

# INVESTIGATION REPORT

## **The subsequent fatality of Mr. Charles (Carl) Wesley Mock from a grizzly bear attack on 15 April 2021 near Baker's Hole Campground on the Custer Gallatin National Forest**

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### **SUMMARY:**

On the afternoon of 15 April 2021, a lone 40-year-old male resident of West Yellowstone, Montana had gone hiking at nearby Baker's Hole Campground on the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) to either fish, take photographs or both. At approximately 3:45 pm, the man called 911, connecting to the West Yellowstone Police Department Dispatch reporting he had been mauled by a grizzly bear. Search and rescue were immediately implemented. The victim, Mr. Charles (Carl) Wesley Mock was found severely injured by search and rescue personnel. Mr. Mock was given medical attention in the field, taken to an ambulance, and transported to Idaho Falls, Idaho Regional Medical Center. The following day, 16 April investigation team members were charged by a bear near the site where Mr. Mock had been mauled. Investigators killed the bear during the encounter. Unfortunately on Saturday, 17 April 2021, Mr. Mock died from complications from the severe wounds to his head and neck caused by a grizzly bear attack. Mr. Mock was a West Yellowstone resident and guide for Back Country Adventures.

### **Format of report:**

A board of review (BOR) is required after any human fatality caused by a grizzly bear as per the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines (p 59). This report is based on the investigations, personal statements, and documentations of personnel with the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office, West Yellowstone Police

Department, United States Forest Service, Gallatin County Search and Rescue, Hebgen Basin Fire and Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks. Gallatin County Sheriff's Office (Deputy Mike Gavagan) report of Mr. Mock's rescue and Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks enforcement division (Warden Robert Pohle) overall reports are attached in Appendix A. This report is written in sections of occurrence and with an investigative conclusion at the end of the report. To avoid

unwarranted speculation as to how this attack and resulting fatality occurred, only information gathered and documented during the investigations is contained in this report.

*Note: There are several minor discrepancies between this investigation report and officers Gavagan's and Pohle's reports. Those minor discrepancies are footnoted below their reports. The information in this investigation report is correct.*

### **Baker's Hole Campground:**

Baker's Hole Campground is located on the Hebgen Ranger District, Custer Gallatin National Forest. The campground is located within a lodgepole pine (LPP) forest with willows along the southeast side. The campground is east of U.S. highway 191, west of the Madison River, approximately 2.5 miles north of West Yellowstone, Montana and approximately 200 yards west of the Yellowstone National Park boundary.

The campground has 73 campsites within the 3 campsite loops. The campground is annually closed to camping from October 1 to May 1 but the area is open to recreationists year-round. People also use the campground to access the Madison River for fishing and wildlife viewing as the area is known for its use by bears, moose, elk, ospreys, eagles, waterfowl, and bison. Baker's Hole Campground is very well posted with permanent wooden or metal signs at the entrance and on kiosks among the campsite loops informing the public of grizzly bear presence in the area and of food storage order requirements (Photos 1 & 2). An image of the attack site in relation to Baker's Hole Campground, West Yellowstone and Yellowstone National Park is shown in Figure 1.



**Photo 1. Grizzly Bear awareness signs at Baker's Hole Campground**



Photo 2. Grizzly Bear awareness and food storage sign at Baker's Hole Campground



Figure 1. Baker's Hole Campground in relation to West Yellowstone and Yellowstone National Park

**04-15-2021**

**SEARCH and RESCUE:**

**15:42 hours** - West Yellowstone Police Department (WYPD) Dispatch received a call from a 40-year-old male reporting he has been mauled by a grizzly bear approximately 200 yards from CGNF Baker's Hole Campground.

West Yellowstone PD, Gallatin County Sheriff's Deputy (GCSO), US Forest Service law enforcement (USFS LEO), Gallatin County SAR ( GC SAR) and Hebgen Basin Fire are immediately dispatched to respond. Hebgen Basin EMS was then dispatched to Baker's Hole Campground to wait for rescue of the victim.

Secondary information from WYPD Dispatch was issued to Search and Rescue (SAR) that the victim reported he had facial injuries, was laying on the ground, there was one bear and to go to the closed campground main entrance.

**15:52 hours -approximately**

\*GCSO, USFS LEO, WYPD, Hebgen Basin Fire and GC SAR arrive at Baker's Hole Campground to begin the search. Initially human footprints were searched for in the snow near hiking trails towards the Madison River.

\*Hebgen Basin Fire was instructed by GCSO to assume incident command.

\*Dispatch was unable to triangulate or ping a location of the victim's cell phone. His phone was not active, 911 emergency call capacity only. Though found by SAR relatively quickly the phone's status had delayed SAR from finding the victim sooner.

\*Although seriously injured, the victim was able to communicate with WYPD dispatch before he was found by SAR.

\*Hebgen Basin Fire activated sirens, which victim told dispatch he could hear the sirens. He then told dispatch he was about ¼ mile from campers (camp host) in campground, towards town (south of main entrance).

\*The victim then relayed he was off the blue diamond ski trail.

\*With this information SAR was then able to focus on an area.

\*Incident command requested West Yellowstone based Air Idaho (helicopter) to aid in support and search. Also a SAR page was sent out for a backcountry rescue.

\*GC SAR and USFS LEO proceeded on the ski trail out of campground, followed within minutes by 2 officers with GCSO and WYPD.

\*These 2 officers were joined by another WYPD officer after they stopped hiking due to sighting a grizzly bear approximately 80 yards east of the ski trail. The bear was standing on hind legs and making huffing sounds. The bear dropped to all 4 feet and charged towards the officers, breaking of the charge after 30 yards.

Dispatch relayed that the victim could hear the officers yelling and that the bear was very close to him.

\*The search party then turned east off the ski trail, down an old logging spur in the direction of the bear.

\*Approximately 70 yards down the old logging spur the victim was found lying on the ground.

\*The bear continued to aggressively move around the rescue party in a half circle, at a distance varying 20 to 70 yards.

\*The bear continued to stalk the rescuers and victim, making another bluff charge while initial medical attention was being given to the victim.

\*Emergency medical (EMS) and Air Idaho personnel hiked into the site of the injured man.

\*Two GC SAR members arrived with snowmobiles and a rescue toboggan.

\*EMS was able to bandage the victim and carry him up to the ski trail to the SAR rescue toboggan. The victim was transported to the EMS ambulance in the campground and was then transported to the Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Poor weather conditions prohibited victim transport via helicopter.

**16:54 hours** – Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) Warden arrived at campground.

\*Two WYPD officers, 1 GCSO deputy, 1 USFS LEO and the MTFWP warden went back to the site to get coordinates and take initial pictures of the incident scene. The victim's personal items including an empty can of bear spray were noted and photographed. The initial investigation group then left the scene. The bear was not encountered during this brief investigation.

