

# Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems (SCYE) Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC)

Notes from the November 6, 2019 meeting @ Idaho Department of Fish and Game Office, Coeur d'Alene, ID

## **Subcommittee Members present:**

**SCYE CHAIR:** Rodney Smoldon (USDA Colville National Forest)

**SCYE VICE CHAIR:** Ben Conard (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service)

**Members:** Barb Moore (for Chip Corsi, Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Pat Seymour (for Eric Besaw, Idaho Department of Lands), Bart George (for Ray Entz, Kalispel Tribe of Indians), Scott Soultz (for Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho), Rory Trimbo (for Neil Anderson, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks), Felipe Cano (for Jeanne Higgins, USDA Idaho Panhandle National Forests), Chad Benson (USDA Kootenai National Forest), Erin Carey (for Carolyn Upton, USDA Lolo National Forest), Cindy Weston (for Kurt Pindel, USDI Bureau of Land Management), Steve Pozzanghera (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)

**I&E TASKFORCE CO-CHAIRS:** Felipe Cano (for Kim Annis, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Kirsten Kaiser, USDA Kootenai National Forest)

**SCIENCE ADVISOR:** Wayne Kasworm (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service)

## Grizzly Bear Monitoring Update: Wayne Kasworm

### 2019 Grizzly Bear Captures

- 4 bears in the Selkirks (3 female, 1 male)
- 4 bears in the Cabinet-Yaak (1 female, 3 males)
- Iridium collars placed on male bears (whose movements are harder to keep up with). GPS point locations provided every 2 hours through the internet.
- Collars can be programmed to gather more frequent points at desired locations (“geo-fences”), but there is a cost to battery life.

### Genetic Sampling

- Hair samples from captures, rub trees, and hair snag corrals
- We get species, sex, individual genotype, and parentage
- We can document gene flow and effective linkage between ecosystems, in support of eventual de-listing
- 2018 Selkirk effort: 129 camera sites and 373 rub trees
  - 388 grizzly samples from 717 bear hair samples submitted
  - Number of grizzly bears detected in 2018 = 44 (23 females: 21 males). 2017 bears detected = 40.
  - Individuals identified by method in 2018 = 28 at hair snag corrals, 26 at rub trees, 11 opportunistic or captures
- 2018 Cabinet-Yaak effort; 55 camera sites and 782 rub trees
  - 255 grizzly samples from 611 bear hair samples submitted
  - Number of grizzly bears detected in 2018 = 51 (19 females: 32 males). 2017 bears detected = 44.
  - Individuals identified by method in 2018 = 17 at hair snag corrals, 45 at rub trees, 5 opportunistic or captures

### Cabinet Mountains Grizzly Bear Augmentation

- 22 bears added since 1990 (14 females and 8 males)
- 7 bears left the target area but 3 returned
- 6 bears are known to be dead
- 2 females and 1 male are known to have reproduced
- 2019 augmentation bear monitoring
  - Female bear #923 has stayed in the recovery zone
  - Male bear #892 released in 2019 wandered outside the recovery zone but is now back
  - Male bear #927 released in 2018, wandered far south in 2019. He crossed I-90 in May, traveled as far as the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and moved back to the Cabinets in mid-September (again crossing I-90).

### 2019 Grizzly Mortalities

- Selkirks - 1 male, 1 female
  - Female bear killed by a hunter in Smith Creek, Idaho. Mistaken identity by a knowledgeable hunter who got caught up in the moment.
- Cabinet-Yaak - 1 female
  - 2 cubs thought to be 2018 mortalities may actually be alive

### 2020 Research / Monitoring Plans

- Continue existing sampling relying on corrals and rubs at the same sampling intensity in the US.
- Dr. Michael Proctor is still on track to do his grizzly bear mark-recapture study and DNA sampling from corrals to obtain a population estimate in the BC Selkirks.
- The subcommittee has agreed to supplement Dr. Proctor's effort by providing him with trail cameras to identify females with cubs at corral sites in the BC Selkirks.
- Additional rub trees in the US Selkirks?
  - There is a disparity in sex ratios between the Selkirks and Cabinet-Yaak due to more rub post sampling sites in the Cabinet-Yaak?
  - Identifying rub trees takes expertise. WD-40 is a proven attractant.
- Huckleberry transects will continue in 2020. 2019 was a relatively good berry year in many places.

