

BOARD OF REVIEW REPORT

Fatality of Leah Davis Lokan from a grizzly bear attack in Ovando, Montana on July 6, 2021

January 4, 2022

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Summary:

Ms. Leah Davis Lokan, a 65-year-old female from Chico, California, was killed by a grizzly bear at a campground in Ovando, Montana on July 6, 2021. Ms. Lokan had been on a multi-day bicycle trip through Montana with her sister and their friend. They rode into Ovando on July 5th to stay the night. Ms. Lokan decided to camp behind the museum next to Kim and Joe Cole, acquaintances they had met along the ride. At approximately 3:08 am on July 6th, Ms. Lokan and the Coles were awoken by a bear near their tents. They all got up and made noise and the bear left the area. At that time, Ms. Lokan moved food (packaged snack foods and dried lentils) from her tent into a nearby building and took bear spray into her tent. After returning to sleep, the Coles were again awoken by noise at approximately 4:05 am and they realized that Ms. Lokan was being attacked by a bear. They immediately ran to seek help and emergency responders were dispatched. After initial attempts to perform CPR and AED, it was determined that there were no obvious signs of life.

Format of report:

An interagency Board of Review (BOR) composed of state and federal personnel prepared this report. A 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 efforts and investigations, personal statements, and documentations of personnel with the Powell County Sheriff's Office, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), and the Powell County Coroner's Office. This report summarizes the incident, the management response, and the eventual resolution. After examining the detailed investigation materials, the BOR members discussed the incident and followed up on some details to clarify particular issues. Information that was used to develop the finding of the BOR is appended to this report. This report is written in sections of occurrence and with an investigative conclusion at the end of the report. The BOR attempted to reconstruct the incident as much as possible given the information available while avoiding speculation about details not supported by the evidence. All times in this report are Mountain Daylight Savings Time.

Background:

Ovando, (47.02002° N, 113.1331° W) is a popular stop over along the Tour Divide, an annual self-supported bike race, and throughout the summer thousands of bicyclists stop in Ovando to rest, camp for the night or stay at the hotel and eat meals at the restaurants. The Tour Divide follows the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route, a 2,700-mile-long route that is 90% off-pavement along the Continental Divide. Leah Lokan, the victim, had been on a multi-day bicycle trip through Montana with her sister, Kim Lokan and their friend Katherine Boerner. The trip had begun in Eureka a few days prior, and they rode into Ovando on July 5, 2021 to stay the night. Kim and Katherine decided to stay in the hotel that night and Leah camped outside in her tent. They met Joe and Kim Cole from Amarillo, Texas, during the bicycle trip. Leah set up her tent in a grassy area behind the Ovando Brand Bar Museum and next to Joe and Kim Cole's tent. The museum is located at 314 Main Street in Ovando, Montana, close to the intersection of Main Street and Pine Street, which is the central hub for the small town (Figure 1).

Fatality Site Investigation:

On July 6, 2021, Powell County Dispatch received a call reporting that a person camping behind the museum in Ovando had been attacked by a grizzly bear at about 4:00 am and needed medical attention. Lincoln Ambulance, Life flight and Helmville/Ovando Quick Response Unit (QRU) were notified. Helmville/Ovando QRU responded to the scene and began CPR approximately 20 minutes after the attack. CPR and AED were administered but discontinued at 4:50 am as there were obvious signs of death and life flight was cancelled. MFWP Game Warden Joe Kambic received a call from Powell County Dispatch at 4:30 am and arrived on scene at 6:30 am. He was the first officer on the scene. Powell County Coroner's office was contacted by dispatch at 4:55 am and coroners, Lynette Renfro and Heather Gregory, arrived on the scene at 7:00 am. MFWP Game Warden Cpt Joe Jaquith also responded and was the

officer in charge of the investigation. Others responding to the scene included: Powell County Sheriff, MFWP Game Wardens, and MFWP Bear Management Team members. Additional notifications went out during the early hours on July 6th to MFWP supervisors, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Blackfoot Challenge, a nonprofit organization in the Blackfoot Watershed, whose mission is to coordinate efforts to conserve and enhance natural resources and the rural way of life in the Blackfoot watershed for present and future generations.



Figure 1. Map of Ovando, Montana with locations of Brand Bar Museum, the fatality site behind the museum, Blackfoot Angler where the security video of the bear was taken, and the chicken coop incident on July 6th.

Details on the Incident

The victim's sister, Kim Lokan, identified the victim as Leah Davis Lokan, a 65-year-old female resident of Chico, California. Investigators responding to the scene found two tents. Leah Lokan had been sleeping alone in one tent. The other tent, belonging to acquaintances of the victim Joe and Kim Cole, was approximately 20 feet from the victim's tent and was undisturbed (Figure 2, Figure 3). After going to bed earlier in the night, the Coles were awakened at approximately 3:08 am by Ms. Lokan crying out "bear, bear." The bear was several feet from the two tents, exploring the area at the time Ms. Lokan became alerted. Joe and Kim Cole both had Counter Assault brand bear spray with them in their tent. They woke up; Joe grabbed Kim's bear spray and they both began making noise. The bear walked off to the north into the field area behind the Ovando store and the bear spray was not used at the time. Ms. Lokan

said, “the bear huffed at my head.” Ms. Lokan got up and moved two bags of food (packaged snack foods and a large bag of lentils) from her tent into a building known as the old jail at the museum, which was the building next door to the campsite, approximately 25 to 30 feet from her tent. She also took a can of Frontiersman brand bear spray into her tent. The Coles did not have any food in their tent. The Coles asked Ms. Lokan if she wanted to stay in the hotel but Ms. Lokan stated “no,” she wanted to stay in the tent. They all went back to bed.