\*A digital camera with a telephoto lens was found within 4 feet of where the victim had been laying when found by rescuers. The camera was secured in the victim's vehicle at the entrance gate to the Baker's Hole Campground when the victim was transferred to the ambulance. A friend of the victim took possession of the vehicle and investigators did not have opportunity to examine the camera.

\*The moose carcass **was not** noticed by SAR or by the helicopter during the rescue recovery of the victim.

**1830 hours** – USFS HEBGEN RANGER DISTRICT posts closure signs of area.

**04-16-2021**

**1000 hours** - Official order from the Custer Gallatin Forest Supervisor was signed and posted.

## **SITE INVESTIGATION and BEAR MORTALITY:**

**1400 hours** –

\* An investigation team consisting of two USFS LEOs, three MTFWP Wardens and two MTFWP Bear Specialists with one dog meet at USFS/MTFWP residential site north of Baker's Hole. It was required and imperative to investigate the attack site due to its proximity to a public campground, cabin area and well used hiking trails.

The overall investigation, methodology of approach/hike, individual duties at the site and considering the bear's aggressive behavior during the victim's rescue, the bear may still be present and potentially charge were all discussed. Additionally, if the bear was present and would not "bump off" and did charge, it would have to be killed.

The investigation party then drove to Baker's Hole Campground proceeding to the south end of the south campground loop and ski trail.

\*The investigation team began hiking south along the ski trail towards the mauling site. After approximately 45 yards of hiking, the team stopped, firing 2 cracker rounds and hollered. The dog began barking and alerted that it could smell a bear. One of the team members said he had seen something moving approximately 50 yards away in the trees east of the team and ski trail and stated it could be a bear. The dog was now growling and barking indicating a bear was close. The bear was travelling in a parallel direction to the team as they hiked south.

\*The team waited a few minutes, then proceeded another 80 yards, stopping to fire 3 additional cracker rounds. Members of the team alternated yelling during the entire hike to the site. The team again waited a few minutes and there were no other sightings or indications the bear was near or approaching. Though the dog was barking, the investigation team did not know if the bear had possibly moved out of the area or if it was still nearby.

\*The team then hiked to where the old spur logging trail forked off the ski trail, downhill in a southeasterly direction. This junction is approximately 200 yards along the ski trail south of the campground loop. Upon stopping, 2 more cracker rounds were fired. Again, there was no indication the bear was nearby. Team members yelled as the dog continued to bark while they slowly walked down the spur trail towards the attack site. The trail had intermittent deadfall trees across it.

\*Approximately 50 yards down the spur trail, several team members said they could see some brush and a small conifer move, indicating towards the northeast across an open boggy wet area. All members stopped and readied in case it was the bear and it charged. Within seconds the bear silently charged out of the brush, head down, ears back and running full out. The bear crossed the open wet area and continued charging towards the team members, running into a patch of deep rotten snow in the willows. The bear floundered in the deep snow, dug its way clear and began to charge again. At this point the decision was made to shoot the bear.

**1435 hours** - Multiple members shot at once killing the bear instantly.

\*The bear was checked to confirm it was dead and to see if it had been previously captured or marked.

\*A submerged, cached/buried moose carcass was found nearby.

- \*All scenes associated with the incidences were photographed.
- \*Distances between key locations were measured.
- \*Mr. Mock's personal items were collected as were items left by first responder medical staff.
- \*GC SAR was contacted, bringing a tracked ATV to move the bear carcass to vehicles in the campground.

**1630 hours** - All personnel and the bear carcass at vehicles in the campground.

## **INVESTIGATION FINDINGS:**

*The site of where the grizzly bear attacked Mr. Mock was investigated 3 times, on 15 April during an initial investigative overview after Mr. Mock had been recovered by SAR, on 16 April during the actual site investigation and on 21 April during the removal of the moose carcass.*

Following the ski trail from the south end loop of Baker's Hole Campground and then the old logging spur trail, it is approximately 270 yards to the attack site.

The attack site was approximately 70 yards down an old logging spur trail running southeasterly from the ski trail. The site is at the end of the old logging spur located in mature LPP timber and at the edge of a boggy wet area.

Personal items found at the attack site area belonging to Mr. Mock included one muck-type boot, sunglasses, small plastic fishing tackle box, a winter cap, an empty can of bear spray\* & holster, safety lock from bear-spray cannister, fishing pole and a half-empty juice container.

\*The can of bear spray was the UDAP brand, 7.9ounce, Expiration 12/2023 S/N P1711-071135).

It was later discovered that a digital camera was found near Mr. Mock during the rescue but the camera was taken into the possession of Mr. Mock's friends. On 17 April, a MTFWP warden was able to view the memory card from the camera and did not find any pictures from the Baker's Hole area or from the day of the attack.

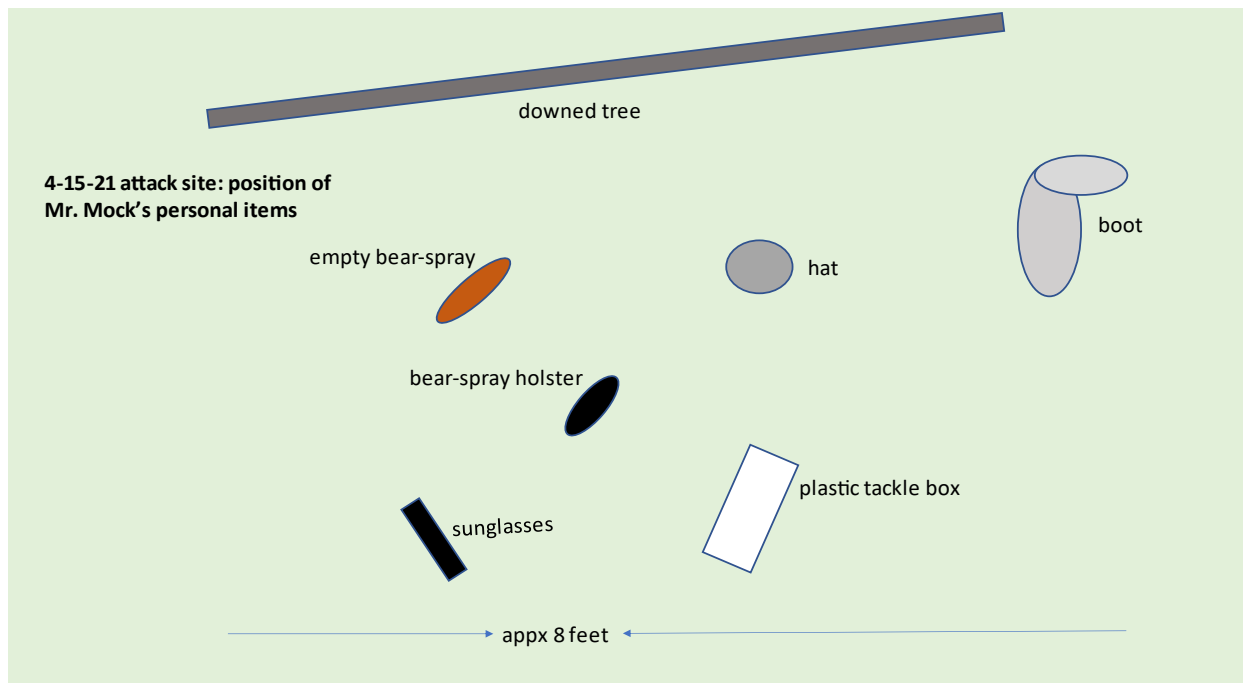
After the investigation team had to kill the bear on 16 April, a moose carcass was discovered cached in the water (Photo 3) near the site where Mr. Mock had been attacked. It was 47 yards from the cached moose carcass to the attack site. Searching the area around the moose carcass it was evident that a bear had been feeding on the moose for numerous days due to multiple and drying bear scats. It could not be determined what caused the death of the moose. Common causes of moose deaths are predation, ticks, winterkill (poor nutrition), meningeal artery worms and vehicle strikes. There were no broken long bones observed on the moose that are normally associated with a vehicle strike from nearby US Highway 191.



