

# Final Interagency Board of Review Report

Fatality of Craig Clouatre in Park County, Montana on March 23, 2022

## Board of Review Members:

**Hilary Cooley** – Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Missoula, MT

**Brian DeBolt** – Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, Lander, WY

**Kerry Gunther** - Bear Management Biologist, Yellowstone National Park, Gardner, MT

**Curtis Hendricks** - Wildlife Manager, Idaho Department of Fish & Game

**Ben Jimenez** - Grizzly Bear Conflict Coordinator, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Missoula, MT

**Adam Pankratz** – Warden Captain, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Bozeman, MT

**Lori Roberts** – Wildlife Research Assistant, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Kalispell, MT

**Jeremiah Smith** - Grizzly Bear Management Specialist, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Bozeman, MT

**John Waller** – Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, Glacier National Park, West Glacier, MT

## Summary:

On the afternoon of March 23, 2022, Craig Clouatre was alone in search of elk antler sheds on USFS lands just north of Red Mountain in Park County Montana. Clouatre did not return to his vehicle when expected. Park County Search and Rescue conducted a search for Clouatre over the following days. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Clouatre was located deceased. The subsequent investigation conducted by the Park County Sheriff Office (PCSO), US Forest Service (USFS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) determined the injuries that lead to the victim's death were likely caused by a defensive attack from a nearby denning grizzly bear.

## Format of report:

The Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan requires an interagency Board of Review (BOR) investigation of all human fatalities caused by grizzly bears and development of recommendations to help prevent future fatalities. This report is based on investigations, personal statements, and documentation of personnel with the Park County Sheriff's Office, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP), and the Park County Coroner's Office.

A bear specialist was not on scene during the investigation therefore the investigative report was compiled by MFWP Warden Captain, Adam Pankratz. BOR members reviewed the investigative report, followed up on questions, and developed conclusions and recommendations. 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.

## **PART I**

### **Board of Review Findings:**

On the afternoon March 23, 2022, Mr. Craig David Clouatre, a 40-year-old man from Livingston, Montana was searching for elk antler sheds near Red Mountain on the Custer Gallatin National Forest in Park County, Montana. By late afternoon, Mr. Clouatre's hiking partner became concerned when he did not respond to communication attempts via 2-way radio or cell phone and did not return to his vehicle as expected. At 2050 hours, the hiking partner filed a missing person report with the Park County Sheriff's Department. The morning of March 24, Park County Search and Rescue commenced a search of the area, with supplemental aerial support provided by Two Bear Air Rescue, from Kalispell, Montana. On March 25, Mr. Clouatre was found deceased.

Ensuing investigations of the scene suggested that Mr. Clouatre likely surprised a resting grizzly bear at close range and suffered fatal injuries resulting from a defensive grizzly bear attack. Bear spray was contained inside Clouatre's pack, which Clouatre left on a ridge approximately 0.6 miles from the attack. Clouatre did not have bear spray or any other defense tool with him at the time of attack, although we do not know if these would have stopped the attack. There was no evidence that the body had been moved, cached, or fed on. Subsequent aerial searches and review of radio-telemetry data found no grizzly bears in the area. Because no bears were found in the vicinity and all evidence indicated a defensive encounter, no additional management actions were taken.

### **Recommendations generated from the findings of this incident:**

Public lands throughout grizzly bear range are experiencing significantly higher human use. Grizzly bear populations are also expanding, increasing the potential for human-bear encounters and resulting injuries or fatalities. There is no guarantee of safety when hiking in bear country, however standard safety practices can reduce the likelihood of human-bear encounters and the risk of injury or death when a human-bear encounter occurs. The unfortunate death of Mr. Clouatre serves as an important reminder to follow these standard safety practices when recreating in grizzly bear habitat.

### **Standard safety practices for hiking in bear habitat:**

**1) Carry a Bear Deterrent** – Although the type of deterrent (bear spray or firearm) to carry is a personal choice, bear spray (a product specifically labeled for deterring bear attacks) requires little training, has proven easy to use, eliminates the risk of accidental injury or death associated with firearms, and has proven highly effective at stopping or reducing the length and severity of most grizzly bear attacks when the person involved has time to deploy it. Bear deterrents should be kept with your person at all times and carried so that they are readily available and can be rapidly deployed (on your body). We suggest carrying multiple cans on longer excursions.

**2) Be Vigilant** – Being vigilant for bears can reduce the chances of surprise encounters at close distances, thereby reducing the risk of an attack. Be observant of bear activity including tracks, scat, and the presence of scavenging birds and animal carcasses. Be especially vigilant if hiking off trail or in noisy areas (e.g., near moving water) and areas with limited visibility. Bears may be more likely to respond aggressively in off-trail areas where they don't expect to encounter people. However, bears frequently use maintained trails and encounters may occur anywhere. The BOR encourages hikers to remain vigilant while hiking in all bear country.