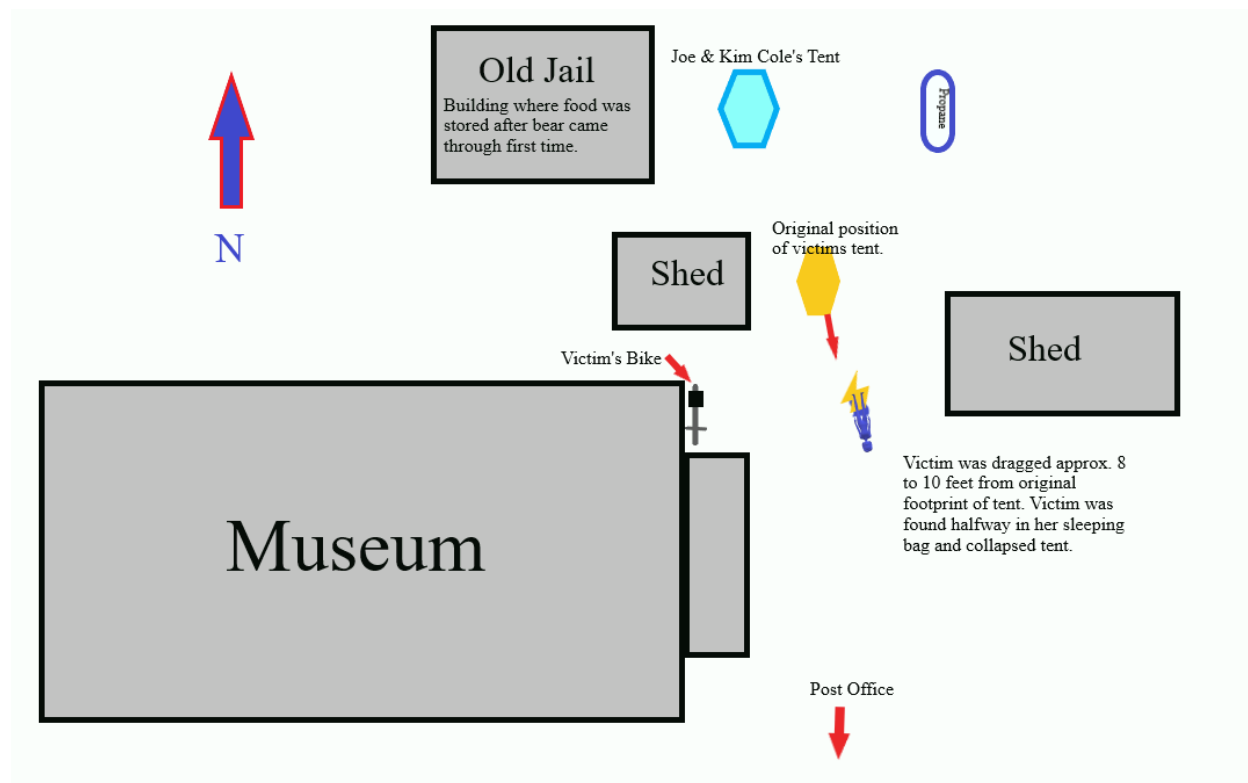


Figure 2. Diagram of the Lokan fatality scene in Ovando, Montana (map not drawn to scale).

At approximately 4:05 am, Joe Cole was awoken again by a noise that made him realize Lokan was being attacked, although she had not yelled out. He immediately started yelling “bear, bear!” He unzipped his tent while yelling in a roaring-like voice and deployed his bear spray as he crawled out of the tent. Kim followed him and began blowing her whistle. The dark shape of the bear was just on the other side of Lokan’s tent, “pouncing up and down” on Ms. Lokan and her tent, as Joe approached continuing to spray. The bear made eye contact with Joe, then averted its head as they approached closer, turned, and left. The back of the tent was still standing but as they approached, they could see that Ms. Lokan and tent had been dragged by the bear approximately 8 to 10 feet (Figures 2, 3) and Ms. Lokan was half out of the tent and sleeping bag showing no signs of life. The Coles immediately ran to the store (Blackfoot Commercial Company, which also houses the Ovando Inn) to wake up guests for help. The can of bear spray Joe used was not recovered but photos show that it was identical to Kim Cole’s

unused can of Counter Assault. Kim Lokan said she believed Joe inadvertently left the can of spray at the store.



Figure 3. Photo of the area behind the museum where Ms. Lokan and the Coles camped.

There is no way of knowing how much bear spray the bear received nor what impact the bear spray may have had on the bear. However, it is obvious that the bear left the attack scene because of Joe's aggressive response and action. The bear made no attempt to defend the body.

The victim's tent was partially collapsed; some belongings were scattered around the immediate area, and a noticeable amount of blood was in and around the tent. The victim's body was found in a prone position, half in the tent with her legs still inside her sleeping bag. The upper part of the tent had been torn and was sitting to the right of the victim. Emergency medical responders (EMRs) moved the tent to gain access to the victim. After performing first aid and CPR and realizing there were no signs of life, EMR personnel placed the victim on the ground in a supine position with legs straight down, arms folded with hands overlaying the abdomen, with a sleeping bag covering her. The victim had been sleeping alone in the tent at the time of death.

Findings

Security camera video from the Blackfoot Angler, a store southeast across Main St. from the museum (Figure 1), showed an approximately 400 lb. grizzly bear (as estimated from the video), in the area approximately 35 minutes prior to the attack (Figure 4). Between 3:26 and 3:30 am a dark-colored bear was videoed coming from the southwest and walking around the front of the Museum. The bear spent about a minute investigating the grass area in front of the museum and then turned and retraced its path back around the museum heading southeast toward the post office. MFWP Game Warden Joe Kambic secured a copy of the video from Blackfoot Angler for review. This was the first bear captured on this video camera in 2021.



Figure 4. Still shot from video taken by security camera at the Blackfoot Angler's. Image shows a grizzly bear walking in front of the Museum on July 6, 2021 at 3:26 am.

Powell County Coroners Lynette Renfro and Heather Gregory conducted the on-site examination of the victim and noted injuries on the victim included severe lacerations to her head, neck, shoulders, and back. Sherrif Gavin Roselles also assisted with taking photographs. The bear had not fed upon the victim. The coroners also collected a blue long sleeve shirt worn by the victim during the attack as evidence. There were numerous bite marks through the material and rips from bites. The distance between canine teeth on the bite marks on the victim's shirt were 2.5 inches. The coroners released the scene to MFWP Game Wardens Justin Singleterry and Lou Royce, who processed the scene (collect, examine, and photograph evidence, including photographs of the scene, personal items that had been in and around the tent, and DNA samples that were later submitted to Wildlife Genetics International in Nelson B.C. by MFWP Warden Justin Singleterry for testing). DNA samples included several hair

samples believed to be animal hairs based on length and color, collected from the victim's shirt, tent, and sleeping pad. There were other hairs found on the shirt and in the tent that were clearly the victim's hair due to color, length, and width. In addition, there appeared to be saliva near bite marks on the screen door of the victim's tent and the entire tent was collected for DNA. The victim's body was transferred to the Montana Crime Lab, in Missoula, MT for an autopsy to be performed on July 7, 2021 by Montana State Medical Examiner, Sunil Prashar, M.D. MFWP Warden Justin Singleterry requested that injuries be swabbed for saliva during the autopsy so that DNA from the bear could be collected.

Two dried blueberry bags containing toiletries and other personal items were found inside the tent. The bags still had the scent of berries on them. No food was found in the tent during examination. Numerous food items, including beef jerky, crackers, seeds, trail mix, granola bars, electrolyte drink powder and tablets, and a baked potato wrapped in foil, were found in the saddle bags of the victim's bicycle which was leaning against the back wall of the museum approximately 10 feet from the victim's tent. Examination of the tent revealed numerous bite marks and tears from the bear breaching the tent. The victim's journal and cell phone were collected from the tent footprint. A journal entry from July 2nd described that the victim practiced deploying bear spray after observing bear signs in and around the area where she was camping at Holland Lake near the town of Seeley Lake, Montana. Nothing of evidentiary value was found in the phone.