**Photo 3. Moose carcass cached in water near the attack site.**

The bear-spray safety lock, fishing pole and a half empty juice contains were discovered where it was determined Mr. Mock had been and first reacted defensively due to the bear. The bear-spray safety lock and juice container were 1 to 2 feet E x NE of the fishing pole. The fishing pole was approximately 6 feet away (NE) from where Mr. Mock had obviously been mauled. At the mauling site Mr. Mock's boot, tackle box, sunglasses, knit cap and empty bear-spay were found scattered in the snow. A diagram of Mr. Mock's personal items at the attack site can be viewed in Figure 2. The bear-spray can was empty and investigators assumed Mr. Mock had likely sprayed the entire can of bear-spray.





**Figure 2. Position of personal items belonging to Mr. Mock found at the attack site.**

Search and Rescue had found Mr. Mock 12 feet up the logging spur trail from where he had been attacked.

A diagram of the distances and location of moose carcass, attack site, bear and investigative team are shown in Figure 3. A satellite image of the locations and relationship of attack site to campground (south loop visible in upper left) and US Highway 191 are shown in Figure 4 and a closer view of the attack area is shown in Figure 5.

Anecdotal information from a friend in West Yellowstone of Mr. Mock's stated that he had talked with Carl Mock in the early afternoon (1342 hours) of 15 April. Mr. Mock said he was going home to get lunch and go back out that afternoon. This information indicates Mr. Mock had only been in the Baker's Hole area for a relatively short time before the bear attack occurred.

Mr. Mock's 911 call to WYPD was recorded. The 911 call lasted for 49 minutes and 47 seconds, 27 minutes into the call at 1609 hours, the dispatcher asked him (Mr. Mock) if he was out fishing. He responded "No, I was taking pictures (with moaning in that statement)" She asked him, "You were out taking pictures?" He then moans with an unintelligible response.

### **BEAR FINDINGS:**

The bear was 20 yards northeast of the unknown moose carcass when it charged the investigation team, who were 57 yards from the bear across the boggy wet area.

The bear was killed 24 yards from the investigative team who were approximately 37 yards from the unknown cached moose carcass.

**FIELD:**

Examination of the bear revealed tattoos were visible in both upper inside lips.

No ear tags were present.

Overall body condition was a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5.

No visible recent wounds or injuries.

Teeth were worn with lower canine teeth broken and worn. Incisor teeth were worn smooth with some missing as is normal with aged bears. Field estimate of age was around 20 years old.

Tattoos were noted in both inside upper lips.

When the bear was loaded into a vehicle at the campground, it was evident the bear had been bear-sprayed by Mr. Mock during the attack as personnel began coughing from the bear-spray residue becoming airborne from handling the bear.

**LABORATORY:**

During the examination of the bear at MTFWP Region 3 Headquarters in Bozeman the bear-spray residue again physically affected investigators.

The bear weighed 411 pounds.

The tattoo was read as 504 in both upper inside lips. Tattoo 504 identified the bear as bear number 449 in the Inter-agency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) database for the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Bear 449 was 6 years old when captured on 9/21/2003 at Cascade Creek, YNP by the IGBST during research capture efforts. Bear 449 had been lip tattooed in both upper lips with green ink, number 504 inside both upper lips (Photo 4.), ear tagged, fitted with a GPS/VHF radio-collared and implanted with a micro-chip at that time. Last known location of bear 449 was on 2/22/2004 at his den site near Nymph Lake, YNP. It was deemed a collar failure as the signal had been intermittent since the bear had been captured, collared, and released on site.



Photo 4. Tattoo number 504 in upper lip of bear 449.

Overtime, male bears are prone to losing ear tags and radio-collars when fighting with other male bears, plus radio-collars are designed to drop off bears.

No functioning micro-chip could be located on bear 449 during laboratory examination, which was not surprising after nearly 18 years since the chip was implanted.

Bear 449 had no previous conflict management captures or history.

A gastro-intestinal examination of bear 449 was conducted revealing moose hair, trachea cartilage, and muscle tissue along with grass/dirt debris. A piece of tissue that was suspected as skin and cartilage that was not identifiable or consistent with other tissues in the stomach was collected and submitted to the Wyoming Game and Fish Forensics Laboratory in Laramie, Wyoming for identification as to origin of tissue. Results were received 14 June 2021. The tissue was identified as originating from a grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*). See Appendix B.

\*The unknown grizzly bear tissue and its location in the lower stomach portion of bear 449 indicates 449 had possibly been in a very recent fight with another grizzly bear defending the moose carcass or fought taking the moose carcass from another grizzly bear. If this were the case, those interactions could have contributed to bear 449's overall aggressive defense of the moose carcass towards Mr. Mock, initial SAR and the Investigation Team.

Muscle (meat) tissue can persist for 14+ hours in the digestive tract of fully active and feeding brown (*Ursus arctos*) bears (Elfstrom et al. 2013). Skin and cartilage tissue can persist longer due to slower gastro-intestinal digestion of the tissue and tissues could also persist longer if a bear was not actively consuming amounts of foods to move previously ingested food through the digestive tract. Skin and cartilage could persist in the digestive tract at an outside time of 2 to 3 days (pers. comm. Charlie Robbins Ph.D. -Washington State University, Pullman, WA.)

The skull/brain of bear 449 was submitted for rabies testing to the Montana Department of Livestock, Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Bozeman, Montana. The results were negative for rabies. See Appendix C.