**3) Make Noise** – Making noise while hiking, especially in areas with limited visibility, is an effective method of forewarning bears of your presence, thereby reducing the chances of surprise encounters and defensive bear attacks. “Bear bells” should not be relied upon as your only source of noise because the ringing does not carry far.

**4) Do not Hike Alone** – Hiking in groups of 3 or more people is known to reduce the risks of bear attack. Larger groups are more intimidating to bears and more likely to have at least one member making noise or being vigilant, thereby reducing the risk of a bear attack. When hiking in a group there is also a better chance for getting quicker medical attention and rescue.

Hiking in wild country is not without its unique hazards. These 4 bear safety procedures may not have changed the outcome of Mr. Clouatre’s encounter with a grizzly bear. However, the Board believes that increased adherence to these safety practices can reduce the frequency and severity of bear attacks on hikers.

**Grizzly Bear Safety Messaging is available on IGBC Bear Aware website:**

<https://igbconline.org/be-bear-aware/>

## PART II

### Investigative Report: FWP22CAD001454

<b>Victim:</b>  Craig David Clouatre DOB: 07/12/1981	<b>Date of Incident:</b>  March 23, 2022
<b>Incident:</b>  The subsequent fatality of Craig David Clouatre from a suspected grizzly bear attack on March 23, 2022 near USFS Red Mountain Road #2596, within Custer Gallatin National Forest.	<b>Reporting Officer:</b>  Warden Captain Adam Pankratz Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

#### Location:

The incident occurred on USFS lands within Section 19, T7S R8E, Custer Gallatin National Forest within southern Park County, Montana. Red Mountain Road is accessed from Daily Lake Road near Daily Lake Fishing Access Site (FAS) and Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Red Mountain Road passes through Dome Mountain WMA before reaching US Forest Service (USFS) lands where it is designated as USFS Road #2596. The WMA has a seasonal closure to all use from December 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup> to protect elk winter range. At the time of the incident the WMA was closed to all public use however the FAS and neighboring federal lands were open for recreational use. The attack site was located approximately 3.9 miles south of the Six Mile Trailhead just west of Red Mountain Road in a heavily timbered basin north of Red Mountain.

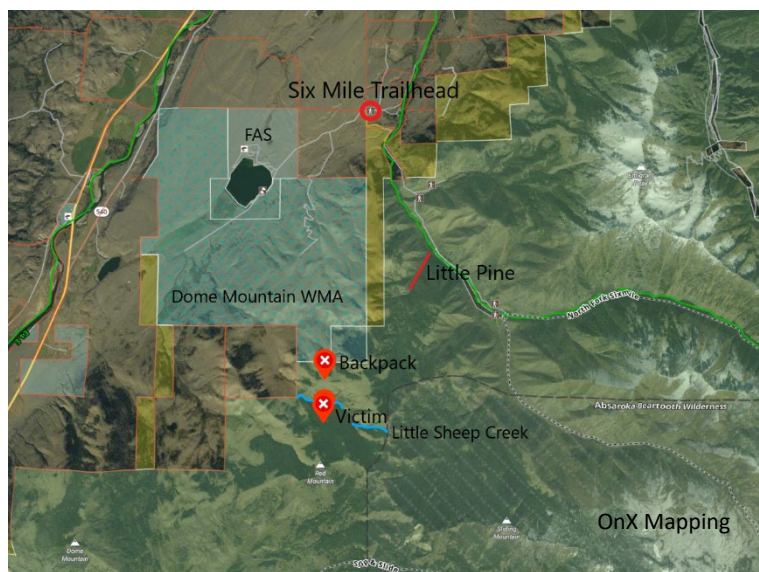


Figure 1 - FWP Wildlife Management Area and Fishing Access Site (Blue), US Forest Service (Green), Bureau of Land Management (Tan)

#### Weather:

On March 23, 2022, the area high was 43 degrees Fahrenheit, and continued to be in the mid 40's during rescue and investigative field operations. Wind was light, less than 10 miles per hour, no precipitation fell between the attack and victim recovery.

## **Jurisdiction and Authority:**

### **Grizzly Bear**

**87-1-201, MCA. Powers and duties.** FWP shall exercise supervision, protection, preservation, management, and propagation of all the wildlife, fish, game, game and nongame birds, waterfowl, and the game and fur-bearing animals of the state.

In 1975 the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the grizzly bear in the lower 48-States as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Grizzly bear management currently resides under the jurisdiction of the USFWS, however, the USFWS delegates much of that authority to state agencies. MFWP conducts the majority of day-to-day monitoring and management of grizzly bears. Grizzly bear conflict response in southwest Montana is primarily conducted by MFWP wildlife and enforcement staff.

MFWP maintains specially trained and experienced enforcement and wildlife staff to investigate wildlife human attacks. All Game Wardens and bear specialists and technicians within region three serve on the Wildlife Human Attack Response Team (WHART) and operate within protocols established through statewide training. Park County asked MFWP for assistance with the investigation to determine species and behavior of the involved animal, to determine if any further threat to human safety existed, and to implement any management decision upon the involved wild animal.

