

# Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Region 1 (North)

Bear Conflict Management

Justine Vallieres

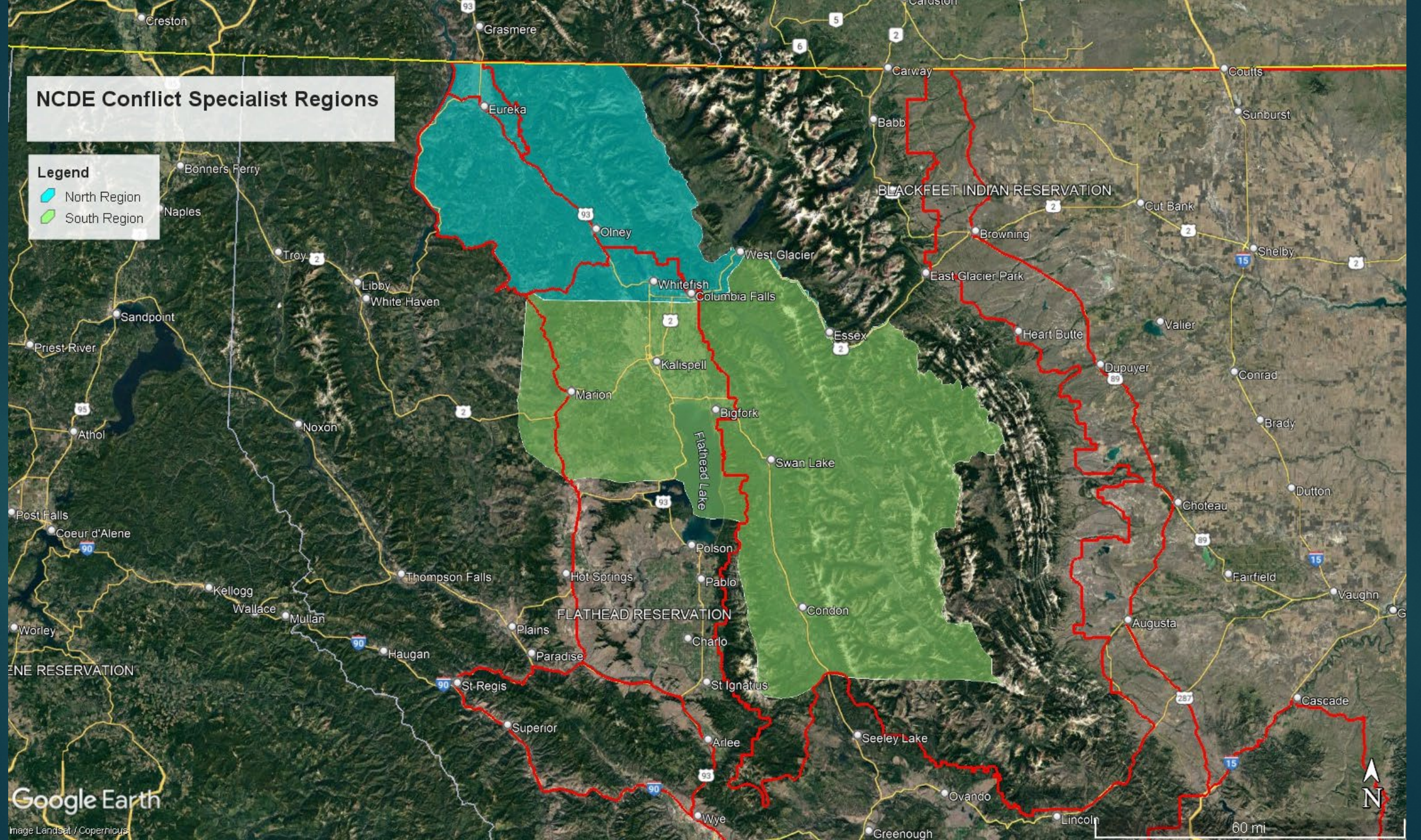




**Legend**

- North Region
- South Region

### South Region





# Grizzly Bear Conflict Calls

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Info/ other	8	7	14	10	3	9	8	5	
Conflict	2	1	14	5	10	39	24	1	
Response	1	1	10	3	3	28	18	1	
E-Fence			6	2		3	3		