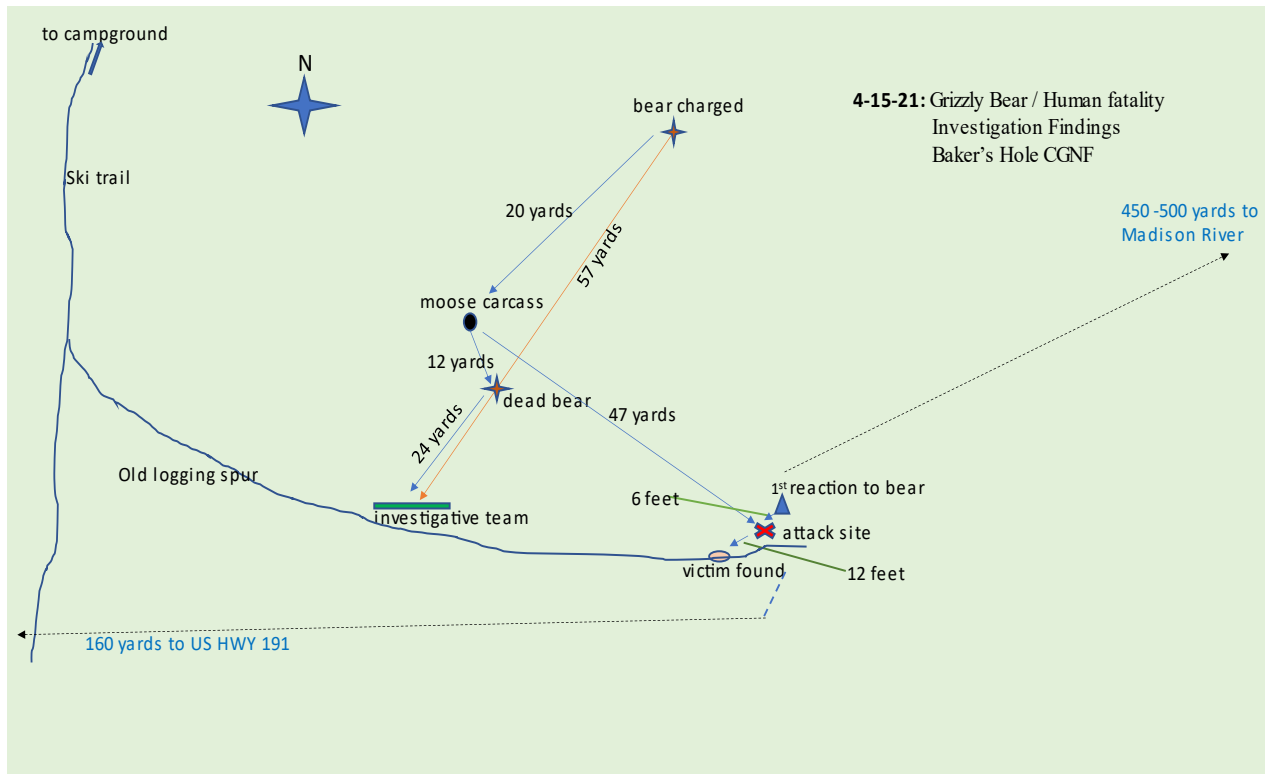


Figure 3. Distances and location of moose carcass, attack site, bear and investigative team near Baker's Hole Campground.



Figure 4. View of the relationship between the attack area, south end loop of Baker's Hole Campground and US Highway 191.



Figure 5. Closer view of the attack area and locations of significant points.

## 04-19-2021

CGNF Hebgen Basin District and MTFWP Bear Management discuss the known moose carcass, its potential to attract other bears, proximity to campground, hiking trails and the options for its removal. Dragging the moose carcass out of area would create a scent trail for other bears to follow to the campground and feasibility of doing so did not exist due to boggy wet area. Hebgen Basin District decided to use explosives for removal and would handle all logistics in the removal of the moose carcass.

## 04-21-21

### **REMOVAL (explosives) OF MOOSE CARCASS:**

Personnel from the Hebgen Basin District CGNF, Bozeman District CGNF, Cody, Wyoming Bureau Land Management (BLM), MTFWP, GCSO and WYPD were all involved in the removal of the carcass.

The BLM flew a drone over the area for possible detection of another bear on or near the moose carcass. No bears were observed and the carcass did not appear to have been recently fed on. A USFS LEO and two MTFWP personnel provided security. CGNF field staff and certified explosive blasters were responsible for actual moose carcass positioning and blasting.

The moose carcass was successfully exploded into obscurity. The area remained closed to the public to allow for scavengers to utilize any small pieces of the moose and for the scent to dissipate.

**04-30-2021** Custer Gallatin National Forest lifts closure and re-opens the area to public use.

## **CONCLUSION:**

On 15 April 2021 prior to 1542 hours Mr. Charles (Carl) Wesley Mock was attacked by a grizzly bear near Baker's Hole Campground on the CGNF. When rescued Mr. Mock was found severely injured 12 feet west of the mauling site. Mr. Mock did not give statements or communicate with SAR as to the grizzly bear attack. Once in medical care Mr. Mock did not speak or was in condition to talk about the attack. Unfortunately, Mr. Mock died from the complications of his sustained severe head and neck injuries on 17 April 2021.

Alone, Mr. Mock had parked his vehicle at the entrance of CGNF Baker's Hole Campground to begin his hike and activities. The campground and entry are well posted with grizzly bear information.

It cannot be determined if Mr. Mock purposely or randomly went to the site of the attack. Mr. Mock was in possession of fishing gear and a telephoto lens camera. The closest point to the Madison River is approximately 400 yards northeast of the attack site. From information provided by Mr. Mock's friend it is estimated Mr. Mock was in the Baker's Hole area for less than 1.5 hours. However, it cannot be determined exactly how much time Mr. Mock had been at the site area prior to being attacked.

Considering field investigation findings of the locations of the attack site, the cached moose carcass and the old logging spur trail, it seems apparent that Mr. Mock had walked along the ice packed ski trail and then down the logging spur trail, passing within 37 yards of the moose carcass to the location of the bear attack site. Either he had done so without being noticed by the bear or the bear came to the moose carcass after Mr. Mock had reached the area of the attack site, which was 47 yards from the moose carcass. The old logging spur/trail basically ends at the attack site.

Though Mr. Mock had told 911 dispatch that he was taking pictures, it cannot be confirmed what Mr. Mock was doing prior to the bear detecting and then attacking him, but the half empty juice container suggests Mr. Mock had likely stopped at the location before the bear detected him.

Field investigation and examination of Mr. Mock's fishing gear did not indicate he was or had been actively fishing when the attack occurred. Mr. Mock was in possession of a valid Montana fishing license, purchased March 10, 2021. Mr. Mock had not purchased a YNP fishing license on-line and vendors in West Yellowstone were not yet in possession of 2021 fishing licenses to sell. Fishing in YNP opened May 29th.