Also, inside the tent was the safety retention tab for a can of bear spray. An almost completely empty can of Frontiersman brand bear spray, black with a white label and missing the safety tab, was found under the tent. This can was assumed to be Lokan's. The can had a fresh oily residue on the outside and had a strong odor of capsaicin, suggesting it had been deployed the morning of the attack.

Timeline:

July 5

19:00	Campers Ms. Lokan and Kim and Joe Cole set up tents in Ovando.
Evening	Estimated time that grizzly bear attempted to break into trailer 3.9 miles west of Ovando

July 6

03:08	Campers awakened by bear approaching tents. Ms. Lokan removes food from her tent, campers return to their tents.
03:26-03:30	Lone grizzly bear captured on security camera in Ovando.
04:05	Joe Cole awoken by bear attacking Ms. Lokan.

04:14 Call to Powell County Dispatch.

04:27 EMS on scene.

04:30-06:30 Grizzly bear breaks into chicken coop on 213 Main St, approximately 215 yards from fatality site.

11:30 First Helicopter search. No bears found.

20:00 Second helicopter flight. A bear (likely grizzly) was observed from ground east of Ovando, but it ran into cover and was not seen again.

21:19 Grizzly bear was photographed on a game camera visiting area near chicken coop at 213 Main St. in Ovando.

July 7

05:00 The bear management team patrolled town through the night. Third helicopter flight for thermal image search of Ovando area. No bears detected.

July 8

0:300 The bear management team patrolled town through the night again and MFWP bear specialist Jamie Jonkel confirmed that a bear of unknown species killed a white-tailed deer fawn in a creek bottom below a bedroom window at a ranch 1.5 miles east of town.

09:30 Report of Chicken coop raided by grizzly bear 5 miles east of town. Traps set at site.

July 9

00:00 Grizzly bear returned to the chicken coop from July 8. Bear was shot by WS agents.

Investigation of Other Conflicts and Search for Bear:

While the attack scene was being processed, the rest of the response team began searching by foot and vehicle in and around the south side of Ovando in an attempt to locate the bear and to prevent it from coming back into town. The MFWP Bear Management Team (Jamie Jonkel, Eli Hampson, Rory Trimbo) responded with tracking dogs and bear traps. In addition, MFWP dispatched a helicopter to aid in the search for the offending grizzly bear; the initial search via helicopter occurred from approximately 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. The flight was conducted by an MFWP pilot with an MFWP helicopter and was accompanied by an MFWP Game Warden. Search efforts were focused south of Ovando because track evidence suggested that the bear exited Ovando in that direction and it was considered possible that the bear was in a day bed in

one of these locations. The USFWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, (Hilary Cooley), gave permission to Jamie Jonkel (MFWP) and Kraig Glazier (USDA Wildlife Services) to shoot any grizzly bear observed and matching the general description (solitary bear, ~400 lbs) from the helicopter or ground within a two-mile radius of town during this initial search. No bears were found during the initial ground and helicopter search. This first helicopter search did not have thermal imagery capability. MFWP verified that no radio-collared bears were known to be in the Ovando area.

After the initial helicopter search, MFWP Game Wardens, MFWP bear management team, Powell County First Responders, and Powell County Sheriff debriefed in the Ovando firehall. The conversation started with a critical stress management conversation led by Powell County Grief Counselor for those individuals effected by the tragedy. The counselor relayed information on services available to assist those having trouble coping with the traumatic event. There was a great concern and a desire from the community to have an MFWP presence through the night of July 6 and it was agreed that MFWP Bear Management Team would maintain a presence in Ovando throughout the night. The Powell County Sheriff closed the entire town to overnight camping. MFWP monitored the area for bear activity, including subsequent helicopter flights, and investigated reports of conflicts immediately prior to and after the fatality.

Also during the day of July 6, at approximately, 5:00 am the morning of the attack, a grizzly bear broke into a chicken coop approximately 2 blocks (215 yards) southeast of the fatality site (Figure 1, Figure 5), at 213 Main St., Ovando. MFWP Game Wardens and Bear Management Team members visited the site to collect photographic and DNA evidence. The bear broke into one chicken coop that was contained behind a three-foot high welded wire fence where it killed multiple young chickens. The bear attempted to break into a second chicken coop closer to the house where the adult birds were kept. Several animal hairs and potentially saliva on the chicken coop fence were collected at the scene. Tracks and trails in the grass around the chicken coop and a bedding site toward the creek on the edge of riparian vegetation near the old Ovando fish hatchery indicated that a single bear, matching the size of the bear observed in the video, had spent considerable time feeding on chickens at the day bed site. MFWP bear management team surmised that this was the same bear. The bear grabbed one chicken at a time, carried it out to the wetlands behind the house to the south and fed. The bear repeated this feeding strategy with at least five chickens. Based on noises the owner could hear, the bear remained in the wetlands for about an hour. Evidence found at the chicken coop indicated that the bear had likely been feeding on chickens and chicken feed between the hours of 4:30 am and 6:30 am. Bear trails in the grass indicated that the bear had visited several homes on that side of town and had most likely been at the chicken coop site at 213 Main St.

around the time Warden Kambic first arrived. Traps were set adjacent to the chicken coop area, the site was closed to the public, and remote cameras were set at the site.



Figure 5. Chicken coop that was destroyed by a grizzly bear in the early hours of July 6th approximately 215 yards from the attack site.

Culvert traps, baited with deer and elk meat, were also placed at the scene of the fatality and the immediate surrounding area was closed to the public. A trail camera was also set within view of the incident site to monitor for the bear and document any activity at the trap site.

With four traps set in town, MFWP Bear Team members continued to patrol the area and fielded information requests from the local community. There were several reports of dogs barking southeast of town and north of town shortly after daybreak and a lone grizzly bear was spotted several miles to the west of town around 9:00 am.

A second flight was conducted by MFWP pilot and helicopter, accompanied by a MFWP Game Warden, Ezra Schwalm, at 8:00 pm on the evening on July 6th. No bears were observed from the air. MFWP Region 2 bear team and law enforcement, with assistance of the Powell County

Sheriff's Department, USFWS Law Enforcement and community volunteers, surrounded the Ovando area at strategic points to look for the bear. At dusk, two bears were observed from the ground. MFWP Game Warden, Joe Kambic, observed a black bear west of town in the Monture Hills and MFWP bear specialists, James Jonkel and Rory Trimbo, observed what appeared to be a grizzly bear just east of town. The helicopter was brought to the site where the bear was observed from the ground, but it ran into a thick cover of willows and choke cherry and was not observed again (Figure 6). The helicopter pulled out just before nightfall. Ground patrols continued into the night; no bears were observed.

