

INVESTIGATION REPORT

The fatality of Ms. Amie Adamson from a grizzly bear attack on July 22, 2023 near Lazy Acres Subdivision on the Buttermilk Trail, Custer Gallatin National Forest

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SUMMARY:

At approximately 0811hrs, on July 22, 2023, two people hiking encountered a human body lying on the Buttermilk Trail in the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF). The two people hiking made a phone call to the dispatch of the West Yellowstone Police Department (WYPD) indicating that they discovered a body. Local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies were immediately dispatched to the scene. The victim, identified as Ms. Amie Jennifer Adamson, was pronounced deceased by responding personnel. Upon investigation it appeared that Ms. Adamson was walking or running and surprised a female grizzly bear with at least one cub causing a defensive attack that resulted in her death. Because the location of the incident was within proximity to campgrounds, residences, and a heavily used human recreational area, the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) closed the area for safety concerns and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) conducted bear capture operations using culvert type bear traps, leg hold snares, and remote cameras from July 22, 2023, to July 29, 2023. Attempts to capture the bears were unsuccessful. On September 3, 2023, an adult female grizzly bear and one cub broke into a private residence approximately 0.5 miles from the July 22, 2023, fatality site. Managers lethally removed the adult female grizzly bear due to an immediate human safety threat. Managers transported the male grizzly cub to the Wildlife Safari Zoo on (9/17/2023) but it died in enroute. DNA confirmed that the female grizzly bear involved in the human fatality on July 22, 2023 was the same bear that broke into the private residence on September 3, 2023.

Format of report:

A interagency investigation is required after any human fatality caused by a grizzly bear as per the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines (p 59). This report is based on the investigations, personal statements, and documentation of personnel with the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office (GCSO), West Yellowstone Police Department (WYPD), United States Forest Service (USFS), Gallatin County Search and Rescue (GC SAR), Hebgen Basin Fire (HBF), Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP), Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) and Yellowstone National Park (YNP). This report is written in sections of sequence of occurrence and with an investigative conclusion at the end of the report. To avoid unwarranted speculation as to how this attack and resulting fatality occurred, only information gathered and documented during the investigation is contained in this report.

Buttermilk Trail:

The 2.67-mile Buttermilk Trail #494 is located primarily within a mixed conifer forest on the Hebgen Ranger District, CGNF. The trailhead is located south of U.S. Highway (US Hwy) 20, approximately 7 miles west of the town of West Yellowstone, 8 miles west of Yellowstone National Park (YNP), and approximately 1.3 miles east of the Idaho border. The trailhead is located south across the highway from the West Side KOA Campground and is bordered to the northeast for a short distance by the Lazy Acres subdivision, where the trail travels southeast directly behind the subdivision before it climbs in elevation through the forest and connects to the Cream Creek Road (#1703). The Buttermilk Trail is open year-round to foot traffic, and from June 16 through December 1 to wheeled non-tracked vehicles (50 inches or less in width) with additional seasonal designations for ATV's and motorcycles.

It is a highly used recreational trail, including ATV, horse, foot, ski, and motorcycle use. The area and trail are frequented by many wildlife species. It is contained within continuous U.S. National Forest land south, east, and west of the trailhead for many miles. The trailhead is posted with permanent bear warning signs, warning recreationists they are in bear country, informing the public of grizzly bear presence in the area and food storage order requirements (Photo 1). An image of the attack site in relation to West Side KOA campground, Lazy Acres subdivision, West Yellowstone and YNP is shown in Figures 1&2.



Photo 1. Photo of Grizzly bear awareness signs at Buttermilk Trailhead.



Figure 1. Google Earth image of Buttermilk Trailhead, attack site and surrounding area.