Due to the empty canister of bear-spray and the bear-spray residue on the bear carcass (hair), Mr. Mock had obviously been aware of possible grizzly bear encounters in the area and had deployed his bear-spray at the bear. It is not known if he bear-sprayed towards the bear prior to the bear contacting him or at what points during the attack he used the spray. During field and lab investigations, it was confirmed that the bear had substantial bear-spray residue on its hair. Additionally, the overall effects of the bear-spray to the bear are not known but the bear had quit attacking Mr. Mock, indicating the bear was affected by the bear-spray. After the bear stopped attacking, Mr. Mock was able to move a short distance and call 911 emergency. However, the bear remained agitated, close to the attack site and near the moose carcass, which was unknown to rescuers during the initial SAR and again the next day (16 April) during the team investigation of the attack site area, when the male bear was killed as it charged the investigation team.

The tragic event of Mr. Mock being attacked by an adult male grizzly bear and subsequently dying from the attack, was the direct result of Mr. Mock's own purposeful or random placed proximity to a moose carcass that an adult male bear had cached and was actively feeding on. A short time before the adult male bear attacked Mr. Mock it may have defended or claimed the moose carcass from another grizzly bear. If so, this would have contributed to the bear's extended aggressive defense of the moose carcass.

## **BOR Recommendations:**

The unfortunate subsequent death of Mr. Charles (Carl) Mock caused by a grizzly bear attack on 15 April 2021, reinforces the inherent possibility of people being involved in a serious grizzly bear encounter and the need for individuals to know and try to follow known safety recommendations.

Due to an increase in human use, bear population numbers and geographic grizzly bear distribution, more people are encountering grizzly bears. These encounters can and have resulted in human injuries or death. Multi-agency bear managers and researchers have conducted a continuous examination of these events. The goal is to provide public information to help reduce dangerous encounters and increase human safety in grizzly bear country.

There are standard grizzly bear safety messages for different public users and private landowners that can help minimize surprise encounters with grizzly bears, thereby reducing human injuries and possible death.

Some of the base safety messages are:

- \* Be constantly alert
- \* Hike or hunt with a partner(s)
- \* Make noise, if possible, to help avoid surprising a bear

- \* Secure food attractants at camps, homes, and work sites
- \* Do not run if you encounter a bear
- \* Avoid animal carcasses -watch for concentrations of scavengers (i.e. ravens)
- \* Carry and know how to use self-defense....bear-spray and or firearms

***It is always recommended to carry bear-spray even if individuals carry firearms.***

*Kevin Frey – Grizzly Bear Specialist, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks*

**References:**

Elfström, M., Støen, O-G., Zedrosser, A., Warrington, I., Swenson, J.E. 2013: Gut retention time in captive brown bears *Ursus arctos* - *Wildlife Biology* 19: 317-324



## Appendix A:



### OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF / CORONER GALLATIN COUNTY, MONTANA

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Sheriff

**Jeremy Kopp**  
Undersheriff

**Randy Jones**  
Chaplain

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On April 15, 2021 at approximately 1543 hours, I was dispatched by the West Yellowstone Police Department dispatch center to the report of a 40 year old male who reported he had been attacked by a bear. Dispatch reported the male was approximately 200 yards from the front entrance to the Bakers Hole Campground and was off trail. The male was later identified as Charles Wesley Mock of West Yellowstone.

I instructed dispatch to page out Hebgen Basin EMS and have them stage at the front entrance to the campground. An update from dispatch informed responding units that Mock had sustained facial injuries, was laying on the ground, there was only one bear and responders should go right at the main entrance.

I arrived on scene approximately 10 minutes after the initial dispatch. Also arriving on scene were Forest Service LEO Ryan Linhart (FS72), West Yellowstone PD officer Neil Courtis (686), Hebgen Basin Fire Chief Shane Grube (36) and Gallatin County SAR member Travis Mann. We all started a hasty search of the area, looking for foot prints in the snow near popular hiking areas. WYPD officer Leonel Sosa arrived a short time later and joined us in the search.

I assigned Chief Grube to take over Incident Command and help coordinate our search efforts. With a lot of ground to try to cover, more information was requested from dispatch. Unfortunately they were unable to triangulate the 911 call, but were still on the phone with Mock. Mock was able to communicate with dispatch, although garbled and hard to understand. Grube activated his siren in hopes that Mock would be able to hear it and possibly guide us closer. Mock was able to tell dispatch that he could hear the siren and that he was about 1/4 away from the campers in the campground, toward town. He then said he was off the blue diamond ski trail.

This information gave us a definitive area to focus the search in. Grube asked Air Idaho in West Yellowstone to add some aerial search support and they launched. He also sent out a Search & Rescue page for a backcountry rescue. Linhart and Mann were closest to the trailhead at the southern part of the campground and immediately headed up the trail. Courtis and I followed behind, roughly three minutes behind them. We were joined by Sosa later, after Courtis and I stopped, having spotted the bear.

Approximately 200 yards south of the campground on the blue diamond trail, I spotted a bear that was about 80 yards east of our location. The bear was standing on its hind legs



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and making huffing noises at us. The bear then dropped to all fours and charged us, breaking off his charge after about 30 yards. We were yelling and hollering at the bear as he charged. Dispatch notified us that Mock could hear us yelling at the bear and he said the bear was very close to him. I notified other search units to respond to our location, knowing we were very close to Mock.

We proceeded south on the trail about another 20 yards until we discovered human footprints in the snow, heading east toward the location of the bear. We started following the footprints east and hollering at the bear who was still aggressively pacing the area and watching us. Approximately 70 yards later, we found Mock laying on the ground. He was seriously injured, having suffered significant head and facial injuries. The bear continued to stalk us, aggressively moving around us in a half circle at a distance of approximately 40 – 70 yards.

Courtis, Sosa and Mann provided scene security for us while Linhart and I provided medical care to Mock. None of the responders on scene had any medical gear with us. Linhart and I determined that we needed to somehow stop the large amount of blood that Mock was losing. Linhart took off his uniform top and removed his t-shirt while I continued to support Mock. Linhart wrapped the t-shirt around Mock's head and applied direct compression. Mock was having difficulty talking and breathing due to the amount of blood in his mouth. We made the decision to move him into the recovery position with Linhart supporting his head & neck and me rolling his body onto his side. This seemed to allow Mock better breathing.

The bear continued to stalk the group and made another false charge. At this point, I turned patient care over to Linhart while grabbing my rifle and providing additional security against the bear. Emergency medical personnel from Hebgen Basin and Air Idaho were able to hike into our location while we provided protection from the bear. Two Gallatin County Sheriff SAR members arrived on scene with two snowmobiles and a rescue toboggan. EMS personnel were able to bandage and wrap Mock's head, they placed him on a backboard and carried him the 70 yards uphill to the SAR rescue personnel and gear.