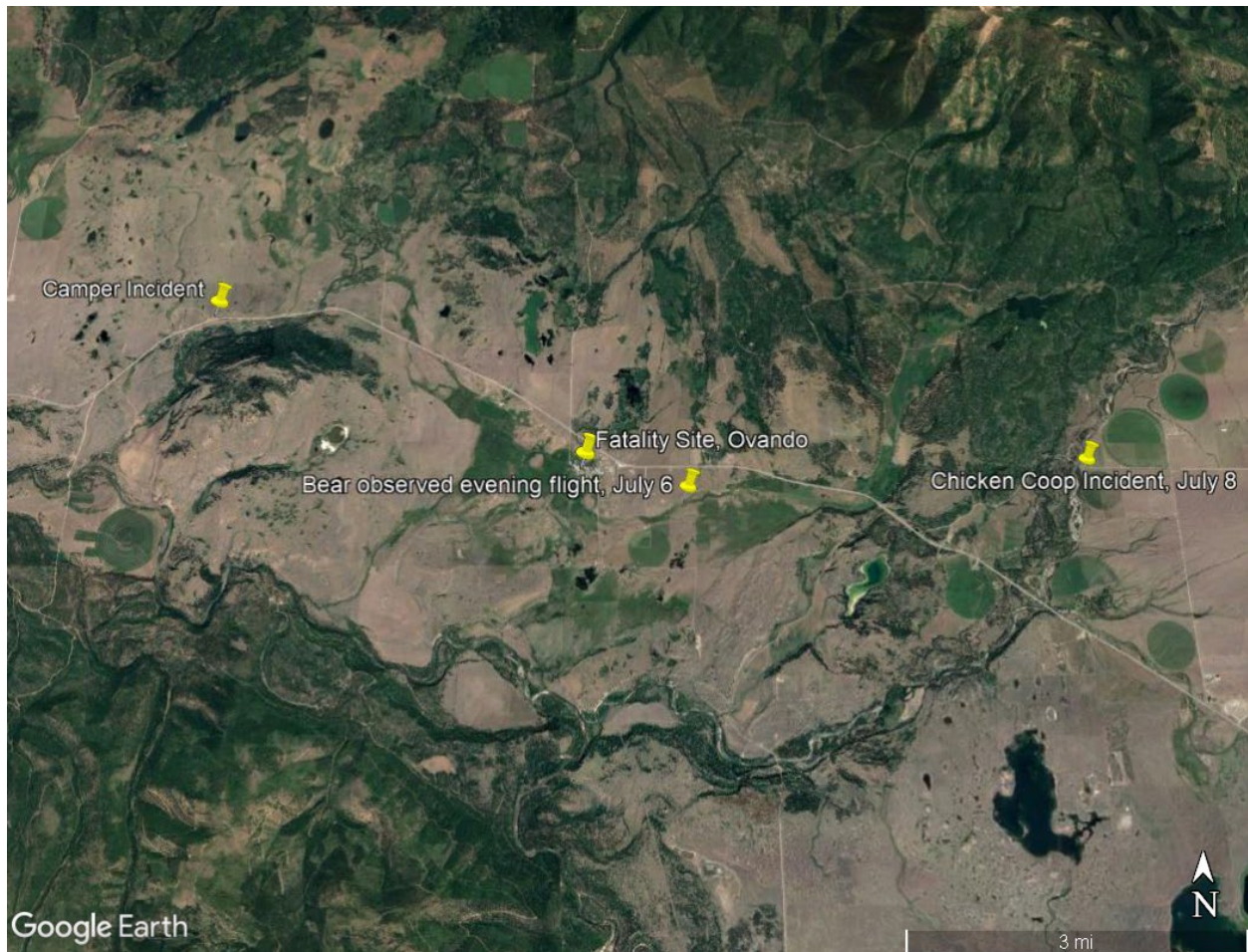


Figure 6. Map of area surrounding Ovando, Montana with locations of the fatality site in Ovando, the camper incident, approximately where the bear was observed on July 6th during the helicopter flight, and the chicken coop incident on July 8th, the location where the bear was ultimately killed at during the early hours of July 9th.

The MFWP Bear Management Team remained through the night to ensure safety in the town. At approximately 10:30 pm, a group of residents visiting around one of the trap sites at the chicken coop were asked to disband and return to their homes for the evening. A main reason

for patrolling through the night was to have an official presence to inform bicyclists of the incident and escort them to stay the night in the church, the school, or the fire hall. Bicyclists participating in the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route were told to avoid Ovando and that no overnight camping was being allowed until further notice.

No bears were trapped overnight, although it was discovered that a lone grizzly bear did return to the chicken coops the night before (July 6th) just after night fall at 12:01 p.m. (Figure 7). This was confirmed through remote camera images at one trap site near the chicken coops. The bear entered from the south side of town, along the riparian area near the old Ovando fish hatchery, to the chicken coop trap site. The bear did not kill chickens on this return visit, likely because the MFWP had constructed electric fences around the coop around the first attempted raid on July 6. The bear spent approximately 15 minutes on the south end of town and investigated one trap site. The bear appeared to have followed the “scent trail” and inspected the trap but did not enter the trap. There were no further observations of the bear in town, and it is assumed that the bear left the Ovando area that night and did not return.



Figure 7. Remote camera image at trap site near the chicken coop approximately 215 yards from the attack site that was destroyed in the early morning hours of July 6th. The remote cameras showed that a lone grizzly bear returned to the chicken coop site on July 6th just after dusk but did not enter the trap.

On the morning of July 7, 2021, MFWP Game Warden, Ezra Schalm, accompanied Two Bear Air in a thermal image search of the Ovando area and riparian areas at approximately 5:00 am. The helicopter intensively surveyed the entire area within one mile of town with some additional casts out to two miles, focusing on the riparian areas. No bears were located during the search.

MFWP Game Wardens and Bear Management Team members continued to monitor the area for bear activity and fielded reports of bears in and around the Blackfoot Valley. Sightings of both black and grizzly bears from the outlying areas and unrelated to the investigation came in throughout the day. The Ovando incident prompted unverified reports from the public throughout the Blackfoot and Clearwater Watersheds but only three of the reports were of a lone grizzly bear, the rest were black bears or family groups. MFWP Bear Management Team members remained to work the traps for the next few days.

