.
- *Bureau of Land Management:*

If a change of status for the GYE grizzly bear population under the ESA takes place, the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming will classify the grizzly bear as a sensitive species in the GYE for at least 5 years post-delisting. Manual 6840—Special Status Species Management Manual, Bureau of Land Management (2008). Grizzly bears and their habitats on BLM lands will then be managed consistent with Manual 6840

#### Appendices

- D: Existing bear foods and related monitoring programs

- No longer monitoring winter-killed carcasses
- Addition of ungulate herd monitoring by NPS and the States
- Updates to the cutthroat trout monitoring program
- E: Habitat standards and monitoring protocols
  - Corrections to the 1998 baseline
- F: Annual cost estimates - removed
- H: The relationship between the five factors in section 4(a)(1) of the ESA and the existing laws and authorities - updated

**IGBST Research and Monitoring Summary - 2016: Frank van Manen** (will be posted on IGBC website)

Thank you to the Museum for hosting us. I want to recognize our partner agencies and study team members and Mark Haroldson for his help with the presentation.

**YES Protocols: Mary**

We were never able to find a charter for YES after checking through the records and past Chairs. There are questions on past practice and how the group should proceed. I would like to ask a couple folks to work on the old YGCC charter and update it, defining who votes, the proxies, etc. to bring to the spring meeting.

*Rick Hotaling*-IGBC looked at their charter and at the last meeting presented what the subcommittee charters should look like but they are still working on that.

*Brian Nesvik*-there is really not an oversight role for YES post delisting. One thing that would be good guidance for whatever group works on this is to talk about the expectation for membership. Some signatories on the Conservation Strategy are represented by one person and some by more than one. That might be the first thing the group might struggle with.

*Mary*-between now and spring begin the work on the draft charter for YGCC. The question will be how much guiding conversation we want today and who would make up the group.

*Dan Wenk*-I think we should have some discussion and carefully deliberate on understanding the impacts on votes and that we have the fairest representation.

*Loren Grosskopf*-One other issue is on voting-if people are present or can have a proxy.

*Sue Consolo Murphy*-The YGCC is still a coordinating committee and I would hope the membership doesn't change substantially from the YES committee.

*Mary Erickson*-there is guidance in the CS on YGCC-there is wording that says at the first meeting the committee would develop and adopt a set of bylaws and speaks to what the bylaws should address. It just doesn't answer the questions around voting, proxies, representation, when you need majorities, when you need super majorities.

*Jeff Gould*-there is a charter already when the species was delisted in 2007, dated 9/17/07 and would be a great starting point to flesh out nuances. It says to amend it you need 2/3 vote. We should see if this was ever formalized.

*Leander Watson*-in regards to the signatories, the voting process, it's been a struggle with the YES committee with tribal relations. We realize we are here at the table being part of it but are just technical staff and we rely on the BLM, Forest Service, Parks, FWS for that trust responsibility and we hold them to that. I have no authority to vote-our council will be the ones to vote.

*Mary Erickson*-my first meeting was the first meeting of YGCC. The charter was there and handed out to the committee. What's in the CS goes a little it further onn thisgs that should be in there. Is there a group that wants to take this on?

*Dan Wenk*-I suggest the makeup of the group is the same as the steering committee, just may be different people.

*Mary Erickson*-we will have a member from each agency as a starting point-one county commission, one lead from the Park Service, one lead from the Forest Service. Is anyone willing to take on the chair of this group?

*Brian Nesvik*-I nominate Joe Alexander

*Rick Hotaling*-Second

Vote-passes

*Mary Erickson*-Do the states need to caucus? States' representative will be FWP, Sam Sheppard or who they designate; Park Service-Grand Teton; BLM-Delissa Minnick; Counties-Tom Rice; Shoshone Bannock Tribe-Leander.

#### **Next Meeting Planning, Loose Ends: Mary Erickson**

The next topic is our next meeting in the spring at Jackson, and some topics we need to attend to then. Typically we need the last week in March or the first week in April, Tues/Wed or Wed/Thur, so we are looking at the 29/30 of March or 5/6 of April. Are there any dates committee members cannot make?

Decision: March 29/30 in Jackson

Planning topics: state management plans; conflict reports; YGCC Charter; I&E Reports/Updates from partners; I&E subcommittee/strategy-put off till Fall 2017 after YGCC charter is formalized; scientific based work/project updates.