Mock was then transported to the ambulance at the entrance to the campground. The armed first responders then escorted the EMS crew out of the area and back to the campground. Due to snow and bad weather that had moved in during this incident, Air



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Chaplain

Idaho was unable to fly Mock to the hospital, so he was transported to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls by ambulance.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks LEO Robert Pohle (FG32) arrived. Officers Curtis, Sosa, Linhart and I escorted him back in to the scene of the attack so that he could take some quick pictures and log an accurate GPS location of the attack. The incident happened at 44.70002, - 111.10018

615 South 16<sup>th</sup>  
Bozeman, Montana 59715  
(406) 582-2100  
FAX (406) 582-2126

Initial investigation at the scene indicated that Mock was likely attacked 15 feet east of the location he was laying at when we found him. It appeared that Mock was able to retrieve his bear spray from its holder and was able to deploy it (can was empty). Additional items on scene were a digital camera with a large telephoto lens, spin fishing rod, small plastic box of lures, and a backpack.

The following day on April 16, personnel from the Forest Service and FWP reentered the location of the bear attack and were charged by a bear. Even with seven people yelling, shooting explosive noise making shotgun rounds, and a dog barking at the bear; the bear continued to charge the group. They were forced to shoot the bear and killed it.

An investigation of the area revealed a large moose which had been buried and cached by the bear. This moose was about 35 – 40 yards away from the location where Mock was attacked. Forest Service requested an agency assist from me, requesting equipment and help removing the bear carcass from the woods. I arrived on scene with a tracked four-wheeler with attached winch. We were able to winch the moose up a short hill and drag it out to the campground across the snow covered trail. The bear was loaded into the back of a truck and taken by FWP for further evaluation and research.

Case closed – Search & Rescue and Agency Assist

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael P. Gavagan".

Deputy Mike Gavagan – Badge #635  
Gallatin County Sheriff's Office

Footnote: it was the bear carcass that was winched up a short hill, not the moose carcass.

FWP21CAD001860 Robert Pohle

On April 15, 2021 at approximately 1630 hours, I, Game Warden (GW) Robert Pohle was home off shift when I received a Gallatin County Search and Rescue page on my personal phone requesting help searching for a 40 year old male who had been attacked by a bear. The location of the attack was Bakers Hole. Upon seeing this I called the West Yellowstone Police Department (WYPD) to let them know I was responding, inquiring if the attack occurred inside Yellowstone National Park (YNP) or the county. I was told dispatch was having a difficult time locating the victim, later identified as Charles (Carl) Wesley Mock (DOB 03/24/2981). **Note:** Due to some technical issue, Carl's phone was not providing coordinates to the 911 system allowing for a back trace. After hanging up with WYPD, I called Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Bear Management Specialist (BMS) Kevin Frey, leaving him a voice mail notifying him of the incident. As my Sergeant was away, I called Warden Captain Adam Pankratz leaving him a voice mail as well. My final call was to Sergeant Coy Kline in Butte, Montana, so I was able to directly notify a supervisor of the incident.

After gearing up, I responded, lights and siren to the Bakers Hole area. While en route I called Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) dispatch to have a call for service started. Captain Pankratz returned my call and after relaying the limited information I had, we agreed if I saw a bear in the vicinity of Bakers Hole, it was to be dispatched.

As I arrived to the Bakers Hole area, I radioed Hebgen Basin Fire Chief Shane Grube who was Incident Commander (IC), requesting info on where other responders were. I was instructed to come to the south loop of Bakers Hole United States Forest Service (USFS) campground where IC was staged. Chief Grube let me know Carl had been located and was in the process of being extricated by law enforcement and medical staff.

I met the group of first responders as they were exfiltrating from the attack location with Carl. Carl was heavily bandaged, being towed on a Search and Rescue (SAR) sled behind a snowmobile. Gallatin County Sheriffs Office (GCSO) Deputy Mike Gavagan, WYPD Officers Leonel Sosa and Neil Curtis, and USFS Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Ryan Linhart gave me a quick brief of the situation. The officers stated they encountered the bear several times during the search for Carl. During the first encounter the bear bluff charged the group of officers several times at approximately 100 yards. During this first encounter, they noticed what appeared to be blood on the head/mouth of the bear. As they continued to search for Carl, they stated the bear hung out in the area refusing to leave, even while medics worked on Carl and the snowmobiles moved in to extract Carl. This information was concerning to me, as with that much human activity, it is not normal behavior for a bear to continue to hang out. **Note:** I learned several days later that while searching for Carl, a SAR helicopter was flying low over the area assisting in the search. Upon hearing the bear was still in the area, I went back to the attack scene with Officers Sosa, Curtis and Deputy Gavagan, with the intent to dispatch the bear.

When we arrived at the attack scene, I observed no indication that a bear was in the immediate area. Not identifying an immediate threat, I took several photos to

FWP21CAD001860 Robert Pohle

document the scene and used my OnX hunt maps to get Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of that location. The location of the scene is 44.70002, -111.10018.

The scene consisted of a patch of snow soaked in what appeared to be blood. A rubber boot, fishing tackle box, sun glasses and a blood soaked beanie cap were strewn about the patch of snow. A blood splattered can of bear spray and holster, later determined to be empty, laid on the edge of the snow. The orange safety cap from the bear spray was several feet away in the grass. A fishing pole and juice bottle lay off to the south east. North west of the snow was the area where medical staff performed first aid. There was various medical packaging littering the ground, clothing that had been cut off Carl and used bandages. After quick photographic documentation of the site, all units returned to the IC.

**Note:** The can of bear spray was the UDAP brand, 7.9ounce, Expiration 12/2023 S/N P1711-071135).

After returning to the IC, I met with USFS District Ranger (DR) Jason Brey, Chief Grube and USFS LEO Linhart to discuss what the preliminary plan was for public safety due to the popularity the location held for recreationists. DR Brey stated the USFS was closing the area and evacuating the few campground hosts who were prepping the facility for opening. Chief Grube informed me that Carl had been transported via ground ambulance to Idaho Falls, due to weather the helicopter was grounded. The helicopters medical crew however was in the ambulance providing patient care to Carl. I cleared the scene while calling in updates to the BMS while the USFS put up barricades and signs stating bear in area and closure information.

Since Carl was going to a hospital in Idaho, I contacted an Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) Warden requesting assistance. I requested a Warden meet Carl at the hospital to collect clothing and if possible, take photos of the injuries and conduct a quick interview as is standard procedure in a Wildlife Human Attack (WHART) incident. I was later notified by IDFG they had been unable to interview Carl or take photos as he was on a ventilator and rushed straight into the doctors. IDFG were able to collect Carl's pants which medical crews had cut off of him. **Note:** I met IDFG Investigator Lauren Lane on April 17th, 2021 in Ashton ID to collect that item.