The MFWP Bear Management Team continued to provide a presence in town through the next night (July 7th). At dusk, FWP received a report from a community member of a dark-colored grizzly crossing the Dry Gulch Road southeast of Ovando. A MFWP Bear Management Team member responded and patrolled the area with the assistance of Barry Gordon, volunteer caretaker at Upsata Lake Wildlife Refuge, some local citizens, and a county deputy, but no bears were observed. The remainder of the night was relatively quiet. Several bicyclists were escorted to the church and later that night a private citizen patrolling town was asked to refrain from patrolling the area so that he would not displace the bear should it come back to investigate the trap sites. (Note: Later, the next day, information was received that a bear matching the Ovando bear's description of a dark-phased grizzly, had been observed earlier that same day near River Junction (roughly 2.5 miles to the south of town)).

At first light on July 8, 2021, a report came in that a bear had killed a fawn at 3:00 am at a ranch 1.5 miles east of town, the same ranch where the bear had been observed during the second helicopter survey on the evening of July 6th. A MFWP Bear Management Team member investigated the site and was able to determine that a bear of unknown species had been at the site and had indeed killed and consumed the fawn near a ranch house. At 9:30 am, another report came in that a grizzly bear had raided a chicken coop five miles east of town on the south end of Kleinschmidt flat along the North Fork of the Blackfoot River at 492 Oxford Lane (Figure 6). The MFWP Bear Management Team verified that a grizzly bear had broken into this new chicken coop, fed on chicken feed, and killed multiple chickens. The bear had also tipped over and accessed garbage from an incorrectly latched bear-resistant garbage can. Hair samples were collected from the chicken coop and bear-resistant garbage can. There was a single set of grizzly tracks in the driveway, showing the bear had come from the river to the property. The tracks appeared to match the size of the bear tracks left near the chicken coop that was hit on July 6th, the morning of the human fatality. One of the culvert traps was moved from town to the most recent chicken coop incident site. As a backup, the MFWP Bear Management Team contacted the MFWP R2 Supervisor and USFWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator to request assistance from USDA Wildlife Services (WS). WS agreed to provide

agents to sit at the traps and wait for the bear during the night. A second trap was set upriver at another ranch that had a chicken coop and uncontained chickens with hopes to get in front of the bear in case it did not return to the site of the most recent chicken coop incident.

After setting traps, a MFWP Bear Management Team member continued to patrol around Ovando, visiting with the public and taking reports and calls from the public regarding bear sightings in the valley. At 8:00 pm, MFWP Bear Management Team member met with WS agents Kraig Glazier and Bart Smith and showed them where the bear had come out of the river bottom and where the bear accessed the chicken coop the night before. WS agents parked their vehicles in their shooting positions and prepared to sit and wait for the bear to come in. They were equipped with night vision gear, thus allowing agents to shoot depredating predators at night.

At roughly 9:00 pm on July 8th, 911 dispatch reported that a camper had been broken into by a bear at 40374 Highway 200, approximately 3.9 miles west of Ovando (Figure 6). A MFWP Bear Management Team member and a Powell County Sheriff's Deputy went to the site to investigate. The owner advised that she had just returned home after being gone for three days, since the afternoon of July 5th, and discovered that the door had been ripped off her fifth wheel camper trailer (Figure 8). The owner had a single-strand electric fence perimeter that does not meet IGBC guidelines, around the trailer but the bear was able to get through the fence. The rear door to the trailer was pulled up from the bottom and bent outwards, with the top half of the door still attached properly. It appeared that the bear tipped over a chair inside the trailer, but things were otherwise undisturbed inside. The game camera set up by the owner had failed prior to taking any photos and therefore, it is uncertain when the bear damaged the trailer. Although there is no way of knowing for sure, the timing of events at other sites indicated that the trailer damage had most likely occurred Monday evening (July 5th), possibly before the incident in Ovando. MFWP set up a camera at the site and collected what appeared to be grizzly bear hair samples from the door of the trailer.

At approximately 12:00 am on July 9, 2021, a bear matching the description of the Ovando bear returned to where the chicken coop had been destroyed on July 8th at 492 Oxford Lane (Figure 6). WS agents shot and killed a large male grizzly bear as it was actively destroying a chicken coop. MFWP Bear Management Team received a call from WS at 12:09 am that the bear had been shot five times. Law enforcement team and supervisors were notified that a bear had been killed. MFWP Bear Management Team member Eli Hampson arrived at 12:50 am and with the aid of WS, wrapped the bear's paws and head in pillowcases and then wrapped the entire bear in a large tarp and loaded it in the back of an MFWP truck.



Figure 8. Trailer with the door partly ripped off by a grizzly bear approximately 3.9 miles west of Ovando. The incident likely occurred the evening of July 5th.

At 9:00 am on July 9th, the carcass was brought to MFWP Region 2 Headquarters in Missoula. Bear carcasses from human fatalities are commonly taken to a crime lab for necropsy by a pathologist with a MFWP person present, but MFWP decided to bring the bear to MT FWP Region 2 Headquarters in this case. MFWP Bear Management Team members, MFWP Game Wardens, and an MFWP Criminal Investigator, Tom Chianelli, met at MFWP Region 2 Headquarters for an examination. The young adult male grizzly bear was checked for an AVID chip, lip tattoo and evidence of ear tags and showed no evidence of ever being trapped or previously handled (Figure 8). Buccal swabs, tissue, blood, and hair samples were taken from the bear for DNA analysis. The claws were scraped for any evidence of human DNA. A tooth was pulled to get an accurate estimate of age but was estimated to be four to seven years of age based on tooth wear. Hair samples were collected to test for bear spray residue. Investigators decided that a full necropsy was unwarranted because the bear did not feed on the victim. Upon examination, photos were taken of the bear's teeth and measurements matched that of the bite marks in the victim's shirt and tent. The bear had fighting wounds, in the form of bites, around the neck area and over the right shoulder. The wounds were minor, showed no signs of infection, and were consistent with the types of injuries observed on most young male grizzly bears handled during breeding season. Based on training and experience, these minor wounds would not have caused any significant pain nor the bears behavior to be altered. The bear weighed 417 pounds and was in good shape but was a little on the leaner side, as would be expected for this time of year. The bear was taken to Custom Bird Works Taxidermy in Missoula where the hide and skull were salvaged. The carcass was taken to a MDOT composting facility later the same day.



Figure 9. Young, adult male grizzly bear that was dispatched by WS shortly after midnight on July 9th as it returned to the scene of a chicken coop that had been destroyed the day before. DNA confirmed that this was the same bear responsible for the attack on Ms. Lokan and destroying the chicken coop approximately 215 yards from the attack site on July 6, 2021.

Over the weekend the MFWP Bear Management Team continued a presence in Ovando and remained vigilant with evening and morning patrols. All traps, except one on the south side of town where the bear had been observed, were removed. MFWP decided, with community support, to retain one trap at the site until DNA results determined whether the correct bear had been removed.