### **Human Deaths**

**46-4-122, MCA. Human deaths requiring inquiry by coroner.** The coroner shall inquire into and determine the cause and manner of death and all circumstances surrounding a human death that was caused: in any degree by an injury, an accidental death, in a manner that was unattended or unwitnessed, or that occurred under suspicious circumstances.

**46-4-103, MCA. Postmortem examination.** If, in the opinion of the coroner a postmortem examination is advisable, the coroner shall order one performed on any dead human body for which the death requires an inquiry and shall retain a medical examiner or associate medical examiner to perform it. Performance of postmortem examinations is within the discretion of the coroner except that the county attorney or attorney general may require one.

### **Search and Rescue**

**7-32-2121, MCA. Duties of sheriff.** The sheriff shall take charge of and supervise search and rescue units and their officers whenever search and rescue units are called into service and command the aid of as many inhabitants of the county as are necessary in the execution of the sheriff's duties.

**Warden Captain Adam Pankratz**  
**Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks**  
**Wildlife Human Attack Response Team Investigative Report**

**Initial Report:**

On March 24th, 2022, I received communication from Warden Gregg Todd that Park County Sheriff's office was conducting search and rescue (SAR) operations for a missing antler hunter near Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Dome Mountain WMA was currently closed to all public use to secure winter range habitat for elk. Warden Todd provided road access through the WMA for search and rescue crews. Lands adjacent to the WMA included public Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USFS parcels open to recreation.

At approximately 1230<sup>1</sup> hours on March 25th, 2022, I received a phone call from Warden Drew Scott notifying me that SAR personnel had located a deceased person during the search for a missing antler hunter. Scott relayed that SAR personnel had reported the body had evidence of a bear attack. Early reports suggested that the body may have been dragged, partially consumed, and cached (these details were later proved incorrect). I was informed the Park County Coroner was on scene and had taken custody of the deceased victim. Warden Scott indicated he would be headed to SAR incident command.

I contacted MFWP Warden Sergeant Josh Leonard and informed him of the situation. I requested he put together a Wildlife Human Attack Response Team (WHART) to investigate the scene the next morning. I then contacted MFWP Chief Loewen and briefed him on the incident. I requested air support for the operation to provide an overview of the scene and to assist in looking for any wildlife in the area. Chief Loewen informed me that he would be sending a helicopter with Sergeant Phil Kilbreath to assist. I provided Chief Loewen the location of the SAR incident command. I then began to travel to SAR incident command located at a trailhead near the intersection of Six Mile Road and Daily Lake Road in Park County, Montana. I informed MFWP regional supervisor Marina Yoshioka of the incident.

Warden Scott arrived at incident command and informed me that the coroner along with USFS and SAR personnel were still on scene with the victim's body. The Park County Sheriff's Office was waiting for FWP staff to arrive to assist with the investigation. Scott stated he was going to get a ride from the SAR helicopter to the scene. Scott provided me with GPS locations of the victim's body and where a backpack had been located on a ridge above the scene.

An immediate investigation of the scene was needed due to the limited amount of remaining daylight. I contacted Sergeant Leonard and asked who was available to visit the scene today. Leonard stated he would send MFWP Warden Aaron Kammann to SAR incident command to assist, and the rest of the team would stand by in case a second site visit was needed Saturday.

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<sup>1</sup> All times in this report are Mountain Daylight Savings Time

**Six Mile Incident Command:**

I arrived at SAR incident command at approximately 1330 hours and met with Captain Tad Dykstra of the Park County Sheriff's Office. Dykstra informed me that multiple SAR personnel, the Park County Coroner and USFS law enforcement officers (LEOs) were on scene. The victim would not be moved until FWP visited the location.

Dykstra stated the victim had been horn hunting with a friend when he went missing. They had departed from the Six Mile trailhead early in the morning of March 23rd. In the afternoon the hikers split up with plans to meet back at the trailhead. Only one returned. The last communication with the missing victim had been a text to his hiking partner stating he was "in a hole".

**Flight Observations:**

Warden Kammann arrived on scene, and I briefed him of our plan to visit the attack site. FWP pilot Joe Rahn and Sergeant Phill Kilbreath arrived on scene with a helicopter. I provided pilot Rahn with the GPS coordinates of the attack site and where the backpack had been found. Kammann, Kilbreath, and I joined Rahn in the helicopter and flew to the attack site.

At approximately 1500 hours we flew towards the attack scene. During our flight I observed the location where the backpack had been found on a bare ridge on USFS land just south of Dome Mountain WMA (45.22235, -110.9336). The attack site was in a basin of thick timber (45.21369, -110.79376), south of the ridge and north of Red Mountain. Sheep Creek flowed through the basin. I observed USFS Red Mountain Road 2596 from just below the ridge line South through the timbered basin near the attack site. The backpack was located approximately 3.9 miles south of the trailhead and 0.6 miles from the victim location (measured using OnX mapping application). I photographed aerial views of the area. During our flight I observed no wild animals anywhere within the vicinity of the scene.