## Human-Large Carnivore Incident Guide: Mike Borysewicz

An example from the Colville National Forest, developed in response to incidents involving cougars and bears in our campgrounds. Applies to high human-use areas (developed campgrounds, day use sites, dispersed campsites, trails, recreation rentals, recreation residences).

### Purpose

- Have an organized, thought out plan for dealing with potential or actual conflicts (respond vs. react)
- Identify roles and responsibilities
- Standardize responses
- Base actions on actual risk

### Situational Guidance

- Large Carnivore is Seen at a High Human-use Area
  - This is an expected, natural event and not cause for alarm
  - Record observer's contact information, details of the sighting

- No additional action necessary
- Large Carnivore Loitering / Foraging on Natural Foods in a High Human-Use Area
  - May be cause for concern as the potential for close range interactions increases over time
  - Record reporting parties' contact information and details of the sighting(s)
  - Raise awareness (line officer, recreation staff, LEO, biologist, campground managers, local state wildlife officer)
  - Base response on: anticipated human use of the site, proximity of humans to the carnivore, likelihood of the animal remaining on site for an extended period
  - Actions to consider: post warning signs, temporary site closure, visitor contacts / LE patrols, support the wildlife agencies with any hazing / trapping efforts.
- Large Carnivore is Known to have Fed on Unsecured, Unnatural Food
  - Cause for serious concern as the animal may have learned to associate humans with a food reward
  - Record reporting parties' contact information and details of the incident
  - Immediately raise awareness
  - Base response on: anticipated human use of the site, animal's behavior (lack of fear / aggressive?)
  - Management actions: post warning signs, consider a temporary site closure, visitor contacts / LE patrols a priority, cite individual(s) responsible, support the wildlife agencies with any hazing, trapping, or control efforts.
- Large Carnivore is Determined to be a Nuisance Animal (determined by the wildlife agencies)
  - This is an urgent situation that requires immediate attention and action
  - Record reporting parties' contact information and details of the incident
  - Immediately raise awareness
  - Management actions: post warning signs, temporary site closure, visitor contact / LE patrols, inform forest visitors and private residents in the area about the nuisance animal, support the wildlife agencies with any hazing, trapping, or control efforts, provide timely and accurate information to the media.

## I&E Subcommittee Update: Felipe Cano

### Bears and Fast-Paced Recreation Signs and Brochures

- Felipe presented the finished trailhead sign and pamphlet related to fast-paced recreation.
- Sign has a QR patch for smart phones that will take you straight to the IGBC website.
- Thanks to I&E Subcommittee members, agency biologists, and recreation staff who contributed to the development of these materials.
- How do we address biking at night, electric bikes, and excessive bike speed? Response: Bike riding on national forests is subject to FS regulations pertaining to resource damage, safe operation, and applicable road / trail closures. Electric bikes are considered motorized vehicles and are confined to those roads / trails shown as open to this use on each national forest's Motor Vehicle Use Maps.
- How about making a You Tube video on high speed recreation in bear habitat? Response: Good idea!

## Updates of Other Grizzly Bear Ecosystems: Hillary Cooley

### Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE)

- Population is doing very well: estimated 1,050 bears.
- Recovery goals have been met: number of females with cubs of the year, all 23 Bear Management Units occupied, human-caused mortality not to exceed 4 percent (with a female mortality component).

- Planned to de-list as a distinct population segment (DPS) in 2018.
- Finalized a habitat-based recovery plan. Finalized a conservation strategy.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service put the brakes on de-listing as a result of the lawsuit filed against the de-listing of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population.
- Mortality rate in the NCDE was pretty high in 2019 due to train / highway collisions, management removals.
- Why is connectivity to the SCYE not a NCDE recovery goal? Response: Very few bears have made it from the NCDE to SCYE to date. They are not one functioning population. MT will be managing for different “zones” with respective mortality limits to facilitate connectivity between the two populations.
- What about relaxing mortality limits when the population is well over the recovery goal? Response: Mortality limits only apply to the recovery zones, not outside.

### Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE)

- Population is doing well. Mortality was low in 2019.
- Lawsuit filed to stop de-listing of the DPS was successful. US Fish and Wildlife Service is now in the appeal process. States have intervened on behalf of the Service. A decision could come next summer or fall.
- One of the takeaways from the lawsuit - evaluate how the GYE population would remain linked to other ecosystems.
- More bears are being reported between GYE, NCDE, and the Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE). A grizzly was photographed by a trail camera in the BE recently.

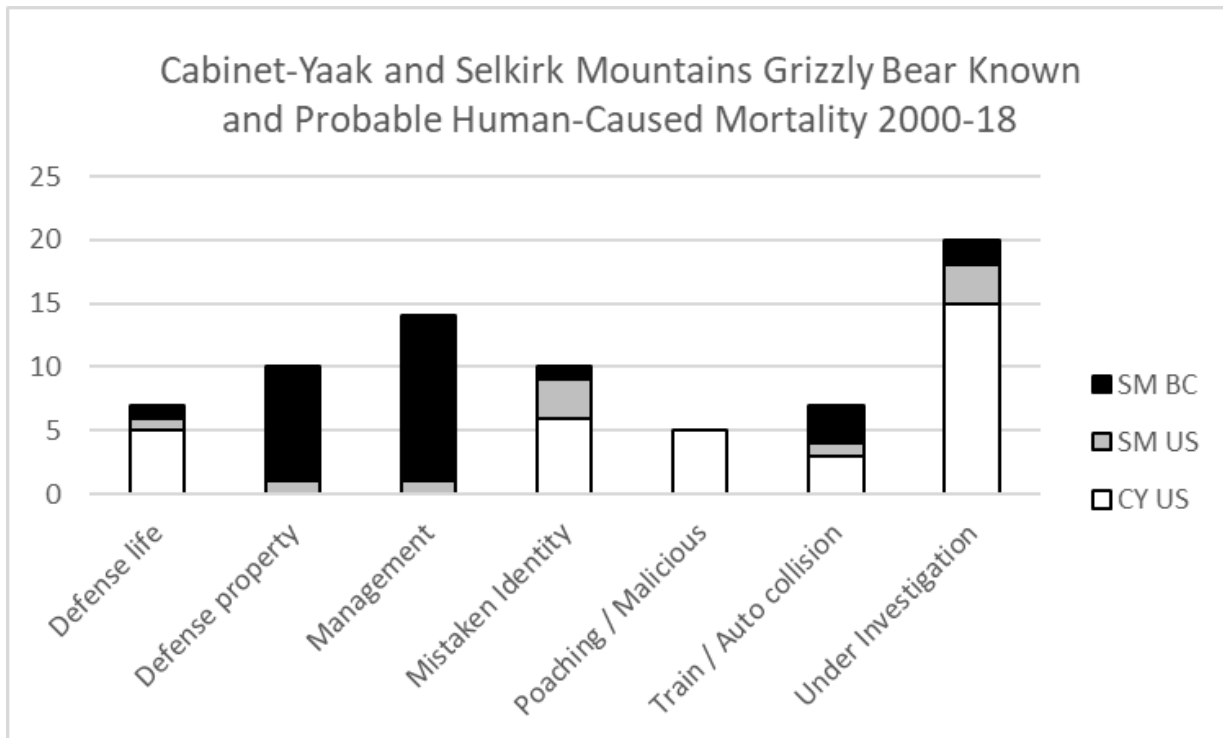
### North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE)

- An environmental impact statement (EIS) was prepared to re-introduce bears to this ecosystem. Recovery would likely take a very long time without re-introductions.
- There have been mixed signals from the present administration. US Fish and Wildlife Service was asked to take public comments again.
- Public meetings were held in several locations. Hundreds of people turned out at a public meeting in Tonasket, WA.
- The comment period is now closed.