On July 14, 2021, MFWP Warden Justin Singleterry received confirmation from WGI that their analysis determined that the evidence submitted from the suspect grizzly bear killed on July 9th matched that of the evidence from the attack scene on July 6th and concluded it was the same bear that attacked and killed the victim, Ms. Lokan. On the same day, a MFWP Warden notified the victim's sister, Kim Lokan, of the WGI findings that the grizzly bear that had attacked and killed her sister in Ovando, Montana had been identified and destroyed.

On July 15, 2021, the remaining trap was pulled out of Ovando and the town reopened for camping.

Evidence:

MFWP Warden Justin Singleterry maintained custody of DNA evidence collected from the attack scene until transferred to WGI (Nelson, British Columbia) for DNA extraction and forensic analysis because WGI specifically studies and profiles DNA from grizzly bears in western Montana. Samples will be retained at WGI. On July 8, 2021, MFWP Warden Captain Joe Jaquith and Warden Justin Singleterry obtained a CITES permit from the USFWS and sent DNA evidence collected at the initial attack scene, from the chicken coop, and from the autopsy to WGI via FedEx. FedEx was unable to overnight the evidence and it would arrive the next Monday on July 12th.

After examination of the body of the suspected bear on July 9th, MFWP Warden Captain Joe Jaquith and Warden Justin Singleterry obtained a second CITES permit from USFWS and sent DNA evidence taken from the grizzly bear carcass via FedEx to WGI, scheduled to arrive on July 13th. Hair samples from the bear's head and neck were sent to the chemistry department of the Montana Crime Lab to be analyzed for any bear spray residue.

On July 14, 2021, MFWP Warden Justin Singleterry received confirmation from WGI that their analysis determined that the evidence submitted from the suspect grizzly bear killed on July 9th matched that of the evidence from the attack scene and concluded it was the same bear that attacked and killed the victim. WGI analyzed 22 samples (Table 1) using the standard set of 10 markers (sex plus 9 microsatellites) for identifying individual grizzly bears in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). Since tissue and blood samples from a fresh carcass have a high chance of succeeding, one of each from the bear killed on July 9th was selected for analysis and the rest set aside. Four of the attack-scene hair items were single hairs that looked like bear hair. The success rate for single hairs is low, so those four hairs were pooled for analysis as a single sample. Eight samples produced high-quality genotypes. The genotypes were all identical, indicating that all eight successful samples came from the same male grizzly bear. These samples included: two separate cut-outs of tent mesh with teeth marks, blood, and possible dried saliva; the pooling of four hairs collected from the victim's shirt and tent; a swab taken from the victim's face; two hair samples collected from the chicken coop in Ovando the same day as the fatal attack; a blood sample collected from the bear killed on July 9th; and a tissue sample from the right paw of the bear killed on July 9th. The remaining samples from the attack scene and chicken coop produced weak signal or no signal and were marked as failed. The successful samples were all assigned to the same male grizzly bear. The bear is new to the WGI database and was assigned NCDE_2021_18, as per MFWP naming protocol. The WGI database includes > 4,400 grizzly bear genotypes from the NCDE, South Columbia Mountains, and Southeastern British Columbia. WGI is confident that a genotyping error in this or past work has not resulted in a failure to recognize these samples as from a previously known bear because: 1) the new genotype was reproduced in 8 samples; and 2) the most similar genotype in their reference set differed at 3 of the 10 markers. In addition, WGI has never encountered a case where siblings have identical genotypes (identical twins). Among the > 1,600 NCDE grizzly

bears for which WGI has 10-locus data, they have never identified a case where two bears match at this marker set. WGI calculated the probability that a full sibling would have the same 9-locus microsatellite genotype as approximately 1 in 5,000 ($P < 0.0002$).

Evidence submitted to the Montana Crime Lab for analysis was suspended due to the outcome from the WGI lab and their certainty that the correct offending bear had been identified and destroyed.

Table 1. DNA results from bear hair, saliva, tissue, and blood samples collected at the Lokan fatality site and from the adult male grizzly bear captured approximately 5 miles from Ovando, Montana, 2021.

Field data		Extraction Data				
Collection Date	Sample Type	DNA successfully extracted	#Loci	Genus/Species	Sex	Individual Genotype
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's face	No	1			
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's face	Yes	9	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's neck	No	0			
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's neck	No	1			
7/6/2021	Swab: back of victim's neck	No	0			
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's back	No	1			
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's scalp	No	0			
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's right scapula	No	0			
7/6/2021	Swab: victim's right shoulder	No	0			
7/6/2021	Hair from victim's shirt and tent (pooled 4 scene hair samples that looked like bear hair and had visible root bulbs)	Yes	10	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/6/2021	Hair from tent	No	0			
7/6/2021	Hair from tent	No	0			
7/6/2021	Hair from sleeping pad	No	0			

1						
7/6/2021	Cut out of tent screen with blood, teeth marks & possible saliva	Yes	9	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/6/2021	Cut out of tent screen with blood, teeth marks & possible saliva	No	3			
7/6/2021	Cut out of tent screen with blood, teeth marks & possible saliva	Yes	10	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/6/2021	Cut out of fence from around chicken coop #1, possible saliva around possible bite marks (~215 yds from fatality site)	No	0			
7/6/2021	Hair from chicken coop #1 (~215 yds from fatality site)	Yes	10	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/6/2021	Hair from corner of chicken coop #1 (~215 yds from fatality site)	Yes	10	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/6/2021	Hair from outside chicken coop #2 (~215 yds from fatality site)	No	1			
7/6/2021	Chicken feathers and bones w/ possible saliva (~215 yds from fatality site)	No	6			
7/6/2021	Chicken feathers and tissue w/ possible saliva (~215 yds from fatality site)	No	0			
7/9/2021	Bear blood sample from suspect bear dispatched ~5 miles from Ovando	Yes	10	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18
7/9/2021	Bear tissue sample from right rear paw of suspect bear dispatched ~5 miles from Ovando	Yes	10	Grizzly bear	Male	NCDE_2021_18

Autopsy:

The Montana State Medical Examiner conducted the autopsy on July 7, 2021. The autopsy indicated that the victim had been in good health prior to her death. The medical examiner concluded that the victim's death was caused by multiple blunt force injuries of the head, torso, and right upper extremity, the neck had been broken and spinal cord severed as well as blood vessels. The injuries sustained caused the death to be instantaneous. The manner of death was determined to be accidental due to the injuries sustained as the result of being attacked by a grizzly bear. The toxicology report detected ibuprofen and other medications, that may or may not have affected the victim's response to the attack, in the victim's blood but did not detect alcohol.

History of Bears in the Area:

Prior to the death of Ms. Lokan, there had been no reported grizzly or black bear activity or conflicts in the town of Ovando, Montana this year. After the event, there was an unverified rumor around town that the bear may have been in town several nights prior to the attack. This rumor was not verified. MFWP bear management Team stated that prior to the attack, there had been no recent black bear or grizzly bear activity in the town of Ovando.