- Conflicts down from last year and previous years
- Majority of calls due to chicken coops and unsecured garbage
- 96 total conflict calls, 65 responses
- Set very few traps, focusing on mitigating conflicts with preventative tools i.e. electric fence to prevent future conflicts.
- Have seen an increase in electric fences and/or willingness to install them



# Mortalities



- **11 total**
  - 6 Females, 5 Males
- **6 removed for management**
  - 3 females, 1 male
  - 2 of those went to a zoo (males)
- **2 hit by train**
  - 1 male, 1 female
- **3 shot in self defense**
  - 2 still under investigation
  - 2 females, 1 male
- **1 probable mortality**
  - 1 male



# Management

- Caught 8/7/2023 Fortine- Unsecured Garbage, no prior conflict history
- Relocated to Frozen Lake by USFWS

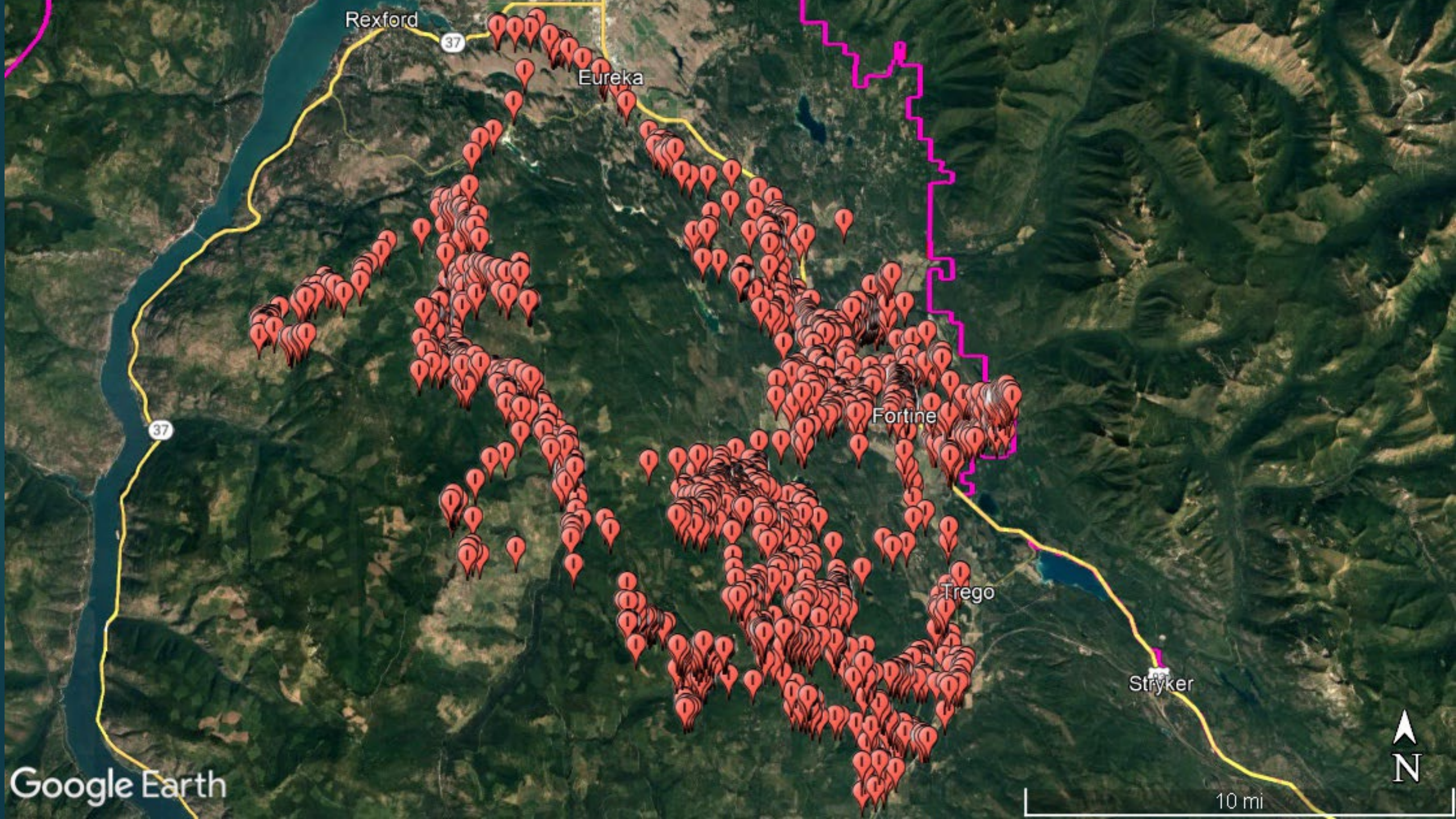


- Caught in North Fork 9/20/23- Breaking into cabins/structures
- Euthanized
- Zoo placement hard to find for single cubs/males









Rexford

37

Eureka

Fortine

Trego

Stryker

Google Earth

N

10 mi





- Caught in Oct 2014 as a yearling - unsecured grain. Couldn't catch mom, released onsite Fortine/Eureka area.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> capture 2016- unsecured pig feed Fortine. Collared and released in Stillwater area.
- Caught 2022 dog food in garage Eureka. Collared and released in Coal Creek North Fork.

9/22/2018 1:53 AM



# Management



- 2 males caught 9/29/2023
- Sow caught 10/01/2023- euthanized
- Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center temporarily house bears
- Zoo Montana





# Management

- Caught 11/02/2023
- Female
