

# IGBC Winter 2021 Update

## Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee

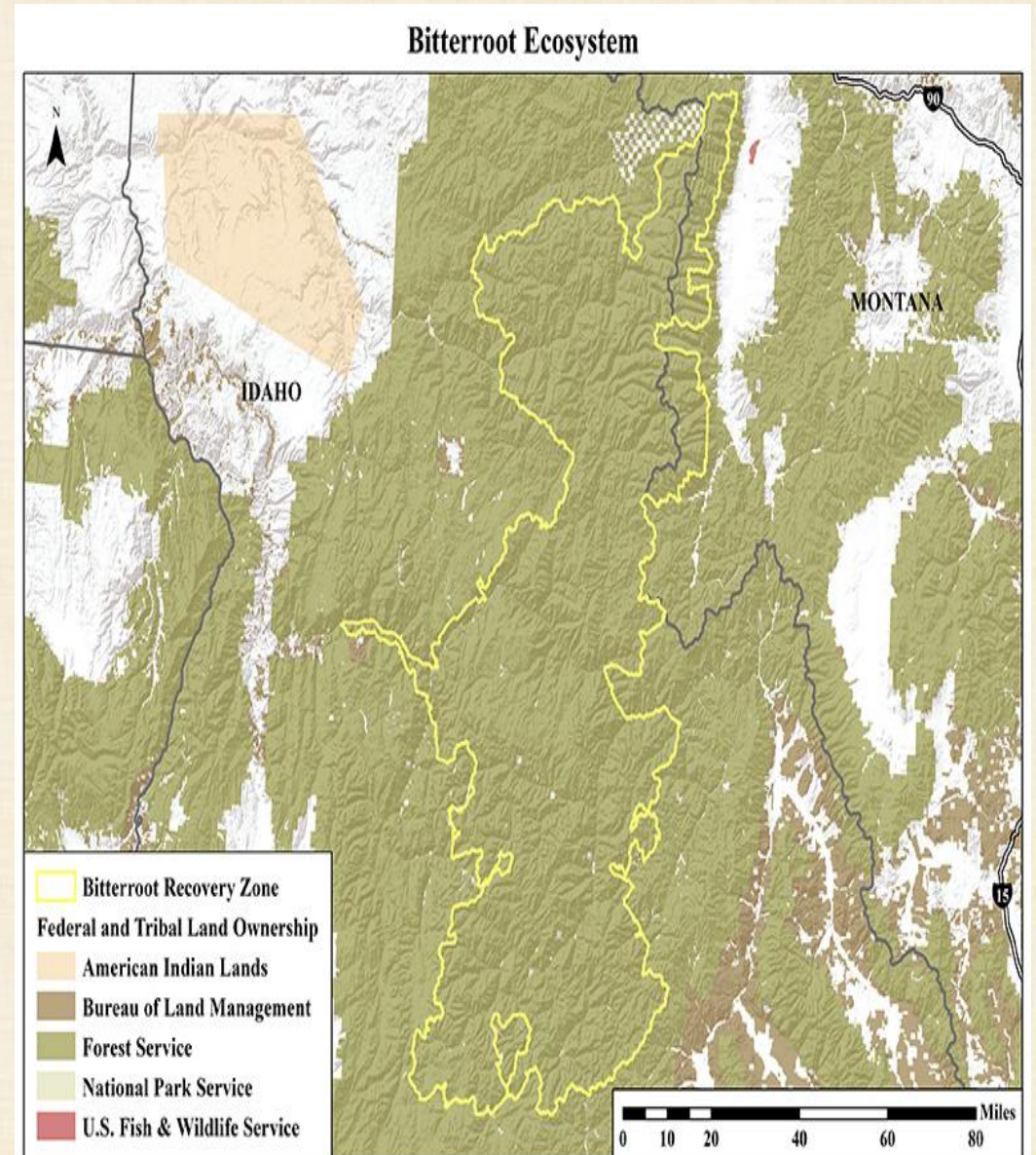


### Membership – Leadership and Staff

- Salmon-Challis National Forest
- Bitterroot National Forest
- Lolo National Forest
- Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
- Payette National Forest
- Idaho Panhandle National Forest
- Sawtooth National Forest Supervisor
- Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Falls District
- MT and ID U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Lemhi, Clearwater and Ravalli County Commissioners
- Nez Perce Tribe

### Annual Meetings were both virtual

- Spring was held on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021
- Fall was held on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021



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### Bitterroot Science Sub-committee – Mike Pruss, NPCNF, Chair

#### Short-term Products & Actions

- DNA/Camera Survey
- Verified location database
- G-Bear conflict database for use by MT, ID & FWS
- Montana FWS connectivity area modeling
- Bear location Information
- Information and Education on Food storage