On June 10th, however, two adult male grizzly bears were video-taped at a neighboring ranch approximately 4.18 miles to the north of Ovando. In that incident, the two grizzly bears were videoed at night on a remote camera after a chicken coop had been hit the night before. Both bears appeared to be young adult males in the 400-pound range. During the spring and early summer prior to the event, there had been a handful of food attractant-related and chicken coop-related conflicts elsewhere in the valley, mostly in the Seeley Lake, Montana area approximately 20 miles northwest of Ovando.

Although grizzly bears and black bears routinely move through the area and are spotted along the edges of the community, conflicts related to attractants have been limited in Ovando. In the early 2000's multiple grizzly bears and black bears were documented at the Ovando Dump 2.25 miles southeast of town. After an especially hectic year with bears at the dump the community worked with the Powell County Dump Board and the Blackfoot Challenge and placed electric fence around the Ovando Dump in 2011. Since 2011 the town of Ovando has supplied bear spray through checkout programs at the Blackfoot Challenge Office and the Blackfoot Commercial Company.

Most of the recent past issues have been related to apples and fruit trees during the fall months. In the summer of 2018, however, two grizzly bears made several forays into town and got into garbage, bird feeders and chicken coops. The community of Ovando is very proactive and after those incidents the town worked diligently with the Blackfoot Challenge and MFWP R2 to contain attractants and garbage. Multiple bear-resistant garbage cans were purchased and placed in town and two bear-resistant recycling bins were purchased for the store and restaurant. Since 2018, multiple chicken coops and homesites in the Ovando area have been secured with electric fence.

Reports of black bears and grizzly bears in the Blackfoot Valley are commonplace. At any given time, during the summer months, grizzly and black bear activity in the Ovando and Helmville areas are common. In past years, upwards of thirty individual grizzly bears have been documented on the valley floor. Between July 6th and July 9th, 2021, at least four grizzly bear family groups (females with cubs, yearlings, or sub adults) had been identified and multiple lone bears were reported in a twenty-mile radius. Because of the open country, rolling terrain, berry shrub fields, agricultural fields and excellent riparian habitat, bears are more easily observed in the Ovando/Helmville Valley than elsewhere in western Montana.

BEAR FINDINGS:

In Ovando, Montana, prior to the death of Ms. Lokan, there had been no recent black bear or grizzly bear activity in town. There were unverified rumors that the bear may have been visiting the community for several nights. From the evidence gathered by the law enforcement and bear management teams it appears that the bear came into town sometime around the early evening of July 5, 2021. However, the bear had not been observed and there was no indication that the bear had gotten any attractants at that time. The first indication of the bear in Ovando, was when the victim and other campers first became aware of the bear around 3:00 am on July 6th. The bear also killed and fed on chickens and chicken feed during the morning after the attack.

After the fact, it was discovered that a bear had visited a homesite approximately 3.9 miles west of town sometime between Monday the 5th and Thursday the 8th where it had ripped the door off an unoccupied camper trailer. MFWP Bear Team member and Powell County Deputy investigated (see above). Although there is no way of knowing for sure, evidence at site indicated to Hampson that the incident at the trailer had most likely occurred Monday evening, July 5th, possibly before the Ovando incident. Hair was collected and sent to the lab for DNA analysis. Results are pending.

Evidence (reports, video footage, tracks) indicates that the grizzly bear involved in the fatality came into Ovando the night of July 5th to explore the townsite. It is possible that this bear was food conditioned and had been in town previously seeking food but not detected, although we cannot know this for sure. Using the cover of darkness, the bear visited the Post Office area after checking out several homesites on the southeast side of town. There were likely food-related smells and scraps in and around the downtown site associated with the previous day's Fourth of July parade and picnic in the area where the Ms. Lokan camped. However, the town of Ovando is especially vigilant with keeping attractants to a minimum and bear aware signs and bear-resistant garbage containers have been placed throughout the downtown area. There is no indication that the bear found any garbage during his exploration of town that night.

The bear first investigated the tents shortly after 3:00 am. At that time Ms. Lokan and the Coles were able to scare the bear away by making noise. There was food in Ms. Lokan's tent at the time, which she moved to the old jail of the museum after the bear left during this initial encounter. There was also food in the saddle bags of Ms. Lokan's bike, which was propped against the building 10 feet from her tent. This food was not moved and remained close to her tent. The presence of food, initially in the tent and in close proximity, is likely why the bear returned to the tents a second time.

The Coles were awoken approximately an hour later during the fatal attack on Ms. Lokan. It is obvious that the bear decided to leave the attack scene because of Joe Cole's aggressive response and action. After likely being sprayed and being pushed away from the attack scene, it is assumed that the bear traveled to the south side of town to the chicken coop. It appeared

that the bear spent considerable time at the chicken coop site after attacking the victim and that the bear had most likely been at the site around the time a MFWP Warden and Powell County Sheriff's department first arrived in Ovando. It is doubtful that the bear received a full blast of bear spray, and potentially received no spray, if the bear raided the chicken coop after the attack because the bear seemed unhampered when it preyed on the chickens.

The grizzly bear most likely remained in the area through July 6th and returned to, investigated, and was photographed at one of the trap sites that evening. However, probably due to all of the activity in the area, the bear moved out of town (bear was killed 5 miles east of town on July 9th).

DNA confirmed that the grizzly bear shot in the early hours of July 9th was the same bear involved in the fatality in Ovando and the chicken coop incident in town on July 6th. The bear was a young adult male in good physical condition and weighed 417 pounds. The bear had fighting wounds, tooth punctures around the head, neck and shoulder area, but the wounds were minor and consistent with the types of injuries observed on most young male grizzly bears handled during breeding season. Although suffering from a regional drought, natural food production in June of 2021, for the Blackfoot Valley was adequate, according to expert opinion of MFWP bear management staff. However, the incident occurred within the feeding shift period, where bears are just getting ready to start foraging on the first of the ripening huckleberries, serviceberries, and choke cherries. This is the time when both black bears and grizzly bears, along with other predators, are foraging for waterfowl eggs, raiding nests, and hunting for elk calves and deer fawns. Although drier than normal, the natural bear food production during 2021 was adequate and the local bear populations had only been showing mild signs of food-related stress (as indicated by increased numbers of conflicts).