*Figure 2 - Photograph from the air of the ridgeline the backpack was found and the basin below where the attack took place. Perspective is northeast facing (Pankratz).*

The helicopter landed near where the backpack had been found. Kammann and I exited, collected our gear, and began to hike down to Red Mountain Road. I observed the backpack was no longer present at the location provided to me by Warden Scott.

We were met on Red Mountain Road by USFS Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) Sean Tripp and Gassman, then traveled to within approximately 75 yards of the victim's location using tracked off-highway vehicles. We then proceeded on foot. As we approached the victim's location, I observed numerous piles of animal scat that appeared to be from a bear. I observed large animal tracks that crossed our path but could not be identified due to their age and the melting snow. The temperature was approximately 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and snow was melting, the time was nearing 1530 hours.

### **The Attack Site:**

At approximately 1600 hours we arrived at the victim's location, I observed three civilian SAR personnel assisting the Park County Sheriff's Office by holding an armed security perimeter for the scene. I observed Park County Deputy Joseph Luther and Deputy Coroner Colette Daigle-Berg attending to the deceased victim. I was then briefed by Warden Scott and USFS LEO Brad Bolte on their observations. Scott stated that the victim dropped his backpack on the ridge. It contained numerous shed elk antlers and an unused can of bear spray. Tracks indicated the victim traveled from the ridge into the timbered basin on snowshoes, possibly looking for more antlers. Scott had identified a possible bear day bed less than 25 yards from the victim. Numerous animal trails led to and from the victim. The area also had numerous human tracks from SAR and law enforcement personnel.



I then began a site investigation with the assistance of Warden Scott and Kammann, taking digital photographs along the way.

I visually examined the victim and observed the following:

- The victim appeared to be a male, approximately 40 years of age.
- The victim was on his back in a large area of crushed compacted snow.
- The victim was on top of the snow and no portion of his body appeared to be buried.
- The snow around the victim was saturated with blood.
- The blood had soaked deep within the snow.
- The victim was wearing outdoor hiking apparel.
- Both feet were equipped with snowshoes.
- A trekking pole was located just to his right.
- A damaged pair of sunglasses and a hat lay near his head.
- Binoculars were attached to his chest.
- Clothing appeared ripped in multiple locations from possible bites or clawing.
- No defensive weapon such as bear spray, or firearm was observed.

I visually examined the body for indications of injury and observed the following:

- His face and scalp appeared cut and partially torn.
- The back of his scalp to appear detached from his skull.
- A possible claw or bite mark was across his face.
- His neck was at an unnatural angle indicating possible injury.
- His right thigh had a large rip or bite wound where the skin and muscle had been peeled back.
- The muscle under this wound appeared to have retracted within the leg when severed.
- A large flap of skin and fat had been peeled back from the thigh but remained attached.
- His left ankle was sitting at an unnatural angle indicating possible injury.
- Blood stains were observed on every piece of clothing to include pants, coat, and hat.
- No obvious indication of consumption of the body was observed.

I then examined the area around the body and observed the following:

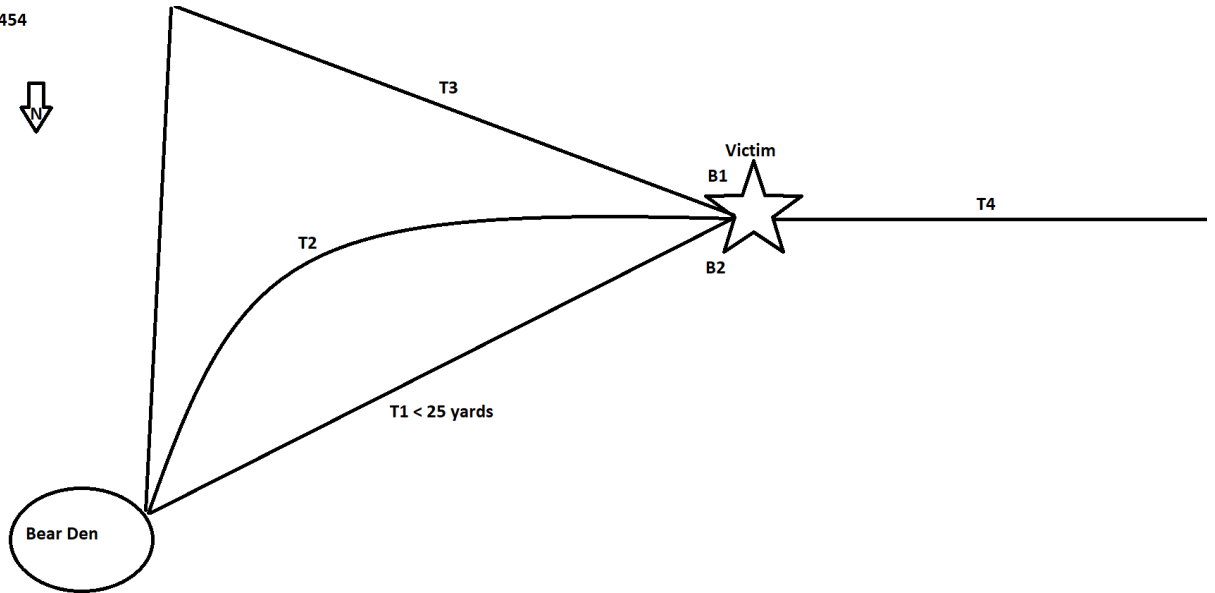
- The body lay in an area of crushed snow approximately 15 yards in diameter.
- Undisturbed snow on the edge of the scene was deep, as I sunk easily past my knees with each step.
- The snow around the body was saturated with blood.
- No animal tracks were easily identified.
- The body appeared to lay where the attack had occurred.
- No evidence was observed that indicated the body had been drug from another location.
- No evidence was observed that the body had been cached.
- No evidence was observed that a defensive weapon was used such as bear spray residue or shell casings.