#### **Public Comment**

*Lee Livingston*-I would really like to thank the YES committee. I'm not sure the folks around here understand the degree of commitment and work that these folks have done and given to this topic. All these folks have other jobs and they've spent a lot of time on this. I was nine years old when grizzly bears were first delisted so I've watched this great success story and it's time to get on with the delisting. I was reading a book about a guy that was hunting here in 1977, seeing all kinds of animals and noted that they saw a few fresh grizzly tracks. Three

weeks ago my daughter and I were up there hunting and we saw five bears in one day and a lot of fresh tracks. I applaud the work this group has done and thank you very much.

*Bonnie Rice*, Sierra Club-I would again like to mention in terms of our objection to the process, particularly in regard to the Conservation Strategy but also the post delisting rule process, in terms of the opportunity for public comment. This has been flawed and convoluted and has been unreal. We didn't see substantive changes that have been made to the conservation strategy; we didn't see all of those that we consider significant, such as changes in regard to connectivity. The public was promised to see a final conservation strategy, a revised strategy and to be able to comment on that. The second thing I'd like to raise is the Sierra Club shares the concerns raised by Yellowstone NP about the ambiguity of a long term management plan for the population. This is a major reason the Sierra Club remains opposed to the delisting framework. We have serious concerns about language like the foreseeable future, we have concerns about the lack of specifics on measures to promote connectivity, the proposed mortality limits. We just heard today the estimate in 2016 is down to 690. There's a lack of long term management that the public can rely on and have confidence in as far as the conservation strategy. The third and last point is the lack of any detailed analysis of the mortality limits in the proposed rule that are incorporated in the strategy and the tri state MOA. This was called for in the peer review in terms of a detailed analysis of what these proposed limits would mean in regard to impacts on the population as a whole and the bears' ability to disperse and to connect to other populations. Recently there's been some modeling done by scientists that suggests some significant declines in a relatively short period of time that might not be detected by current methodology, and we are very concerned that those be addressed. Before any kind of conservation strategy is signed, that kind of analysis should certainly be done. Finally, as a member of the public, it's very disconcerting to hear the motion approved to approve the conservation strategy when a key member of this committee has raised objections. Yellowstone NP plays such a key role in the management and conservation of grizzly bears in this region.

*Kelly Nokes-Wildearth* Guardians

Thank you Superintendent Wenk for standing up on behalf of Yellowstone grizzly bears for voting against the proposed changes to the CS. It is clear from the changes outlined and approved by majority vote that the CS is arguably no longer a logical outgrowth of the draft strategy that was released with the proposed rule and made available for public comment. We appreciate that the public will finally have a chance to review the final strategy once it is posted online and hope it will be right after this meeting. We agree with Mr. Wenk that the strategy approved today does not adequately provide regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the Greater Yellowstone grizzly bears will be allowed to continue to recover in the future. We respectfully remind the Service that proceeding with the delisting is illegal under the plain language of the Endangered Species Act and case law. The Service is well aware that it cannot designate a distinct population segment for the sole purpose of removing ESA protections from the newly created entity. The Service violates the plain language and intent of the law by designating the GYE population of grizzly bears for the sole purpose of rendering the species unprotected. The

DC district court case analyzes this exact issue in the context of grey wolves. The Service may not ignore it. The Service has a duty to recover grizzly bears in the entire lower 48 states and removing vital protections from one isolated sub population at a time undermines the Service's ability to achieve this goal.

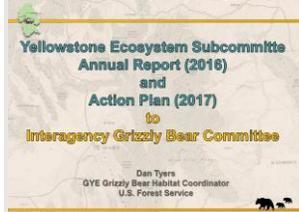
*Caroline Byrd*-Greater Yellowstone Coalition

