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**Background on Proposed Changes to Conservation Strategy Chapter 3
Habitat Standards and Monitoring, and Appendix E. 1998 Baseline for
Habitat Standards**

When the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee recommended changes to the conservation strategy in 2016, the subcommittee did not resolve one compelling issue. The substantial increase in visitor use in National Park lands and surrounding federal public lands and the significant increase in grizzly bear numbers and occupied range such that there are more bears in more places presented a management dilemma that the subcommittee wanted explored. As such, a multi-agency effort (as prescribed in the final 2016 Conservation Strategy) was conducted to determine the best long-term solutions for alleviating administrative pressures associated with increased visitation.

In 2017, this multi-agency technical team was tasked with recommending changes to the standards and application rules for managers' consideration. The most significant recommendation is to apply a "footprint" approach to identify and manage areas of concentrated human use associated with developed sites that were previously listed and counted as points on the landscape, regardless of areal extent. This approach allowed for actual mapping of developed sites and therefore, a more accurate picture of secure habitat (the premise being areas within the mapped footprint are not considered secure habitat). Prior to this mapping, developed sites were represented by a point on a map, which did not accurately represent the acres and scale of these sites. After mapping the footprints within the PCA, actual mapped secure habitat is 0.2% less within the entire PCA than what was calculated in the 1998 baseline. This is because of this process of mapping developed sites accurately, not because of any actual reduction in secure habitat.

The application rules for habitat standards in this updated document spell out how new infrastructure may be authorized to manage the effects of increased visitation with two key changes. The first key change is flexibility for the allowance for small increases (up to 10%)

in overnight visitation at lodges, guest ranches, and organizational camps that operate under special-use authorizations on national forest lands, and in national park lodges that are below the capacity of previously approved capacity (“pillow count”). The second key change is flexibility to allow limited increase in developed sites within primary road corridors. Both of these changes have guidance to help minimize impacts to grizzly bears, while focusing any increased development in already disturbed (unsecure) habitat. The details of these changes and guidance are found in the Proposed Conservation Strategy Habitat Changes dated October 25, 2021 and the Proposed Appendix E.