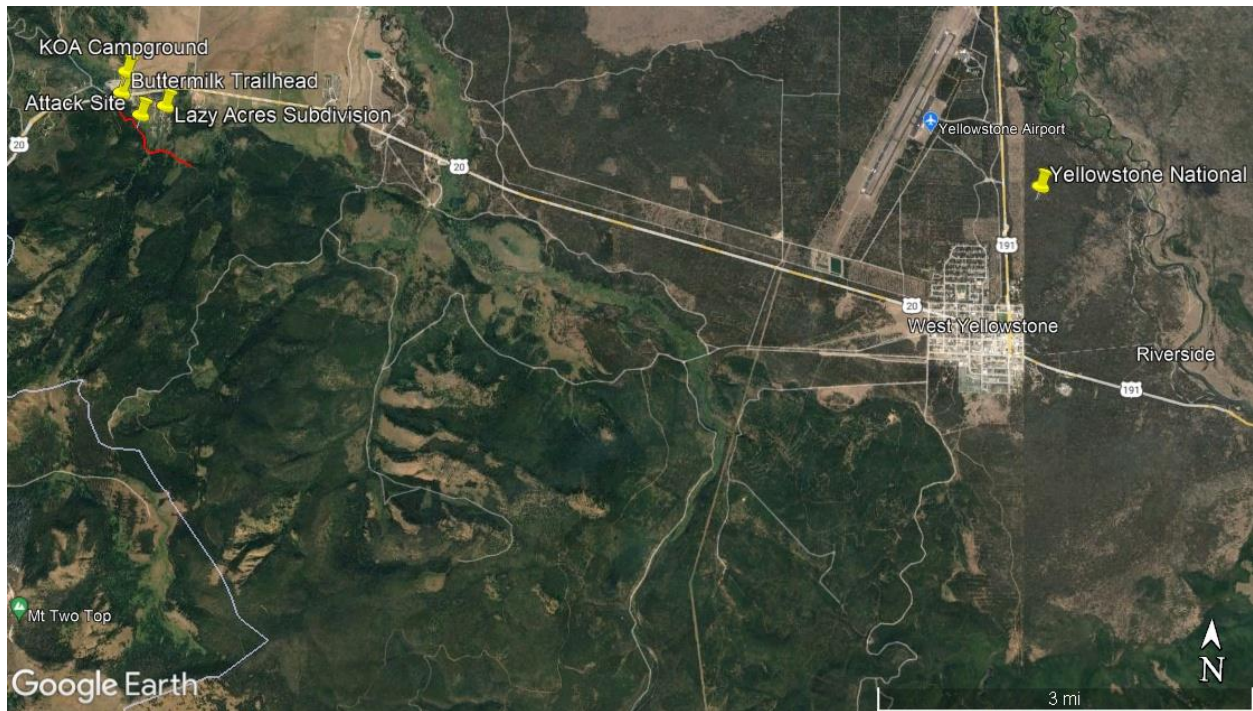


Figure 2. Google Earth Image of Buttermilk Trailhead and attack site in relation to West Yellowstone and Yellowstone National Park.

Initial Scene Response and Site Investigation:

July 22, 2023

0811 hours - WYPD Dispatch received a call from a local couple hiking on the Buttermilk Trail. The couple described a “dead guy laying on the trail and it looks like a possible bear attack”.

0812 hours -USFS enforcement advises reporting party to leave the scene for safety purposes. WYPD, GCSO, Gallatin County Coroner’s Office (GCCO), United States Forest Service law enforcement (USFS enforcement), Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Game Warden (MFWP warden), Hebgen Basin Fire (HBF), YNP (YNP enforcement) are contacted and begin to respond.

0818 hours- MTFWP warden contacts Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Grizzly Bear Management (bear management). MTFWP warden responds to staging area at the Buttermilk Trailhead.

0838 hours- Responders begin staging at trailhead area with initial reporting party.

0844 hours- Bear management gathers traps and equipment and begins travel to incident. Bear management contacts MTFWP pilot (Cadwell) and requests a fixed wing flight to scan for known collared bears with active collars. Cadwell is instructed to stage at West Yellowstone airport after the flight survey/scan. Bear management contacts the Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) bear management and YNP bear management due to the proximity to Idaho and Yellowstone. IDFG and YNP respond. YNP shuttles traps to the West Entrance in case more are needed.

0930 hours-911 dispatch receives report from another caller operating a OHV that there is a dead body on Buttermilk Trail. Dispatch tells the reporting party to continue to trailhead and contact response team.

0935 hours-(approx.) OHV arrives at trailhead via the Buttermilk Trail. The occupants report that there was an “obviously deceased” individual laying on the trail. They drove their OHV around the body and continued to the trailhead per dispatch instructions. The reporting party was interviewed by MFWP and USFS enforcement and mentioned no bears or other people were seen at the location of the decedent.

0939 hours- Initial response team consisting of MTFWP, WYPD, HBF, GCSO, GCCO, USFS enforcement, and YNP arrives on scene (Photo 2). The attack site was on the trail/road. The team secured the scene, takes photos, and collects evidence, including hair, scat, tissue and blood samples. MTFWP, GCSO, GCCO recovered the body and began the initial investigation. The decedent was confirmed as female. GCSO deputy Slingsby described the decedent as wearing a red puffy jacket, light pants and running shoes. MTFWP warden Pohle and GCSO deputy Slingsby documented one set of partial adult grizzly tracks (4.5inches or 11.5cm) and one cub track next to body (Figure 3). The decedent was not consumed, dragged, or cached by the bear(s). No animal carcasses were identified in the immediate area. Coroner Davis and Warden Pohle examine the decedent. The team found a cell phone on the decedent but found no bear spray, firearms, or noise making devices. Warden Pohle described the attack scene as “no bigger than 9ft in diameter”. One shoe print matching the decedent’s shoes was found at the Buttermilk Trailhead by HBF and its orientation suggested travel in the direction of the attack site. Investigators noted that the attack scene was contaminated by OHV tire tracks. Any tracks or sign that may have been present on the trail were driven over by two separate OHV’s.