- No zoo options, relocation not an option given extent of conflict history





# Take Away Message



We need to look at the big picture when trying to conserve females and take into consideration generational conflict history. It's not an easy thing to do, but removing one female with bad learned behaviors will conserve more bears in the long run.

It's critical for us to work towards long term solutions, such as working with landowners to secure attractants rather than just trapping and relocating. Relocation is just a temporary solution and doesn't address the root cause of the issues.

Properly securing attractants and education is how we will protect future generations of bears so energetically taxed females will not go on to teach cubs bad habits and ways of obtaining anthropogenic foods.



# Management



- **Collared female in Whitefish range.**
  - Caught in 2021 with 3 cubs of the year.
  - Tried blowing collar off this fall.
  - Three 2 year olds this spring kicked off.
  - Dennded early in same spot as last couple years.
  - Should come out with cubs next year.
- **Collared female from BIR.**
  - Relocated this Spring to North Fork.
  - Has spent majority of time in Canada.
  - Currently dennded in Canada.



# Train Strikes



Collared trend female, 11  
years old, Coram



Unmarked adult male, 20+  
years old, Stryker area



# Trend/Augmentation Trapping



CORE\_CAM

72F 22C

07-16-2023 10:16:58



CORE\_CAM

78F 25C

07-16-2023 10:26:39

- Combined CYE Augmentation, trend, and black bear collaring efforts in Whitefish range for 3 weeks.
- Only had one female grizz with a cub of the year show up on cam the day we locked traps open due to high temps.



