

4/19/16. Choteau MT/Stage Stop Inn. (10 am to 4 pm)

Jim Williams (Chair) and Jeff Mow (Vice Chair) open meeting at 10:00 am

Dr. Chuck Jonkel

Moment of silence for Dr. Chuck Jonkel's passing. FWP Commission resolution on behalf of Chuck Jonkel passed out to everyone in attendance.

NCDE Housekeeping items.

NCDE Recognition:

Deb Mucklow for her term as past Chair person of the NCDE and careers work on behalf of grizzlies.

Dan Carney for his careers work on Blackfeet Reservation grizzlies & NCDE participation.

Chris Servheen for being the 35 year chief scientist and recovery coordinator for grizzly bears in the United States.

"This Land is Our Land" grizzly bear print on canvas presented to Chris by Jeff Mow on behalf of NCDE subcommittee and Glacier Park Conservancy

All NCDE original charter and member list handouts passed out.

Deb Mucklow & Kathy Ake / Update USFS Plan Amendments to the Conservation Strategy.

Current schedule to have notice of availability starting 5/27/16 for 90 day review. The Revision team is holding open houses week of June 11th in Kalispell & Missoula. The Draft EIS does not have a preferred alternative. JW - all habitat commitments are being handled by this process?-Yes as applied to National Forest. Chris Servheen adds regarding litigation on the recovery plan that they agreed with the plaintiffs that a habitat based workshop would be held in each ecosystem so that people could comment on the habitat components of the CS, here's your chance. Double Tree Hotel in Missoula on July 7. 1-4 pm and 4-8 pm. Federal Register notice will be published for this meeting.

Ken McDonald / Chris Servheen - Yellowstone Delisting Update and Demographic Criteria -

MT, ID & WY have signed an MOU in the Yellowstone Recovery Area to outline how we will work together at the ecosystem scale post delisting. The MOU was signed by agency directors and commissions. Any hunting that may be proposed must be approved by agency directors and State Commissions and will be tightly regulated to not exceed established biological mortality thresholds. This is an ESA requirement for the post delisting rule to show that any legal hunting would be tightly managed should any standing Commission choose to explore legal hunting. If hunting is considered in the NCDE, when it comes to discretionary mortality, it will be worked out between the statutorily designated population management entities (FWP, CSKT, BIR, and GNP). Jim acknowledged that the local ranching families on the east front have made changes to their livelihoods, at their personal cost, to recover grizzly bears and it has worked and thanked the families for their sacrifices. Jim also thanked the Tribal, Park and State bear specialists and other agency/NGO staff for their hard work on the east front.

- Local County Commissioner asked - what will change is they are delisted? - That is a difficult question to answer but we would have increased flexibility in relation to discretionary mortality and zones of occupation, particularly outside of the recovery area on the prairie agricultural lands.
- Brian Peck - Will there be a companion framework that goes to the commission that would not involve hunting? Ken- we would keep doing what we're doing with specialists to continue to address conflicts. - The Governor appointed 5 member FWP commission decides regulatory pieces as they are a regulatory body for any hunting in Montana .
- Nina Baucus - I thought available discretionary mortality in the Yellowstone was close to what the current threshold already was? How can we discuss a hunting season? On some years with high natural and agency mortality that could be true and the biological/demographic commitments that are established in the CS/MOU will be followed.

- Is the age of the bear going to have anything to do with any potential hunting season? - Age would not be a factor in a hunting season because how would a hunter know.
- Will the state take a hunter out and show them a problem bear that needs to be taken out? - Probably not. If hunting was considered by the Commission, all season types would likely occur only under ethical, legal and acceptable fair chase standards.
- The draft GB conservation strategy should serve as a demographic and rescue operation for other bears within the US? - Couldn't they (the Bears) be used to augment other ecosystems instead of killing them? This might be a good strategy for FWP to do for at least the first 5 years. Augmentation of other recovery areas is already built into the NCDE conservation strategy and we are planning on continuing NCDE augmentation efforts to the CYE.

Chris Servheen/Update on Yellowstone Proposed Rule to Delist and you can think of how applies to NCDE:

Right now the YES delisting rule is out for public comment. The objective of the ESA is to get the GYE grizzly bear population recovered and delisted as per the legal direction of the ESA - this requires a biological and legally defensible proposed delisting rule and conservation strategy. Grizzly bears are a conservation reliant species or "Species that can maintain a self-sustaining population in the wild only if ongoing management actions of proven effectiveness are implemented." The purpose of the conservation strategy is for a post delisting management plan that will be in place in perpetuity to guide & direct State, Tribal and Federal habitat and population management in order to maintain the recovered population.

Will the GYE GB still be protected after delisting? - Yes there will continue to be strict limits on total mortality through several entities. There will also be habitat protections inside the primary conservation area (PCA). What about suitable habitat outside of the GYE system? The USFS will continue to manage these 4.2 million acres. What types of mortalities count against total mortalities limits inside the DMA? Management removals, undetermined, hunting, vehicle kills self-defense kills, mistaken identity, illegal kills, natural mortalities, etc.

How will GYE population be managed? Since 2002, the average population size has been 674 and this will be the target number.

What state regulation must be in place inside the DMA? - all discretionary mortality inside the DMA will be suspended if the population falls below 600, as an example.