Deputy Coroner Daigle-Berg and Deputy Sheriff Luther conducted the examination of the victim per MCA 7-32-2121 (Duties of sheriff). I moved to examine the attack site and evidence within the area surrounding it.

I proceeded to examine an approximate 50 square yard area around the body and observed the following (reference scene diagram):

- The day bed or den location identified by Scott was a dug-out hole approximately two feet deep, under and adjacent to a rotting log beneath a small stand of trees.
- The distance from the bed to the victim measured was approximately 24 yards (mapped using OnX mapping application).
- A large amount of debris was scattered around the bed.
- Debris included dirt and rotten wood.
- Multiple tracks were observed in the snow around the bed, consistent with those of a large bear. The tracks were consistent in size, possibly indicating they were made by the same bear.
- A direct straight trail (T1) led northeast from the victim to the day bed.
- The trail appeared to have been created by a large animal.
- Strides between tracks in the trail indicated the animal was possibly moving at a high rate of speed.
- Tracks were not positively identified due to melting snow.
- Blood drops, animal hair, and fecal material were observed within trail (T1).
- An additional trail (T2) led from the day bed to the victim in an arc. This trail also contained blood drops.
- A third trail (T3) led to the south and up an embankment from the victim. This trail also contained blood drops.
- Trail (T4) led straight west from the body and had been heavily traveled and used by SAR and LE personnel. It is unknown if an animal had used the trail before being used by search crews.
- Warden Kammann and I used this trail (T4) as we approached the scene.
- Tracks and evidence observed indicated a large animal walked or ran through the trails.
- The trails appeared well traveled indicating a bear or multiple animals had used it multiple times recently.
- No trail indicated the victim had traveled or been drug.
- Blood on all trails appeared to be droplets and not smear or spray marks.

FWP22CAD001454  
WHART Scene  
Not to Scale



*Figure 3 - T1, T2, T3, T4 indicate trails leading to and from the victim. B1 and B2 indicate blood sampling locations near the attack site.*



*Figure 4 - Photograph of bear day bed/den (Scott)*

I then collected evidence samples from the scene to include:

- Two blood swabs from each location T1, T2, T3, B1, and B2.
- A fecal sample from trail T1.
- Hair samples from trail T1.



*Figure 5 - Photograph of T1 looking back at victim location (Pankratz)*

Each sample was collected and packaged separately. Gloves were changed between samples.

Warden Scott informed me the area had been searched and no indication of an attractant such as an animal carcass had been found, nor had any wild animal in the area been observed. The search found tracks identified as grizzly bear in the area. Scott also had collected a hair sample from near the den site.





*Figure 6 - Photograph on Left: grizzly bear track (Scott). Photograph on Right: Suspected bear hair found at scene (Scott).*

I spoke with Deputy Coroner Daigle-Berg. She stated that she had found and collected animal hairs on the body and inquired if they could be from a domestic dog. She also stated that no defensive weapon or evidence of one being used had been found on or near the victim. After her field examination was complete, Law Enforcement personnel placed the victim in a body bag and onto a rescue sled.

At approximately 1800 hours personnel then left the scene. The victim was loaded onto an off-highway vehicle and taken to a helicopter on the ridge. Kammann and I met pilot Rahn and were transported in helicopter back to SAR incident command. I did not observe any wild animals during the return.

At incident command I spoke with Deputy Coroner Daigle-Berg and Deputy Luther. The coroner asked if our agency would be requesting an autopsy. I indicated that FWP did not have the authority to request an autopsy but the findings of one would be critical to the investigation, specifically the examination of the injuries and a determination of cause of death. Deputy Luther indicated that Park County Sheriff would be conducting one. While at incident command, I was informed that a crushed cell phone was recovered from the chest area of the victim that had what appeared to be a puncture from a large canine tooth. I then took into custody a paper evidence bag containing animal hairs sampled from the victim's body by the coroner.