With night approaching, I talked with BMS Frey and discussed the next steps for the following morning. As I headed home, I came across a vehicle parked inside the USFS emergency closure. I notified WYPD dispatch I would be out looking for the occupants as we did not know the circumstances behind the bear attack and could not leave them in the area without notification of the incident and closure. After finding the individual had been fishing outside of closure on the Madison River, it was determined his car had been parked there before the closure went into effect. He left the scene without incident. Clearing that contact LEO Linhart and I observed another vehicle attempt to enter the closure by the means of the FWP driveway before backing out heading south on US HWY191 where they turned into the Bakers Hole Campground drive. USFS LEO Linhart and I contacted that individual to advise them of the closure and they commented they had heard of a bear attack and were out looking to take pictures of the bear.

Footnote: A fishing pole and juice bottle lay off to the northwest. West of the snow was the area.....

FWP21CAD001860 Robert Pohle

**Note:** Between the attack and when investigators returned to the scene the following day, law enforcement made multiple contacts of people trying to access the closure area. A white Ford F150 with ID license plates stopped by my residence before the attack, while I was off shift. The 2 male occupants of that Ford inquired about a sow grizzly and 2 cubs they had heard were active in the Basin which I was unaware of. They were wearing camo clothing and had a camera with large lenses on the center console. This indicated to me they were wildlife photographers looking for bears. I observed that vehicle along US HWY191 when I initially responded to the scene and then again turning into the Bakers Hole Campground drive as units were clearing. When I last saw that vehicle, USFS personnel were talking to the occupants.

The following morning, April 16, 2021, I was contacted by Captain Pankratz. He informed me to hold off going to the Bozeman Regional Office (BRO) as he was headed down to West Yellowstone, that he would contact Bear Management and we would then plan to meet and return to the attack scene. My decision to return to the scene was made due to the following considerations;

- Without being able to interview Carl, it was unknown what precipitated the attack. We did not know if it was a predatory attack, defensive attack or surprise encounter.
- We had no time line of when an interview with Carl may take place.
- No evidence was collected the day of the attack except for photos and the pants which IDFG retrieved from the hospital.
- It was forecast to start snow/rain in a couple days which would diminish any evidence on scene.
- The area the attack took place is a "high use" recreation area. It is common for anglers, hikers, campers and skiers to frequent the Bakers hole area.
- As noted earlier, multiple law enforcement contacts had been made concerning individuals trying to take pictures of bears. News of bear activity was drawing them in.
- This close to a weekend, we could expect a significant number of recreationists wanting to use the area. This would be compounded by the opening of Yellowstone National Park (YNP) for the summer season and news of a bear active in the area.
- It was imperative that we find out what precipitated the attack. While it was likely guarding a carcass, it was equally likely it was a surprise encounter, it was a bear with cubs or it was a predatory attack. Especially given the volume of human activity in the area while rescuing Carl did not scare the animal away.

After careful consideration, it was decided the significant risk to public safety resulting from the unknown causation of the attack outweighed the risk of a potential bear encounter from a re-entry to the scene. Phone calls were made and a team of seven (7) plus one (1) bear dog was assembled. We met at approximately 1400 hours and after a quick briefing on the situation entered Bakers Hole Campground.

**Note:** The team consisted of Captain Pankratz, GW Daven Thorne, GW Robert Pohle, USFS LEO Noah Pieprzyca, USFS LEO Linhart, BMS Frey (K9 Loki) and BMS

Jeremiah Smith. All team members were armed with lethal firepower and we had bear spray available.

We began our entry to the attack site, following the Boundary Ski trail that exits out of the south loop of Bakers Hole Campground. All members yelled out randomly making noise to alert a bear, humans were present. K9 Loki added to the noise barking loudly. At approximately the same location responders observed the bear the day prior, USFS LEO Pieprzyca alerted the team he saw something brown moving south towards the attack site. The movement came to the east of our location in a marshy area. It was unknown at that point if it was a bear as there were fresh bison tracks in the snow and mud. The team held that position as multiple cracker shells were fired and more yelling was made in attempts to haze the animal away. After several minutes holding that position and not seeing further movement, we continued down the trail. Along the way the team continued yelling and more cracker shells were fired. Specialist Frey alerted the team that the behavior and loud incessant barking from K9 Loki indicated a bear was nearby. **Note:** We were walking into a northerly breeze which would bring any bear scent directly to K9 Loki.

The attack site is approximately 50 yards to the south east of the main Boundary Ski trail down an old, over grown USFS road. That road had multiple downed trees laying across it and others growing through the former road bed. As we turned that way, we got approximately 30 yards from the attack site when BMS Smith alerted us to a bear. The bear was east of our location, at the edge of a small marshy clearing. It was moving south east before it stopped. At that point the bear looked at us for a split second before immediately changing directions and charging directly towards the team. The bear had to clear the marshy area before encountering willows partially buried in snow. As the bear cleared the marshy area, it hit the snow in the willows and was slowed due to the depth and softness. We held fast yelling as the bear kept pushing through the deep snow in a fashion similar to the way a dog runs through deep snow in a field. As the bear continued, it quickly became apparent this was not a bluff charge. The snow while deepest where the bear was currently located, began to thin before disappearing the closer you got towards the team's location. In the event the bear cleared the deep snow and regained traction, there would be no time for the team to react before contact was made with a human, resulting in serious injury or death.

In the split second it took to process what was taking place, I made the decision I was going to engage the bear and shoot it before it was able to gain traction again. I called out loud that I was taking a shot, before firing my shotgun. Afterwards I learned both Specialist Frey and Smith called out to shoot as well. Multiple shots were fired and I could see the impact of several rounds on the bear's body as they hit. The bear slumped down in the snow before moving again. USFS LEO Pieprzyca was armed with an issued 45/70 government rifle and heavy 540 grain bullets designed for penetration. At the instruction of Specialist Frey, USFS LEO Pieprzyca fired a couple rounds into the bear. **Note:** Once shot, it is absolutely imperative to prevent unnecessary pain and suffering of the bear and for public safety, we ensure the bear is deceased. After the bear stopped moving, the other team members covered Specialist Smith and I as we

Footnote: We were walking into a southerly breeze. The bear was northeast of our location...  
It was moving southwest before it stopped.

approached the bear to check its status. As we still did not know the sex of the bear, we approached ready to engage another animal should it have been a female with cubs. Once confirmed dead, I assisted Specialist Smith in rolling the bear over where we discovered it was an adult male. While others maintained a security perimeter and Bear Management began their checks on the bear, I took pictures of the scene, only to discover that during the charge the bear had run over a cached moose carcass, buried in the marshy area. It was difficult to see the moose as it was mostly buried and I could not smell anything that would indicate there was a carcass there.