#### Upcoming Meetings

- Next meeting in January will go over grant funding
- Will have the spring meeting in March

#### Potential Long-term Products & Actions

- Habitat modeling and monitoring
- Potential funding for mapping project
  - Looking for a student to participate
- Bitterroot Ecosystem recovery zone BMU mapping project
  - Using USFWS function with benefits from new information provided by postdoc habitat use and connectivity analysis
- Human Attitude Surveys
  - Has been done in MT by MFWP and with cabinet yak ecosystem efforts

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### Bitterroot Information, Education and Outreach Sub-committee – Jen Bruns, IDFG, Chair

- 7 members on the IE & O Subcommittee across agencies
- IGBC Coordinated Outreach
  - BEAR AWARE and KNOW YOUR BEAR annual spring outreach to sportsmen and other recreational users
- This Committee monitors IGBC grants
  - 4 grant recipients, these projects are wrapping up
  - 2022 Grant application: Deadline was November 12
  - \$45,000 will be available for FY2022
- Bear Smart Community Working Group
  - BSCP is a proactive conservation initiative that encourages efforts by communities, businesses & individuals to reduce human-bear conflicts
  - Working on building criteria for lower 48 programs



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**USFS RAC Bitterroot National Forest Project, Assessing Bear Wise Infrastructure and Public Outreach**

- **Project led by the Wind River Bear Institute in conjunction with MTFWP**
- **Element 1: Education and Assistance in the Bitterroot Ecosystem**
  - Conduct community outreach and education and on-site human-bear conflict education, response, assessment and assistance within the Bitterroot Valley
- **Element 2: Mapping Human-Bear Conflict Hotspots in Lolo, MT**
  - Collaborate with FWP and the Lolo Community Council to create a working map of human-bear conflicts within the Lolo area
- **Key Progress to date**
  - Conducted field trips for K-12 students
  - Use the WK-9s as ambassadors for education and with FWP on-site while responding to bear conflicts
  - Monitored and assessed 3 “hot spot” bear focal sites and assist in conflict response with FWP
  - Conducted an initial visual survey of residential sites to assess garbage infrastructure status
  - Assisted FWP and Defenders of Wildlife in initiating a Bear-Resistant Garbage Can Loaner Program for Lolo residents

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University of Idaho Graduate Project: Exploring the Human Dimension equation in G-bear Conservation in Idaho How to Effectively Outreach to our Publics –Katie Shaw and Dr. Kenny Whallen

#### ➤ Research Questions:

- What are Idaho BE residents' opinions towards grizzly bears and their management, and to what extent do these create cognitive or structural barriers or facilitators to tolerance?
- Which people, organizations, or agencies do BE residents identify as trusted managers of grizzly bears and champions of community management preferences?

#### ➤ Study Areas: Rural Idaho Communities- Grangeville, Elk City, Orofino, Kooskia and Kamiah

#### ➤ Methods: Conducted both personal interviews and focus group meetings in 2021

#### ➤ 4 Main Concerns Causing Intolerance:

- Fear for personal safety
- Concern for other animal populations
- Economic concerns
- Restrictions- ESA “baggage”

#### ➤ Project and study results will be completed and reported during spring IGBC Bitterroot meeting

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## SW Montana DNA Project

- Cooperative Project: USFWS, Lolo NF, and Defenders of Wildlife
- Project Overview: Goal: Document presence of grizzly bears in SW Montana outside current distributions, survey methods, and preliminary results



- Methods:
  - 140 Hair Coral camera sites on USFS lands
  - Sites set from previous verified sightings and recom. of local biologists
  - Set mid-May - August

- 2021 Results
  - Grizzly bear detected at 1 site
  - Black bears detected at 100 sites
  - 52 sites with camera issues
  - 805 hair samples collected
  - 181 hair samples sent to lab for DNA analysis
- Future Actions
  - Reporting of preliminary results
  - Summarize 2021 verified sighting information from partners
  - Assess potential areas for improvement
  - Reporting of final results from pilot year
  - Coordination for 2022 field season