## **Wildlife Management Decision:**

I contacted Chief Loewen and informed him of the field investigation. I then spoke with bear specialist Smith and informed him of the incident, investigation and our observations which included:

- The victim appeared to have died due to injuries sustained from an animal attack.
- The victim's body was not consumed.
- The victim's body was not cached.
- No indication indicated that a predatory animal had claimed the body as food.
- The victim was located near a possible bear day bed or den.
- The victim appeared to have been deceased for up to (2) days.
- No attractant such as an animal carcass was located in the area.
- No predatory animal was observed in the area of the body during the entire multi-day search event to include ground and air searches.
- Initial evidence suggested that the animal involved was a possible grizzly bear.
- No evidence indicated that the offending animal was injured.
- The incident location was remote, in an area difficult to get to at that time of year, with no immediate public safety threat.
- Targeting the specific responsible animal would be difficult due to the time between the attack and the investigation with no recent predatory animal sightings in the area.

Smith advised that the attack was likely defensive in nature and management action on the bear was not recommended. I then spoke with USFWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator Hilary Cooley and informed her of the above details. Cooley also advised initial indications pointed towards a defensive attack and agreed that management action on the bear was not recommended.

I spoke with FWP regional supervisor Yoshioka and informed her of the initial investigation. Yoshioka also agreed no management action of the bear was warranted at this time. I also advised FWP information manager Jacobson of the incident.

Later I spoke with Smith again regarding the investigation. Smith informed me that he had reviewed photographs of the scene from Warden Scott. Smith believed the day bed Scott had found was a bear den. The state of the den, debris around it, and the trail leading to the victim's body indicated the bear may have exploded out of the den at a high rate of speed. The multiple trails leading to and from the den indicated the bear had been awake for a few days or weeks and was basically "sitting on the front porch" of his den when the victim came too close, resulting in a defensive attack. Smith stated that he was interpreting based on our observations and photographs and could not confirm this as he was not present at the scene.

Smith checked recent grizzly flight monitoring records. The last flight for collared grizzly bears within the area of the attack occurred on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, two days prior to the attack. All collared bears located were still within their dens at that time. No collared bears were observed within close proximity to the attack site.

Due to initial indications that the incident was a chance encounter between the victim and a possible grizzly bear, the time of year, location, length of time (48-hours) between the attack and discovering the victim, and defensive nature of the attack; no immediate management action was taken to pursue, trap, or euthanize the offending animal.

*Note: The bear den is listed as both a den and bed throughout the report to indicate what each observer described it as being.*

### **Evidence Analysis:**

Upon returning to the FWP region three headquarters, I secured all collected evidence and stored it in a secure enforcement refrigerator.

On March 28th, I contacted USFWS Regional Agent in Charge, Armstrong. I informed Armstrong of the investigation. Armstrong offered to assist with evidence processing.

On March 30th I took into my custody an evidence envelope containing hair collected by Warden Scott from the bear den and secured in a refrigerator. On March 31st I packed and sealed all evidence collected and sent via FedEx to the USFWS laboratory in Ashland Oregon. Items included:

- T1 - 2 blood samples from trail T1
- T2 - 2 blood samples from trail T2
- T3 - 2 blood samples from trail T3
- B1 - 2 blood samples from snow near victim
- B2 - 2 blood samples from snow near victim
- H1 - Hair samples from trail T1
- H2 - Hair samples from victim's body
- H3 - Hair samples from den location
- F1 - Fecal sample from trail T1

On April 15th I received laboratory analysis results from USFWS forensic scientist Darren Wostenberg. Examination conclusions include:

- Samples T1, T2, T3, B1, B2, all were identified as human blood, but had a brown bear DNA contributor.
- Sample F1 was identified as elk fecal material but had a brown bear DNA contributor.
- Sample H1 was identified as elk hair but had a brown bear DNA contributor.
- Sample H2 was identified as canine hair, likely from a domestic dog the victim had recently been in contact with.
- Sample H3 was identified as male brown bear hair.
- The brown bear DNA contributor in samples T1, T2, T3, B1, B2, F1, and H1 matched the DNA of the hair sample H3.

*Note: Grizzly bear, Ursus arctos horribilis, is also known as the North American brown bear and is a subspecies of brown bear, Ursus arctos.*

### **Supplemental Reports Summary:**

I received Offense Report PCSO22OFF000140 authored by detective Rhenon Stoddard of the Park County Sheriff's office.