Could GBs be relisted? The Service could start a status review and if need be could do an emergency delisting within 2 weeks if needed. Checks and balances are in place to make sure we maintain healthy populations.

Harold Yeager- rancher - why is the bear population maintaining now? Is it because there are too many Bears and they will be going out into other areas? Why doesn't the voice of the people who live on the land have any say? We've been working with you for 30 years and the problem are getting worse. In my mind the conflict people aren't really responsive to the people living with the Bears. Jim answered Harold encouraging him to keep working with local staff to work through any issues.

If the GYE delisting process gets delayed how will it affect the NCDE process? Two separate processes and we are moving forward with the final completion of the NCDE conservation strategy.

Nina Baucus - can we go back to the mortality - you're dealing with mortality in each of the given areas or the entire area as far as the hunting season goes? Each system has separate mortality limits in the respective conservation strategies.

NCDE Task List

Jim Williams reviews with all the NCDE Progress Report on the 5-year Plan Tasks 2013-2017. See scan attached to these notes so that all can have easy reference to the tasks at hand. Deb Mucklow asks for plans from all landowners - BLM, State DNRC, GNP, on & on. At Fall meeting, we should again review all land habitat commitments. Kathy Ake will have 2015 report ready in December.

- * Any remaining agency/Tribal food storage additions to CS
- * Jeff Mow shared that we should consider visitor services and pressures on grizzly bears in Glacier Park. GNP is in process of redoing the Going to the Sun Rd management plan. INCORPORATE THIS INTO FALL MEETING.

Vital Ground's Gael Bissell - how might this committee address future private land habitat conservation partnerships going forward? Jim and Jeff agreed as there are many opportunities for private land habitat work that the NCDE subcommittee could serve as an official partner. This may help with funding and national priority issues.

Chris Servheen recognition: Chris is going to retire at the end of April.

Chris Servheen announces the Acting Recovery Coordinator - Wayne Kasworm and Jennifer will be the knowledge base in the Missoula office. Final thoughts on grizzly bear conservation and recovery from Chris were shared.

NCDE Historic Mortality Trends Presentation - Lori Roberts

Lori gave overview of the various human caused mortalities, primarily illegal mortalities, defensive, agency removal, etc. Brian Peck asks if the information from her presentation could be added to the GB Trend website. Lori / Cecily will look into this.

NCDE Science Team Update / Trapping/Monitoring Plan and Updates – Dr. Cecily Costello

First meeting of the recently re-established NCDE technical group was yesterday here in Choteau. Dr. Costello provided an update on the meeting.

Update form 2015 NCDE GB demographics. Research summary to be released by June.

Mr. Yeager suggests that Cecily (and other agency people) come out and meet with the ranching people to get factual information.

Laurie Wolf. I&E Updates

Action item: how to get ahead of informational curve regarding NCDE? How to make the delisting process and sharing of information more manageable and digestible for the public?

Bear Manager Reports/Plans/Updates

New Business from Committee Members

Deb Mucklow - may need to be an updated Charter and agreements with different agencies. Share with IGBC what our sub-committee should look like.

Fall Meeting will be in Missoula before the IGBC meeting (1 to 2 weeks before).

Public Comment

Mr. Hofer: How many Bears don't hibernate? Answer: Very few.

Nina Baucus: still not clear on the delisting area within the state. JW says there are two different maps for 2 different recovery areas with different established zones. The two primary conservation areas are close to the traditional recovery areas. JW will get her maps.

Trend monitoring methodology - non-invasive genetic sampling - why was an invasive methodology used when non-invasive is available? Known fate technique provides the measurable data needed in the CS. The team will, however, utilize DNA as appropriate to answer research questions.

Maggie: how will the rest of the state be addressed during delisting? This is a huge concern to her. Answer: At the current time, outside of the conservation strategy zones, bears will remain listed under ESA.

Rancher - people are losing their tolerance for these Bears as they expand their territory out on to prairie agricultural farm and ranchlands. It is true that there all of the ranches can only call one specialist, Mike Madel? This area needs additional people for this vast area and to deal with this changing world. Answer: There is also Wildlife Services and local FWP game wardens and biologists. It's a team effort.

Mr. Hofer: 75% of the ranchers don't even call someone any more. Because nothing happens. One bear killed 40 or so sheep and the bear didn't even get killed! We don't get any help so what is the point calling the bear people. Answer: More management flexibility would be provided on prairie agricultural farm lands if delisting occurs.

CO Commissioner: The bear recovery people will have a bigger problem than they think. Most ranchers are equating the delisting of the grizzly bear to the delisting of the wolves and being able to treat the grizzlies the same. Answer: Strict mortality thresholds and limits in the NCDE conservation strategy will be followed. Bears have a completely different reproductive strategy (slow growing) than all wild canids (wolves, coyotes, fox).

Nina Baucus / member of Board of Livestock: The ranchers are worried. We need to expand the map east to the state line. We need to somehow work and deal with this issue. We need to use real useful information as people are thinking that once they are delisted, they are delisted throughout the whole state. I can say that the Board of Livestock has a lot greater respect for USDA wildlife services vs. the game wardens or the State specialists and is the agency we prefer to work with. If there is any money available to help wildlife services, we appreciate that money going to them.

Board of Livestock & Livestock Loss would like a greater involvement in this NCDE charter as it moves forward.

Adjourned. 3:30 pm