## **Reducing Grizzly Bear Mortality: Wayne Kasworm, Brian Johnson**

The IGBC tasked the subcommittees with Identifying a preliminary list of priority issues (using the 2009 Yellowstone Mortality Report) to reduce grizzly bear mortality as bear populations expand. This was triggered by the high bear mortality rates experienced in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in recent years.

The following table is from Wayne Kasworm’s report of June 2019: “Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains Human-Caused Grizzly Bear Mortality Summary”.



#### Defense of Life

- Continue to educate about bear spray vs firearm use.

#### Defense of Property

- This is presently more of a BC issue. Defense of property is legal in BC but not in the US.
- Potential tools include; electric fencing, good livestock husbandry, guard dogs.
- Emphasize how prevention can provide a financial benefit to the property owner.
- Example of the Kootenai Valley North Bench (north of Bonner's Ferry, ID).
  - 30 years ago there was no grizzly bear use in this area.
  - 10 years ago there was occasional grizzly bear use.
  - Today there is an established grizzly bear population with 6+ bears using the area.
  - Grizzly recovery requires tolerance from the local communities. They need to be given the tools / support for dealing with bears.
- Defenders of Wildlife electric fence incentive program – 50 percent cost-share with property owners.

#### Mistaken ID

- Require tests for hunters such as WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife's on-line course which is taken annually.
- There will always be some level of mistaken ID. Even knowledgeable hunters can get "caught up in the moment" and make a bad choice.

#### Poaching / Malicious

- Greater fines for incidents?
- The perpetrator is not always caught.

#### Train / Auto Collisions

- Crossing structures can reduce bear mortality and cost to motorists.

- BNSF is paying much closer attention to investigating grain spills from rail cars. They have even invited bear managers to review clean-up operations. There is still room for improvement.
- It may be worthwhile to dig up incidents related to train and auto collisions to tease out trends.

### Under Investigation

- Most incidents have occurred near roads and during the hunting season (“you find a bullet in a bear”).
- Wayne Kasworm believes cases of mistaken identity and malicious kills are under-represented.

## Communities Starting to Deal with Grizzlies: SCYE Subcommittee

### Public Concerns

- There is an understanding that bear populations are expanding onto private lands.
- People want to know where the bears are, and what to do about their personal safety.
- There is a desire for a “go-to person” to call when there is an incident involving a grizzly bear.
- There is a lack of awareness about resources available to deal with bears.
- Every model won’t work for every community.
- “Pay attention to private individuals!”

### This is a Community Awareness Issue

- Ask the communities what they think they need. What is the priority to address first?
- Information / education is the biggest thing we can do. How do we get information on available resources (a toolkit) out to the public?
- November 18 meeting of the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) in Bonner’s Ferry, ID. Wayne Kasworm is scheduled to speak. It would be good if Kim Annis was there as well.
- This issue is familiar to folks in the NCDE. Capitalize on their experience.
- There are parallels with the USFS fire-wise / urban interface campaign.

### This is a Personnel Issue

- There a need to have someone in Kim Annis’ position working the SCYE in Idaho. The MT recovery office of the US Fish and Wildlife Service is sending money to support such a position.

## Spring Meeting with NCDE

- They are interested!
- Initial conversation about a foundational guiding document.
- Presently there is not much gene flow / movement of animals between the NCDE and SCYE. How is the area between the two ecosystems going to be the managed when bears start moving into it?
- What lessons can we learn from NCDE’s experience with bears moving into human-populated areas? What personnel do the NCDE have in place to address these conditions?
- A meeting with the full complement of the two subcommittees would be unwieldy. Better to meet with a few key representatives from the NCDE.
- Rodney will reach out to the NCDE to arrange a meeting place and date for next spring.

## Public Comments

- There are products advertised as bear spray coming out on the market that have questionable ingredients / percentages by volume. The IGBC could correct this by publishing a position paper on what they consider to be the chemical make-up by volume, of bear spray.