The report described the coroner examination of the victim (no autopsy was performed), identified as Craig David Clouatre, DOB 07/12/1981. Coroner Al Jenkins and Deputy Coroner Mark Higgs performed the examination. The report described the following:

- No indication of criminal activity was observed at the attack site.
- The victim's pants and coat were blood soaked.
- A 6 X 4 inch section of the right thigh was missing.
- Multiple large tears, punctures, and lacerations were observed on the left leg.
- The left hip indicated it was disjointed.
- Wounds were observed on the right arm.
- The scalp was eviscerated.
- A quarter inch diameter puncture wound was on the upper right side of the skull above the ear.
- Several deep lacerations were on the right side of the face that stretched from the nose to eye.
- Deep lacerations were observed on the victim's sides just above the belt line.
- Several deep puncture wounds and lacerations were on the abdomen and thorax on the left side.
- An open chest wound approximately one inch in diameter was found on the sternum.
- Two puncture wounds in between the shoulder blades in line with the vertebrae.
- Crepitus was felt in the cervical vertebrae indicating the victim's neck was possibly broken.
- Numerous hair samples that did not appear to be from the victim were recovered.
- The summary stated: "the injuries and condition of Craig's body were consistent with being the result of a bear, or other large predator, attack."

Offense Report PCSO22OFF000140 included a narrative by Park County Sheriff Sergeant Ryan Call:

- Sgt. Call spoke to hiking partner and took the initial missing person report.
- Hiking partner and Clouatre left the Six Mile Trail head at approximately 0445 hours to go "horn hunting."
- They walked south above the area of Daily's Lake.
- At approximately 1045 hours Clouatre indicated he wanted to walk to the end of Sheep Creek. Hiking partner told Clouatre he did not want to walk that far.
- Clouatre and hiking partner then split up, with a plan to remain in contact via VHF radio and cell phone.



- When Clouatre did not show back up at the truck at 2000 hours, hiking partner got worried.
- Clouatre last contacted Hiking partner at 1322 hours with a text message that stated, “in a hole.”
- Hiking partner described Clouatre as a “very good outdoorsman and has lots of experience in the woods.”

Offense Report PCSO22OFF000140 included a narrative by Park County Sheriff Sergeant Joseph Luther:

- Upon approaching the attack site Luther identified numerous bear tracks.
- The victim appeared to have been “knocked back into the ground”
- His body had lacerations on “his scalp, face, stomach, pelvis and leg.”
- A cell phone was found in the victim’s jacket pocket, “with what appeared to be a bear tooth punctured through the phone.”
- There were no signs of a “struggle, use of a weapon, bear spray, or any obvious altercation.”
- Multiple footprints were observed around the body and identified as belonging to SAR members.
- Bear tracks were observed leading to a bear daybed within 30 yards of the body.
- The track led straight from the day bed to the victim “as if the bear was startled and attacked Craig in a territorial event.”
- Bear tracks were observed in a circle around the body, where some tracks had small blood droplets near them.
- Luther determined there were no signs of criminal activity.

Additionally, the Park County Sheriff’s Office provided digital copies of photographs from the investigation. I reviewed these photographs and observed the following:

- Clouatre's backpack was a lightweight pack frame.
- A least three elk antlers and a small day bag were secured to backpack.
- No bear spray was visibly attached to the exterior of the pack (bear spray was found inside pack).
- Clouatre's cell phone (taken from his left chest coat pocket) appeared to have a round puncture in the center of the screen.
- A matching puncture wound was located on the exterior of the left chest coat pocket worn by Clouatre.
- The back of the cell phone was stained with blood.



*Figure 9 - Photograph on Left: victim backpack (PCSO). Photograph on Right: Victim's cell phone (PCSO).*

I received a copy of the SAR CAD log for the search event. These logs indicated the following:

- The initial report of a missing person occurred on March 23, at 2050 hours.
- The victim was reported missing by his hiking partner.
- Hiking partner and Clouatre had plans to turn on their cell phones at 1300 hours in case they could not reach each other with their two-way radios.
- The last communication received from the victim by hiking partner was a text message at 1320 hours that stated, "in a hole."
- At approximately 1430 hours hiking partner attempted to text Clouatre but they would not go through.
- Subsequent phones calls went straight to voicemail.
- Their hike started at the Six-Mile parking lot.
- When they separated during their hike, the victim indicated he was headed to Stands Basin.
- Hiking partner indicated the victim was extremely familiar with the area and would not be lost but worried he may be injured.
- Hiking partner indicated Clouatre was equipped with a knife and bear spray but no firearm.
- Cellular data obtained from Verizon showed Clouatre's phone's last known location was 3.93 miles Northeast of a cellular tower located at 45.207831 -110.856328.
- Search efforts included the use of a Two Bear Air Helicopter, thermal imaging, drones, and ground searches.
- No predatory animal was observed during the search, nor were any heat signatures found using the thermal imaging.

- Ground tracks possibly belonging to the victim were reported found on March 24, 2022, at 1204 hours.
- The victim was found deceased at 1209 hours on March 25th.