I used my OnX Hunt maps to get GPS coordinates of the following locations;

- 44.70168, -111.10067 -- Location of the south loop of Bakers Hole Campground.
- 44.69999, -111.10053 -- Location I was standing at when I shot the charging bear.
- 44.70010, -111.10025 -- Location of deceased bear once rolled over.
- 44.70017, -111.10021 -- Location of cached moose carcass.
- 44.70002, -111.10018 -- Location of the attack site from 04/15/2021.

A brief conversation occurred with BMS Frey and it was evident that the primary causation of the bear attack on Carl was the defense of a food source. It is unknown if Carl knew the carcass was there or why he was in that location. The articles of clothing and Carl's possessions left on scene were collected. The only items retained for evidence were the discharged can of bear spray, a bloody beanie soft cap and the pants collected by IDFG. Reports indicated the attack focused on Carl's head, resulting in major head trauma with very little injury to other parts of his body. As such it is unlikely that the bear would have left any saliva or blood on other articles clothing in significant volume to provide any useable evidence to identify an individual animal. The fact the WHART team experienced a strikingly similar encounter less than 24 hours after the initial attack, resulting in a dead male bear leads one to believe the deceased bear was responsible for the attack. It would be unlikely to have multiple dominate male bears so close to such a valuable food source coexisting as the more dominate would chase the lesser male away.

USFS LEO Linhart arranged for Deputy Gavagan to bring a tracked All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) to retrieve the dead bear, as well as USFS Sawyer to clear the path. The ATV's winch was used to retrieve the bear where it was loaded into Captain Pankratz truck and taken to the BRO. While loading the bear, I noticed a burning, tingling sensation in my nose and lungs, coughing several times. That sensation was consistent with past exposure I have had to bear spray, albeit at a much lower dose. Later, while going through Carl's belongings collected from the attack site, I experienced the same sensation of burning and coughing. This indicates bear spray was discharged some time during the attack, consistent with the empty canister of bear spray found. Whether the spray was successfully deployed on the bear, or if the residue on the bear and Carl's belongings was the result of cross contamination, will forever be unknown.

**Note:** I was notified there had been a digital camera with Carl after the fact. That camera was passed off to his friends before my arrival during the initial rescue. On April 17, 2021, I met Keith Johnson (DOB 06/15/1985) at Back Country Adventures in West Yellowstone and was able to view the pictures on the memory card for the month of April 2021. I did not observe any pictures on that card similar to the attack site. Whether any pictures were removed before my observation is unknown, as control was lost over the camera.

I was notified the morning of April 17, 2021 by Captain Pankratz that Carl had succumbed to his injuries while in the hospital. As a result, investigators will never know for certain the events that led up to this bear attack.

No Further Action Taken.

Robert Pohle FG32



**Appendix B:**

**WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT** 5400 Bishop Blvd. Cheyenne, WY 82006 Phone: (307) 777-4600 Fax: (307) 777-4699 [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov) **GOVERNOR** MARK GORDON **DIRECTOR** BRIAN R. NESVIK **COMMISSIONERS** PETER J. DUBE – President GAY LYNN BYRD – Vice President RALPH BROKAW MARK JOLOVICH RICHARD LADWIG ASHLEE LUNDVALL KENNETH D. ROBERTS

Wyoming Game and Fish Wildlife Forensic and Fish Health Laboratory  
1212 South Adams Street  
Laramie, WY 82070  
Phone: (307) 721-1921

**FORENSIC LABORATORY**  
**EXAMINATION REPORT LAB NO.**

21-27-W-CAF  
**SUBMITTERS:** Kevin Frey  
Grizzly Bear Specialist

**AGENCY:**  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1400 South 19th  
Bozeman, MT 59718

**DATE:**

June 14, 2021  
**EXAMINER:** Tasha Bauman  
Lauren Schumacher

**CASE NO.:** 2021-04  
**PURPOSE:** Species identification of the submitted item.

**EVIDENCE RECEIVED:**

Tasha Bauman, Forensic Specialist, received the following item via Federal Express on May 7, 2021:  
Item #1: “Possible skin/cartilage tissue from stomach of grizzly bear”

**EXAMINATIONS CONDUCTED:**

Tests for species and family level identification were performed using serological and enzymatic electrophoretic techniques. Species identification was also performed using an amplified portion of the mitochondrial DNA cytochrome b gene and subsequent sequencing of the amplicon (mcb398 and mcb869). The sequence obtained was matched against sequences in the National Center for Biotechnology Information DNA database ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)).

**RESULTS:**

- 1) Species identification, by serological and enzymatic electrophoretic techniques, of item #1 was non-reactive.
- 2) The sequence of item #1 is 99% (max identity) to grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) sequences in the GenBank database over (395/401) base pairs indicating the sample originated from grizzly bear.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

- 1) Item #1 originated from grizzly bear.

**DISPOSITION OF SAMPLES:**

The item was retained in the custody of the examiners.

21-27-W-CAF Page 2 of 2 June 14, 2021

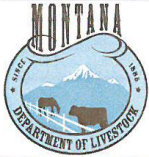
**SEROLOGY AND DNA EXAMINER:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Tasha Bauman, M.S.

Forensic Specialist  
**SEROLOGY AND DNA EXAMINER:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Lauren Schumacher, M.S.

Forensic Analyst

Appendix C:

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	<b>MONTANA</b>	<b>PHONE:</b>	<b>(406) 994-4885</b>
	<b>VETERINARY</b>	<b>FAX:</b>	<b>(406) 994-6344</b>
	<b>DIAGNOSTIC</b>	<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<b><a href="http://www.liv.mt.gov/lab">www.liv.mt.gov/lab</a></b>
	<b>LABORATORY</b>	<b>WEB RESULTS:</b>	<b><a href="https://mvd.liv.mt.gov">https://mvd.liv.mt.gov</a></b>
		<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<b><a href="mailto:mvd@mt.gov">mvd@mt.gov</a></b>
		<b>1911 WEST LINCOLN STREET</b>	
		<b>BOZEMAN, MT 59718</b>	

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JENNIFER RAMSEY DVM FW & P  
1400 S. 19TH AVE  
BOZEMAN MT 59718

**CASE:21-18156**  
**Name/ID:** FWP Grizzly  
**Species:** Brown Bear (Grizzly)  
  
**Sex:** Unknown   **Age:** 20 Years  
  
**Owner:** Montana FWP

**COMPLETE REPORT 04/19/21**

**Sample Collection:** 04/16/21  
**Accession:** 04/19/21

**Case Coordinator Authorization:**  
SH

**Previous Reports**  
04/19/21  
04/19/21  
04/19/21

**RABIES**

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**Rabies**  
Animal ID  
FWP Grizzly

**Brain**  
Test  
Condition  
Human Exposure  
**Rabies Final Result**

**Verified on: 04/19/21 by: SH**  
Result  
Fair  
Yes  
**Negative**