

**29 November 2018**

**North Cascades Ecosystem Subcommittee Meeting, North Bend, WA**

**Subcommittee:**

*Karen Taylor-Goodrich (NPS, chair)*

*Mike Williams (USFS)*

*Dianne Freeman (USFS)*

*Hilary Cooley (USFWS)*

*Gregg Kurz (USFWS)*

**Technical Team:**

*John Rohrer (USFS, chair)*

*Anne Braaten (NPS)*

*Jesse Plumage (USFS)*

*Scott Fitkin (WDFW)*

*Wayne Kasworm (USFWS)*

**Outreach:**

*Denise Shultz (NPS)*

**Other participants:**

*Monte Kuk (USFS)*

*Lorna Smith (Western Wildlife Outreach)*

**Audience:**

*Pat Lathrop*

*Robb Krehbiel (Defenders of Wildlife)*

*Steve Tabor*

*Kurt Aluzas (USFS)*

**Environmental Impact Statement update: Karen Taylor-Goodrich**

- During the period between the end of March and early August, the comment summary was completed, submitted literature was reviewed and responses written for substantive comments on the Draft EIS.
- Two papers were completed and published as NPS Natural Resource Reports in response to concerns expressed in public comments on the Draft EIS. The first, "A Synthesis of Historical and Recent Reports of Grizzly Bears (*Ursus arctos*) in the North Cascades Region", will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal pending additional work. The paper builds on previous reports regarding historical grizzly bear presence in the NCE, including a more detailed analysis of the Hudson's Bay Company reports than has been done in the past. Additional efforts were made to include First Nations/tribal histories into the narrative.
- The second project is a work in progress and addresses concerns raised about long term effects of climate change on translocated grizzly bears. The first installment, "Climate Change Implications for Grizzly Bears (*Ursus arctos*) in the North Cascades Ecosystem", synthesizes the scientific literature and develops a conceptual basis for understanding potential climate impacts on grizzly bear habitat quality in the NCE. The second installment will spatially link dynamic vegetation models with grizzly bear population models (Lyons et al. 2018, the carrying capacity modeling completed for the DEIS) to better understand how climate change influences on vegetation abundance and distribution may alter grizzly bear distribution and abundance in the NCE. These papers will also be submitted to peer-reviewed journals upon completion.
- A third paper, "Salmon Poisoning Disease in Grizzly Bears with Population Recovery Implications", was published in the Journal of Wildlife Management in July. The research, conducted at Washington State University, identified susceptibility of interior grizzly bears to salmon poisoning disease (SPD), via feeding trials with salmon from the Columbia and

south/central Cascades watersheds. Captive interior grizzly bears were seriously affected by a relatively new agent of the genus *Neorickettsia*. Because of the severity of the disease and the potential for mortality of translocated bears consuming anadromous salmonids, further work is ongoing to look at the distribution of SPD in the NCE; developing an antibody test; and collecting blood from bears in the NCE and NCDE to test for immunity to the disease in either population. The distribution and antibody test projects are being funded by the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission, and the project as a whole is a collaboration of the USFWS, WDFW, NPS, WSU and Southern Georgia University.

- The USFWS reached out to over 100 stakeholders and completed 30+ meetings with 55+ stakeholders to discuss early concepts for an experimental, non-essential (10J rule) designation to be part of the action alternatives.
- In August Rep. Newhouse requested that the Department of the Interior provide more opportunities for stakeholder outreach. There has been no direction yet for moving forward.

#### EIS – Education (Denise Shultz)

- The Bear Trailer staff made over 7,000 contacts with visitors at the North Cascades National Park Visitor Center in Newhalem, with an additional 500 contacts at local schools.
- Multiple entities donated a total of \$5,000 to upgrade the trailer, which will be done this winter.
- The IGBC I/E/O subcommittee will meet next month, and signage for the NCE will be on the agenda.

#### EIS – Education (Lorna Smith)

- They are looking into a reprint of the BearWise brochures: the IGBC is in charge of this.
- The WWO bear trailer was out approximately 20 times this year, some of them to large events with roughly 3,000 people/day. Events included the annual “Bear Affair: Living Northwest Conservation Day” at Seattle’s Woodland Park Zoo and at schools in Issaquah, where the human population is burgeoning into (formerly) high quality black bear habitat. They, along with BearSmart King County, are working as a partner with a nonprofit educational farm and the University of Washington-Bothell on deploying “smart” electric fences with bear-facial recognition.
- WWO also attends events in the (WA) Selkirks. People seem to be more interested than afraid.