Many of the black bears and grizzly bears living in the lower-48 States exhibit some form of habituation due to the proximity of humans living and recreating in bear country. In order to survive in any habitat dominated by humans, wildlife need to become non-reactive in the presence of human activity to take advantage of the rich low elevation habitats that are dominated by humans. Many bears living in Montana, at one time or another, encounter unnatural foods such as garbage, grains, and bird feeders, and may be considered "mildly food-conditioned." However, the circumstantial evidence gathered on this bear indicates a higher level of "food-conditioned" behavior. In addition, the bear was quite familiar with chickens. In a 48-hour period he raided two chicken coops, killed multiple chickens, and fed on large amounts of uncontained chicken feed. The fact that he was videoed exploring downtown Ovando, under the cover of darkness, and that he accessed garbage at the second chicken site indicates a certain expertise at maneuvering through areas of human habitation while seeking garbage. He was also suspected to be responsible for a trailer break-in, which is another learned behavior common to food-conditioned bears. Although this grizzly had no conflict history and his DNA had never been observed or picked up in the ecosystem, all evidence indicates that he was very adept at accessing residential-related food-attractants. The bear's

mother and father were both captured during the Swan black bear study in 2001 (mother) and 2003 (father). The mother was detected via opportunistic hair sample at a depredation site in 2018 on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The father was detected multiple times during the USS DNA Rub Tree Project in 2004, 2010, 2011, and 2012. An opportunistic sample was collected in 2015 on the Flathead Indian Reservation at a corn field.

Not all bears exhibiting food-conditioned behavior exhibit predatory behavior but for some unknown reason a predatory response was triggered in this bear. While foraging under the cover of darkness in Ovando, perhaps due to a simple movement made by the sleeping victim, or a certain sound made by the victim, the bear reacted and ended up taking the life of Ms. Lokan.

CONCLUSION:

This unfortunate incident appears to have been a predatory attack by a habituated or food conditioned bear. Predatory attacks are rare, and we do not know exactly how, why, or when the predatory instinct occurred. Food and toiletries inside and near the tent as well as food scent left behind from July 4th picnic celebrations prior to the attack were likely contributing factors.

Thank you to the community of Ovando for the quick and effective response, as well as their proactive efforts to secure attractants and post bear aware signs prior to the attack.

Summary of Recommendations

Grizzly bears within campgrounds or lingering near residences or other areas where people congregate, such as town centers, are serious events and should not be tolerated. Bears can often be convinced to leave the area with simple hazing methods such as clapping, yelling, or horns. If a grizzly bear approaches an occupied tent, campers should seek shelter in a building or vehicle, and should not return to the tent for the night.

Recommendations generated from the findings of this incident

1) Camping:

- Keep food and anything with a scent (e.g., toiletries such as toothpaste, lotions, etc.) out of tents and well away from tents.
- Properly store unattended food and anything else with a scent. Food storage options include: bear boxes, hard-sided vehicles (car, truck, RV), certified bear-resistant containers, electric fencing, or hang properly (10' off the ground, 4' from supports).
- Do not tent in the same area where food was cooked. Cooking area should be 100+ feet from sleeping area.

- If a bear comes into the vicinity of an occupied tent, do not return to tent. Move to a hard-sided vehicle or building if possible.

2) Public land management agencies:

- Food storage orders and guidelines should be enacted on all public lands throughout grizzly bear occupied range.

3) Towns, communities, municipalities:

- Assume that grizzly bears could be anywhere in western Montana, even in residential areas.
- Towns, communities, and counties should consider enacting food storage regulations or ordinances to reduce attractants on public and private lands throughout grizzly bear occupied range.
- Towns and communities should consider participating in the IGBC Bear Smart Program.
- Private campgrounds should provide bear resistant containers, food storage, and place bear aware signs.
- Towns and communities in grizzly bear range should consider placing bear aware signs.
- Bears should not be allowed to feel comfortable near houses, buildings, or human activity centers. Residents should use approved deterrence methods (see [USFWS deterrence guidelines](#)) to safely keep bears away from residences. If deterrence does not work, residents should call the local bear manager.

4) Recreation events

- Consider bear education and food storage requirements as part of federal land special use permits.
- Race organizers need to inform all participants that participants are racing through wild country with both black bears and grizzly bears and should consider disseminating IGBC bear education materials to participants. Bike trips in grizzly habitat should include camping in grizzly habitat message and require participants carry bear spray. Race organizers should also encourage all communities along the route to endorse bear spray, bear smart practices, provide bear-resistant food storage bins, enact food storage regulations, provide electric fence checkout kits at camping sites in town and place bear aware signs.
- In addition, race organizers need to emphasize to participants that the very act of biking in bear country places them in greater danger of encountering bears. And that they need to be thinking “bear”, be observant at all times, and have bear spray close at hand when biking in remote settings.

- 5) Bear Spray manufacturers (this was a suggestion made by the victim's friends and family)
 - Consider adding a unique whistle to the bear spray trigger so that deployment includes noise to notify people in the area and that bear spray has been activated. And the whistle may be an extra deterrent to the bear.
- 6) Agency incident responders/Investigators
 - Implement a Wildlife Human Attack Response Team with team structure and strict adherence to protocols to ensure a systematic approach to investigation.
 - Conduct full necropsy on bears involved in any human fatality to check stomach contents for human foods and look for unseen injuries. Consider standard disease testing such as rabies or other issues that might be related to the attack.
 - If responsible bear is caught and euthanized, protect head and paws by wrapping in plastic or other available material to preserve any potential DNA evidence (investigation team did a good job with this).
 - Document full chain of custody for all samples.
 - Treat decisions on final disposition of hide and skull with sensitivity for the victim's family.

The unfortunate death of Ms. Lokan caused by a grizzly bear attack on July 6, 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, grizzly bear population numbers and geographic distributions, more people are encountering grizzly bears. Even though rare, these encounters can and have resulted in human injuries and death. The goal of this multi-agency review is to provide the public information to help increase human safety in grizzly bear country.

Standard Grizzly Bear Safety Messages:

- * Camping:
 - Keep food and toiletries out of tents.
 - Properly store unattended food, toiletries, and other human-attractants and toiletries in a certified bear-resistant container or hard-sided vehicle.
 - Dispose of garbage in provided bear-resistant containers; otherwise, take it with you and dispose of it properly elsewhere.
- * For residents:
 - Do not tolerate the presence of bears near your residence; chase them away at every opportunity
 - Never feed wildlife, especially bears. Bears that become food conditioned lose their natural foraging behavior and pose a threat to human safety.

- Properly store garbage in a certified bear-resistant bin or in a secured building (four walls, roof, and door with latch).
- Do not leave out pet food, bird feeders or bird seed, or livestock feed.
- Keep grills and BBQs clean of food and grease. Store in a secured building when not in use.
- Bears are attracted to fruit-bearing trees and bushes, gardens, and compost piles. Install electric fencing. Pick fruit immediately when ripe.
- Secure vulnerable livestock (i.e., chickens, goats, sheep) with an electric fence.
- * Feeding bears puts people and bears at risk.
- * Carry and know how to use bear-spray