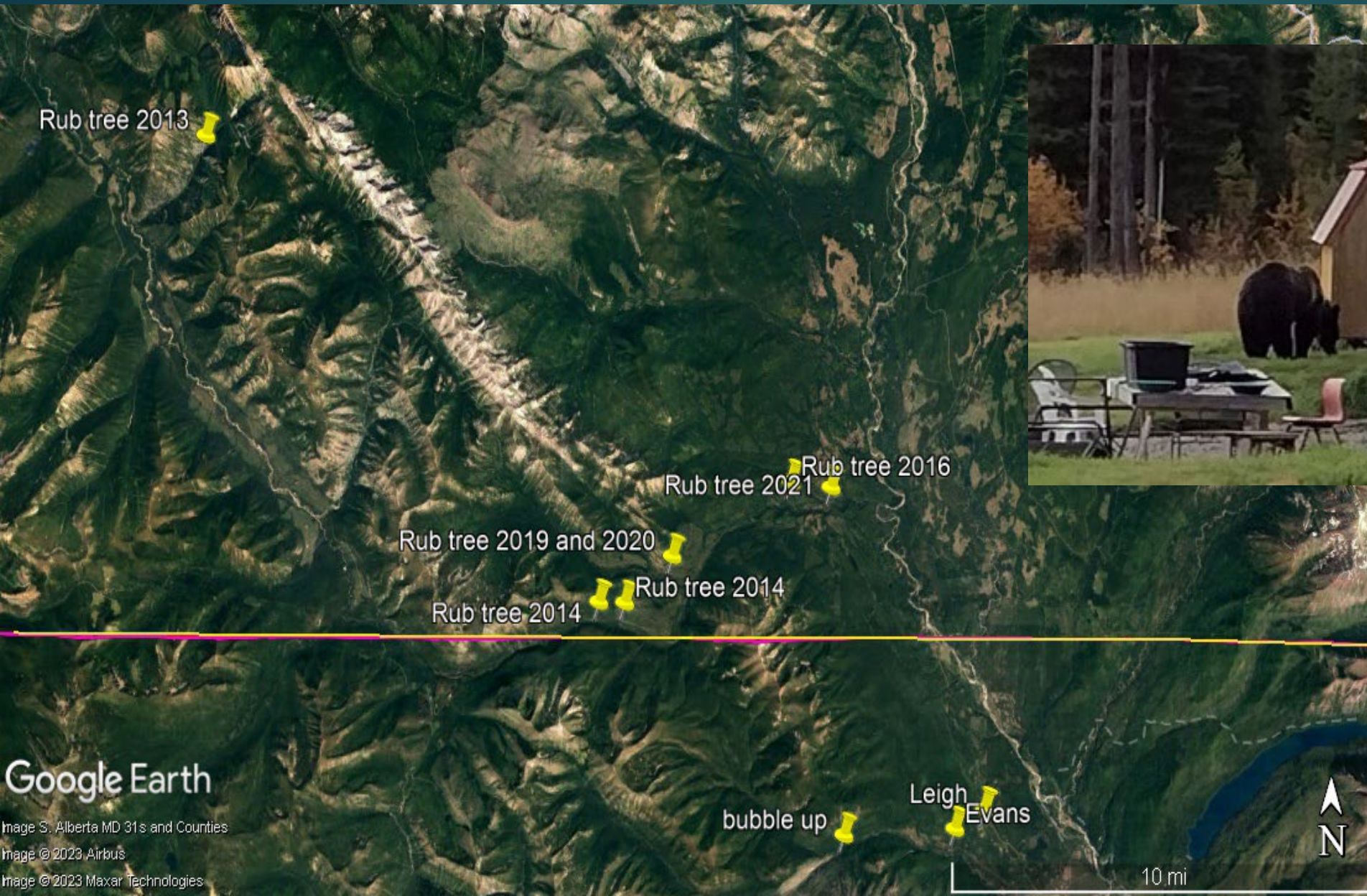
# WHART

- 07/12/2023 Female grizzly consumed man after he committed suicide.
  - No known conflict history, never caught for research. Opportunistic hair sample on tree from 2020 in North Fork at Landowners property.
  - No management action taken
  - It was an opportunistic food source. No evidence that bear will seek humans as food later.
- 08/26/2023 Archery hunters shot a sow with 3 cubs of the year in self defense in Whitefish range. One hunter also shot.
- 10/01/2023 Male grizzly attacked woman on Trail Creek North Fork in surprise encounter where dog was involved.





# Grizzly and Dog Encounters





# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Fruit Drive for the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center



- Flathead Fruit Gleaning Facebook group growing every year (1,700 Members)



# Conflict Mitigation

- Electric Fence
- Chrissy Lambert Non-lethal Specialist USDA Wildlife Services- Working closely with 4H
- Rory Trimbo USFWS
- Ryan Wilbur People and Carnivores – Columbia Falls ordinance
- Defenders of Wildlife cost-share program





# Thank you?