This CS is a crucially important document which will be the roadmap for this animal we all care so deeply about. We appreciate the commitment to stability has been reasserted. We were dismayed when we thought that had been removed and we were extremely worried that we would see a downward population trend after 40 years of really hard work, tens of millions of dollars and all the people at this table and in this room working so hard and achieving such an incredible success in grizzly bear recovery in what we see today. So thank you to committing to stability again. We also urge and expect you all to carry on your work together in coordinating and managing the grizzly bear as an ecosystem population. We are faced with another record year of grizzly bear mortalities and we have to do more to keep grizzly bears alive. GYC remains committed to doing just that working with all of you along those lines. We're going to double down our efforts to reduce conflicts, to protect core habitat, and promote connectivity for grizzly bears, regardless whether they are listed or not; however, we the public, as has been pointed out previously, have yet to see and read this incredibly important roadmap for the future. We ask for time to read and study this CS and have an opportunity to comment on these substantive changes before it is finalized. This is a crucial time for all of us and I think inclusion, the opportunity for the public to see the final product and weigh in on it is an important step in the integrity of this process. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this.

**Thursday, Nov. 17**

We talked about the ability to post the Conservation Strategy with track changes on the IGBC website fairly soon, and Gregg Losinski will work with Jennifer to make that happen.

**YES 2016 Accomplishments/2017 Action Plan: Dan Tyers**

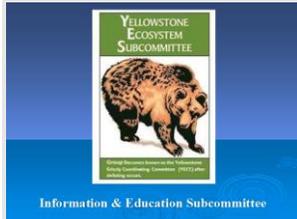


The Interagency committee is interested in revitalizing their ties to subcommittees. It falls to the current chair to bring the reports to the winter meeting in Missoula. The intentions of these reports is corporate.

*Mary Erickson*-We hadn't produced an annual report or action plan for a number of years and are trying to revitalize that for IGBC and it's also a good way to record the accomplishments. Dan will work back through each agency and bear biologists for the final review of this report so

we aren't missing anything. Dan will work with key contacts on the final version and we will get it out to the website after it is vetted with IGBC.

#### **Information and Education Subcommittee: Gregg Losinski (posted on IGBC website)**



We will have a formal presentation in the spring. We have had a lot of requests for funding that IGBC will be meeting on. Hopefully the ones we submit will get funded.

#### **Wyoming Grizzly Bear Management Program: Dan Thompson (posted on IGBC website)**



We are always excited to talk about some of the work we do in Wyoming to recover grizzly bears.

#### **Conclusion**

- Bears are recovered –bears will remain on the landscape
- It is an exciting and challenging forefront for what happens now as bears have reached carrying capacity and expand further into human dominated landscapes
- On the ground management/conservation currently taking place changes little depending on status
- Monitoring, conflict resolution and education remain vital

*Loren Grosskopf*-What can the counties do better concerning landfill issues and tell us a little about the bear trailers.

*Dan Thompson*-The counties have been great working with us. The issues we had ten years ago don't happen so often now. The trailer travels around and we take it to local celebrations-have talked to over 4,000 people this summer. Talking to people brings them into this ownership of grizzly bears. Without that public ownership, it wouldn't work so well.

#### **Public Comment**

*Bonnie Rice*-Thanks for this opportunity to comment on behalf of the Sierra Club. We appreciate all the work everyone in this. Yesterday we heard a new estimate for the Yellowstone population. For the third year in a row, the population is declining from over 750 a couple years ago to 700 and then 690. As far as I know, that does not include conflicts for 2016. We are on track to have another record high conflict year. I was concerned because I didn't see

any concern on the part of the committee or reaction or discussion about that. On behalf of over 2 million members, we don't feel this is the time to delist. We urge this committee and FWS not to move forward with this proposed rule and Conservation Strategy until the concerns of the public and peer reviewers are taken into consideration, including the lack of a mandatory commitment of a long term conservation plan, measures to ensure connectivity, a detailed analysis of the proposed mortality limits in regard to impacts on the total population. We need a public comment period to comment on changes that are happening right now, and have meaningful consultation with the tribes.

*Mary Erickson*-We will try to get the draft meeting notes on the web but have approval at the spring meeting. The draft CS will be on the website in the next couple days. I will be in touch with people so that we have everything we need for the IGBC meeting in December. Joe Alexander as Chair will be working with folks on the YGCC Charter. Dan Tyers will work to get the 2016/2017 accomplishment reports and actions plans out. We will be working on getting signatures from all the agencies on the Conservation Strategy, either in person at the IGBC meeting or bring electronic signature.

Thank you for the Museum hosting us and the city of Cody. Also thanks to the committee and our staffs over the past year-from our steering committee, technical staffs, FWS.