



IGBC Member Agencies:

Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management: ID, MT, WA, and WY

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Region 1 and Region 6

National Park Service: NPS Regional Office Serving DOI Regions 6,7, and 8 and NPS Regional Office Serving DOI Regions 8,9,10, and 12

U.S. Geological Survey: Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Forest Service: Region 1, Region 2, Region 4, and Region 6

Alberta Environment and Parks

British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Land, and Nat. Resource Operations

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IGBC Strategic Meeting Statement, September 2023

In August, 2023 the Executive Committee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) convened a strategic meeting. At the [last strategic meeting held in 2019](#), the IGBC Executive Committee mutually agreed to recommit to its mission to “Support recovery and delisting, and ongoing conservation of grizzly bear populations and their habitats in areas of the western United States through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management, research and communication.”

At the 2023 meeting, the IGBC Executive Committee started by reflecting on its accomplishments over the last 40 years (see below). The group then reviewed changes that have occurred since 2019, including continued expansion of occupied areas and increasing numbers of verified outlier sightings beyond occupied range. The group also noted the separate decision processes that are now underway in the unoccupied North Cascades and Bitterroot Ecosystems, and other ongoing administrative and legal processes that are currently led by multiple IGBC agencies in the occupied areas. IGBC members recognize and mutually respect the authorities and mandates of all parties under federal and state law. Participation in the IGBC has no effect on the sovereignty or jurisdiction of any of its members. The IGBC is not a governing body or legal entity. Until completion of these separate processes, the IGBC will be proceeding in an uncertain external policy environment.

The discussion then turned to the ongoing work of the IGBC and its Subcommittees. The group reviewed the IGBC’s historic five-year planning process. Historically, the IGBC has adopted five-year plans, the most recent in 2018. Acknowledging the maturity of conservation efforts in occupied areas, and the uncertainty in the policy environment, the IGBC decided to refocus the five-year plans on an annual reporting process and exchange among the Executive and Subcommittees. The Executive Coordinator will work on this with the Subcommittee Chairs prior to their Fall meetings, with the goal of preparing a 2024 plan for discussion and adoption by the Executive Committee in December. The goal is to produce a planning document that can be a template for IGBC meeting agendas and provide a standard reference for the group’s annual performance and activity reporting.

On the 40th anniversary of the IGBC, there is a common understanding with all its members that successful grizzly bear recovery and conservation requires a shared responsibility with all parties, and continued promotion and coordination of grizzly bear conservation across all recovery areas.

IGBC Accomplishments

- Executive Committee - In the four decades since its establishment through [a memorandum of understanding](#), the IGBC has coordinated successful management actions to further the conservation of grizzly bears and their habitat, and developed and maintained substantial interagency support for these efforts. The IGBC has worked with many partners to build a foundation of public support and understanding about the habitat and population needs for grizzly bear recovery and about management of recovered populations. The IGBC has periodically spoken with an expert collective voice, for example with the [IGBC Guidelines](#) (1986), which are still in use today for responding to grizzly bear management situations; the [IGBC Bear Spray Guidelines](#) (2017), which have been cited extensively by industry, outfitters, and the media; and in 2023 year signing on to a letter of support requested by Montana Department of Transportation for a federal research grant on a highway crossing project.
- Ecosystem Subcommittees - Through its five Ecosystem Subcommittees in grizzly bear ecosystems in Idaho, Montana, Washington and Wyoming, the IGBC coordinates decisions and oversees recovery efforts on the ground. In 2022 the Executive Committee provided direction to the Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide ecosystems to review and update their Conservation Strategies, and to the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak subcommittee to begin the drafting process. All three have active technical teams. In addition, in the occupied ecosystems the subcommittees have identified and promoted effective actions and techniques to increase human safety and decrease the likelihood of human-bear conflicts.
- Information and Education Subcommittee - The IGBC has established an active and effective presence in grizzly bear education and outreach efforts through the Information and Education Subcommittee. The subcommittee has developed an effective and successful Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). IGBC funding awards help partners and agencies to disseminate consistent messages about grizzly bears and to promote effective actions and techniques to increase human safety and decrease the likelihood of a human-bear conflict. In 2019, the IGBC adopted [universal messages](#), which are now routinely shared through the network of expert agencies. In 2021, the IGBC overhauled its [website](#), which now attracts 8,000 users and, 98,000 total impressions per month. In 2022, the IGBC developed and published a [Bear Smart Communities framework](#) and in 2023 published a [Bear Smart Communities handbook](#) for communities that are voluntarily interested in establishing their own Bear Smart Committees, completing a Bear Smart Community Assessment, and developing and implementing a Bear Smart Community Plan. In 2024, the subcommittee is planning to host an Information, Education, and Outreach summit planned for 200 practitioners and social scientists in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with a theme of building resilient communities in bear country.
- Science Subcommittee - The IGBC has developed and supported [world-class science](#) to learn more about grizzly bears, what they need to survive, and to monitor their populations. The primarily Yellowstone-focused [Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team](#) (IGBST) pre-dates the IGBC and science teams for Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak/Selkirks, North Cascades, and Bitterroot ecosystems were formally established over time. The Science Subcommittee was added to the charter in December, 2018, but is still a new concept in region-wide implementation coordinating the all science teams. The group has met twice this year, and a briefing is planned for the IGBC Executives at the Winter 2023 meeting. Recent scientific advances include adoption of the advanced demographic monitoring using Integrated Population Models and predicting connectivity pathways between ecosystems.
- Attractant Storage/Food-Conditioning – The IGBC has provided clear direction for [food storage](#) and garbage management within key grizzly bear management areas as an important means of

promoting bear conservation and human safety. In 2023, the US Forest Service published a unified food storage order for the National Forests in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, and newly harmonized food storage orders for the National Forests in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, completing a process that was started in 2017.

- Bear Resistant Products Testing Program – Since the 1980s, the IGBC has conducted in-depth research into effectiveness and efficacy of several bear-related developments and products such as bear deterrent sprays, bear-resistant food containers, and portable electric fences to restrict bear access to supplies in the backcountry. The Bear Resistant Products Testing Program is a partnership with the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, Montana and the Washington State University Bear Center in Pullman, Washington. With financial and administrative support provided by the Wildlife Management Institute, these two facilities conduct product testing with captive grizzly bears. Products have been tested at the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center for the past 20 years, and to increase testing capacity, the Bear Center at Washington State University joined the program in 2022. Today, nearly 500 products from more than 100 manufacturers are on the [IGBC List of Bear-Resistant Products](#).