I reviewed USFS Report of Investigation 22-01-IBDG00C, authored by USFS LEO Bolte. The report included the following:

- USFS LE Bolte and Park County Deputy Luther interviewed hiking partner at the trail head, on the morning of March 24th.
- Hiking partner indicated he and Clouatre were hiking on BLM and USFS land adjacent to Dome Mountain WMA in search of shed elk antlers on March 23rd.
- They arrived at the Six Mile Trailhead at approximately 0430 hours.
- Clouatre and hiking partner parted ways at the top of Little Pine Drainage.
- Clouatre and hiking partner were using two-way radios to communicate.
- Clouatre was last known to be heading towards Red Mountain.
- On March 24th footprints possibly belonging to Clouatre were observed near Sheep Creek.
- On March 25th at approximately 1000 hours SAR personnel had located the backpack belonging to Clouatre, identified by hiking partner.
- At approximately 1130 hours Bolte was informed Clouatre was found deceased from an apparent bear attack.
- At the location of the victim Bolte observed numerous tracks he identified as bear.
- Bolte observed a "freshly dug depression in the ground" approximately 20 yards away from the body while following a set of tracks.
- The depression was dug down to dirt/soil.
- A civilian bear trainer, was on scene assisting Park County SAR and stated to Bolte that the depression was a "typical bear bed".
- Bolte observed additional bear tracks leading to and from the victim and blood drops along the way.

## **Timeline of Events:**

### **March 23, 2022**

0430 Craig Clouatre and hiking partner arrive at Six Mile Trailhead and depart with plans to search for shed elk antlers.

They hike south on Six Mile Creek Road through BLM and USFS lands

1045 They split up at the top of Little Pine Drainage. Clouatre informs hiking partner that he was heading to Stand's Basin near Sheep Creek and Red Mountain.

1320 Hiking partner receives a text message from Clouatre that states "in a hole."

1322 Verizon records the last known location of Clouatre's cellular phone as 3.93 miles northeast of a cellular tower located at 45.207831 -110.856328, placing Clouatre approximately one mile northeast of the attack site.

Over three miles south of the Six Mile Trail head, Clouatre removes his frame pack containing a can of bear spray and multiple elk antlers on the top of a ridge north of Sheep Creek and descends into a heavily timbered basin just north of Red Mountain.

Clouatre enters the basin with snowshoes on his feet and traverses the area in a southerly direction where he crosses Red Mountain Road numerous times.

Clouatre walks within 25 yards of an active bear den, and is killed during a defensive bear attack.

2050 Hiking partner places a call to the Park County Sheriff's office to report Clouatre missing.

2108 Park County Search and Rescue dispatched to the area to locate the missing Clouatre.

2247 Park County Deputies check multiple locations along the highway for signs of Clouatre in the hills above or at different exit points to include Slip and Slide, Joe Brown, Cedar Creek, Dry Creek, Point of Rocks, and Old Yellowstone.

### **March 24, 2023**

0014 Park County concludes SAR efforts for the night.

0622 Two Bear Air enroute to assist with the search.

Extensive SAR operations occur with the use of air and ground resources.

1204 Two Bear Air locates possible tracks from the victim, and directs SAR ground staff to the area.

2201 Two Bear Air concludes its air search for the day. No signs of human or predatory animal activity observed in the area.

2342 SAR efforts conclude for the day.

### **March 25, 2023**

1000 SAR personnel located the frame pack left by Clouatre on ridge.

1130 Clouatre found deceased by ground search staff at coordinates: 45.2137298, -110.7938906.

1230 FWP Game Wardens respond to the scene to assist with Park County Sheriff's investigation into the unattended death of Clouatre.

1800 Clouatre is recovered and removed from the scene.

*Note: Some small time discrepancies exist between those events in law enforcement reports and the dispatch CAD log for the incident.*

### **Investigative Conclusions:**

- On the morning of March 23rd, 2022, at approximately 0430 hours, Craig Clouatre left the Six Mile Trailhead with hiking partner on foot.
- Clouatre was on a backcountry hike looking for elk shed antlers on BLM and USFS lands within southern Park County, Montana.
- Clouatre and hiking partner separated at the top of Little Pine Drainage where Clouatre continued south towards Red Mountain.
- Clouatre removed his backpack before descending into the Sheep Creek basin. He left behind his bear spray, which was inside his pack.
- The last known contact with Clouatre was a text message received by hiking partner on March 23rd at 1320 hours that stated, "in a hole."
- Cellular data indicated the last known location of Clouatre's phone on March 23 at 1320 hours was 3.93 miles Northeast of a cellular tower located at 45.207831 -110.856328.
- Clouatre walked in snowshoes within 25 yards of an active grizzly bear den.
- DNA confirmed the presence of a male grizzly bear at the scene of the attack, in the den and along trails leading to and from the victim.
- A grizzly bear likely left its den and defensively attacked Clouatre.
- Coroner's examination identified the injuries Clouatre sustained were likely caused by a bear.
- Tracks and blood droplets indicate the bear likely retreated and returned to Clouatre multiple times during the attack along the trails in the area.
- Clouatre died from the injuries sustained from the bear at the location of the attack and was not moved.
- Clouatre was alone at the time of the attack and his death was unattended.

- No evidence indicated that the body was consumed, cached, or that the bear claimed it as food.
- The grizzly bear fled the area after the attack but before search operations occurred, likely the same day as the attack.