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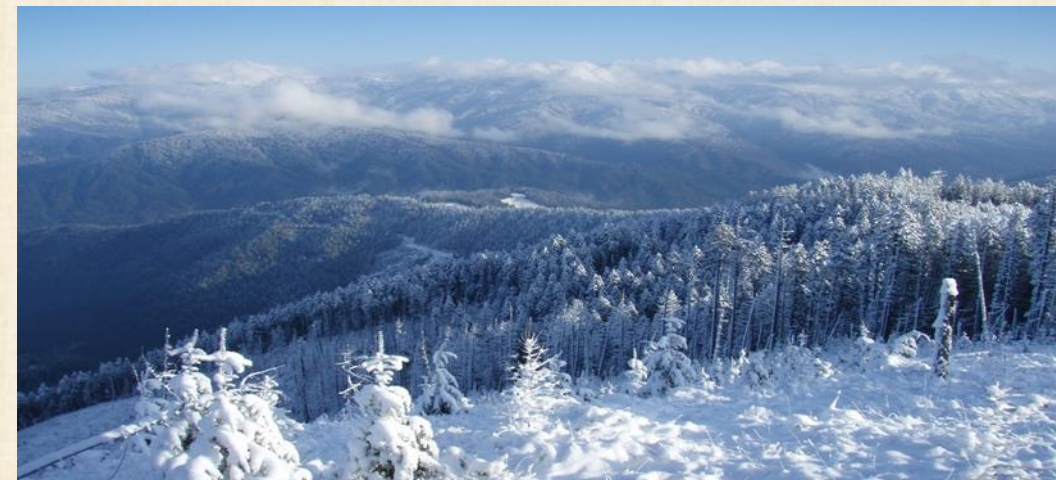


#### Salmon Challis NF

- Installed grizzly bear sanitation and identification information at trailheads, campgrounds, and public-gathering locations (stores), mostly in and around the Continental Divide
- Shared “Be Bear Aware” information with employees on the North Fork and Salmon-Cobalt RDs and taught how to use bear spray and carry into the field
- Validated male grizzly bear at a bear bait station on Grizzly Hill, which is just south of Lemhi Pass. Game camera pictures were from the fall hunting season 2020
- Will restart Forest Plan Revision with the focus on the Salmon National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

#### Nez Perce Clearwater NF

- Fire Season est. 110,000 acres burnt this year, about 58,000 of this was front country
  - Conducted bear education with firefighters
- Working on Forest Plan Revision with other agencies
- Working on may be present maps with FWS
- Working with outfitters and guides to get ahead of bear human conflicts
- Working on be bear aware trailer
- Conducting bear spray trainings
- Working with IDFG on bear charging simulator



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**Lolo NF**

- Been installing new/replacing bear signs on the Forest
- Adding/replacing bear resistant trash bins and food lockers on the Forest
- Working with the USFWS on updating our Forest Plan consultation and in early stages of Forest Plan revision

**USFWS MT and ID**

- Lawsuit challenging FWS's 2000/2001 Rulemakings to reintroduce grizzly bears to the Bitterroot Ecosystem

**Bitterroot NF**

- Cooperative Outreach to forest users with IGBC partners
- Installing new Bear Aware signage at trailheads
- Involvement with the relocation process and discussions



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## Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

- 1 verified G-bear in MT BE east of Sula Mt
  - Continued field reports of previously verified grizzly activity east of the Bitterroot Ecosystem, in the Rock Creek, Flint Creek and Warm Spring Creek areas of the Upper Clark Fork Basin
  - Continued to respond to potential observations in the Lower Clark Fork and Bitterroot River drainages and with no confirmations
- This summer the Bitterroot Sanitation Work Group was officially launched
  - Focus of this group is the reduction of black bear conflicts as they relate to garbage and residential attractants
- Working with Defenders to purchase and place bear resistant containers for public use areas and garbage facilities
  - Additional partnership with Defenders for home and production livestock electric fencing projects and supplies
- The Bitterroot-Sapphire Wildlife Corridor Coalition
  - Continues to work closely with the Five Valleys Wildlife Passage Working Group and the Montana Department of Transportation on issues related to wildlife collision and wildlife passage across the Bitterroot Valley

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## Idaho Fish and Game

- Clearwater portion of the BE experienced a severe drought, record temps, and an extreme fire season
- IDFG did not detect or verify sightings of any G-bears within the Clearwater Region in 2021
  - No credible reports came in from the public to IDFG
- Current projects that have potential to detect bears
  - IDFG continue with Wolf Camera census work in 2021
    - Cameras just 150+cameras across the Clearwater
    - picked up and being analyzed from summer survey
  - Recently put out 17 scent pump camera sites in the ID Bitterroot for Wolverine as part of a multi-state effort to estimate occupancy in the lower 48 at higher elevations. Will be recovered next June/July
- IDFG Clearwater did obtain a G-bear culvert trap and a couple GPS collars in case needed
  - IDFG is responsible to respond and address all wildlife/human conflicts
- IDFG Clearwater Outreach
  - Spring Bear Aware messaging campaign to spring/fall hunters
    - 2 News Releases: “Hunters and hikers urged to be 'Bear Aware' as they head into the field this spring” and “It's spring in the Clearwater-- Be Bear Aware!”
  - Also sent “Bear Aware” and “Know your Bear” information by email to 19,323 recipients