#### Updates from the Recovery Office: Hilary Cooley and Wayne Kasworm

- Delisting in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem has been remanded, and moving forward with Northern Continental Divide delisting has been put on hold pending decisions made for the GYE.
- Known mortality is significantly up this year in the Yellowstone, Northern Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems.
- Several First Nations have been working on a consolidated resolution to the government of British Columbia with respect to restoring grizzly bears to the BC portion of the NCE. Another meeting will be held sometime this winter. The NPS has been attending their meetings.
- There has been an effort to determine who the BC liaison to the IGBC will be, in lieu of Tony Hamilton’s retirement. No one has been assigned at this point.

#### Food storage orders: John Rohrer

- There are inconsistencies across different forests in the other ecosystems regarding the definitions of “attractant”, dates when proper attractant storage is required, etc. Discussions

will happen next summer with hopes the IGBC will sanction a template for food storage orders. The two forests in this ecosystem will wait for a template to work on orders that are consistent with all of the other national forests.

Core area: John Rohrer

- The two forests continue to operate under the 1997 interagency agreement to no net loss of core area on federal lands in the ecosystem; the North Cascades National Park Service Complex formalized core area management in a 2012 general management plan. The original agreement is now 21 years old and would benefit from some clarity in a number of areas. For example, what may not have been a high-use trail in 1997 may now be one: how does this affect core values for the affected Bear Management Units? Should seasonal aspects be dropped? To what degree can core area be “banked”? Should there be minimum core area patch sizes (do patches of core area less than a certain number of acres contribute to habitat availability/connectivity, etc.), and what is – or is there – a minimum size? How can advances in science elsewhere inform management here? It is a matter of reaffirming the original letter, not changing the intent.
- Work had begun on drafting a new agreement letter for the USFS Region 6 when a very active fire season commenced. The letter has thus not yet been completed.

IGBC Science Subcommittee: Wayne Kasworm

- This new subcommittee would facilitate collaborative research among the ecosystems. It would put projects on a more equal footing, so one ecosystem’s science project wouldn’t be prioritized over another ecosystem’s when both are looking at the same or similar issues. It would also be instructive to present to the IGBC unmet research needs and identify potential partners.
- The SPD project in the NCE could be an example of a process contributing to other ecosystems.
- The chair of each subcommittee would be the main contact.
- Science projects are not normally presented at IGBC meetings, something that should change to help inform management.
- The NCE Subcommittee agreed this would be a good organizational tool.

Public comments:

- Very interested in returning grizzly bears to the NCE, gathering up information to see if there is anything they can do. Want it done as soon as possible, understanding it’s a complex process.
- Over/underpasses are more common in Canada, would like to team up politically and get funding inserted into large road projects to create crossings for wildlife hot spots.
- Thank you, it is always good to hear fed.s say science is good.
- Defenders is working with Seattle City Light and Waste Management to test and possibly install bear-resistant garbage cans for City Light inholdings within the Ross Lake National Recreation Area.
- They are also looking for additional funds for the USFS for bear-resistant dumpsters in campgrounds.

- Defenders is exploring putting on a workshop next spring with the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe with regard to carrying bear spray.
- Excited to see progress, wants to reemphasize the importance of education and outreach. Trail monitoring in the trails along I-90 shows hundreds to thousands of people per day, so information and education are all that much more critical. Recreation pressure is only going up.

Literature cited:

- Lyons, AL, WL Gaines, PH Singleton, WF Kasworm, MF Proctor and J Begley. 2018. Spatially explicit carrying capacity estimates to inform species specific recovery objectives: Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) recovery in the North Cascades. *Biological Conservation* 222: 21-32.
- Ransom, J. I., M. Krosby, and A. L. Lyons. 2018. Climate change implications for grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*) in the North Cascades Ecosystem. Natural Resource Report NPS/NOCA/NRR—2018/1814. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.
- Rine, KM, AM Braaten, JG Oelfke, JI Ransom. A synthesis of historical and recent reports of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*) in the North Cascades region. Natural Resource Report NPS/NOCA/NRR—2018/1662, For Collins, Colorado.
- Robbins, CT, NL Woodford, GG Clyde, C Minor, OL Nelson, MM Brewer, PH Khalife and JR Hawley. 2018. Salmon poisoning disease in grizzly bears with population recovery implications. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, DOI: 10.1002/jwmg.21502.

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<sup>i</sup> Agency acronyms: National Park Service (NPS); US Forest Service (USFS); US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW); Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC); British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (BC MoE)