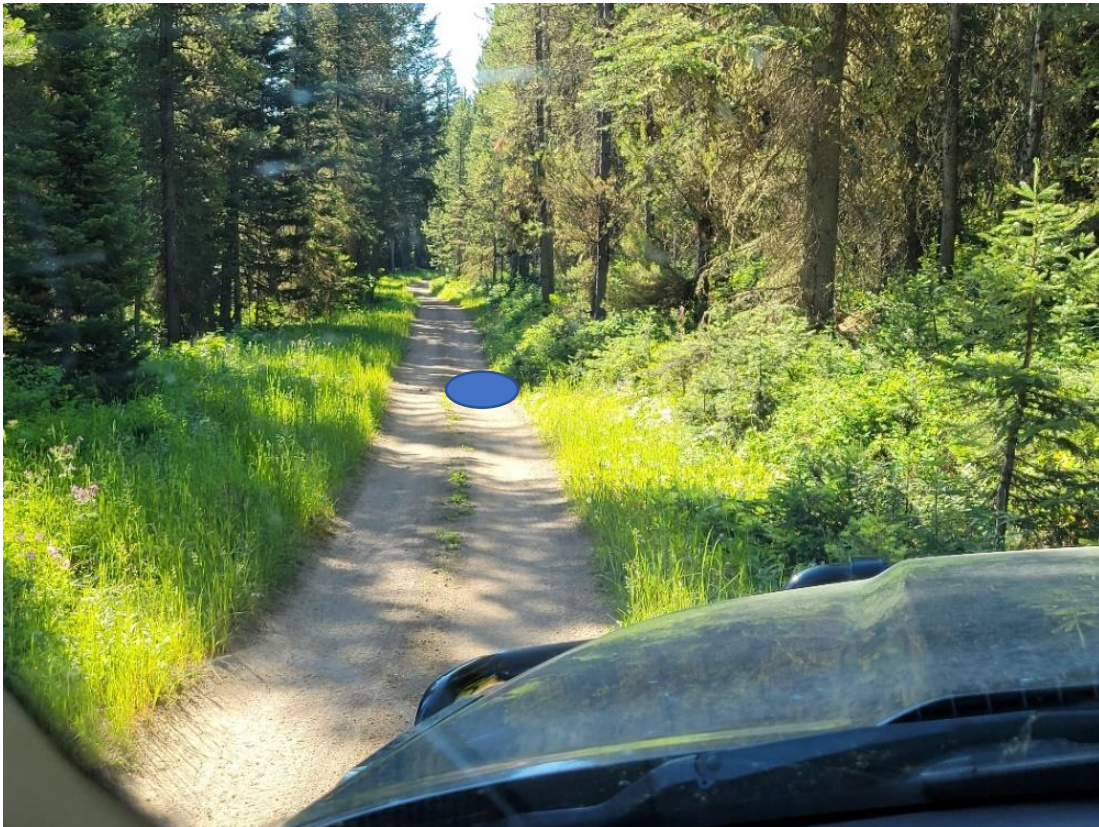


Photo 2. Photo of attack scene and surrounding area looking East to West on July 22, 2023.

1053 hours-West Side KOA reports a missing employee, Amie Adamson, to the WYPD.

1126 hours-The initial scene response and investigation is completed. USFS enforcement remain on scene. They were given instructions by bear management to euthanize any bears that return. The remaining initial response team exits the area and transports the decedent to the Search and Rescue (SAR) facility in West Yellowstone. USFS enforcement temporarily signed and closed area roads, unmarked trails, and marked trails.

1215-1250 hours-MTFWP fixed wing aircraft (Piper 18 Supercub) piloted by Cadwell with observer McHugh equipped with telemetry equipment arrives in area. They conduct an aerial survey of the attack site and surrounding area. No bears or other wildlife were observed from the air due to thick timber. No grizzly bears with active collars were heard via telemetry during the flight. MTFWP fixed wing exits the attack site and lands at the West Yellowstone airport.

1300 hours-Bear Management along with additional MTFWP wardens arrive at the SAR facility in West Yellowstone. MTFWP requests an autopsy once the decedent is transferred to a medical examiner. Coroner Davis, warden Pohle and bear management further examined the decedent at the SAR barn. Measurements of bite wounds and claw puncture wounds were taken, and hair and saliva samples were collected. Refer to Coroner Davis's detailed report for initial remarks of wounds sustained during the attack (Appendix A). Initial examination of the body showed suspected injuries due to a bear attack. This was substantiated by grizzly bear tracks, scat (no human remains found-vegetative), and hair found at the initial scene investigation. MTFWP warden Pohle transports 14 evidence samples taken at the SAR barn (lab number 23-24-W-CAF) to the MTFWP fixed wing aircraft. Refer to MTFWP warden Pohle's case report for the evidence sample list (Appendix B).

1424-1440 hours- MTFWP fixed wing aircraft with observer (Cadwell and McHugh) conducted a second investigative flight. No bears or other wildlife were observed or detected with radio-telemetry. Fixed wing returns to the West Yellowstone Airport to refuel.

1500 hours (est.)-MTFWP fixed wing aircraft exits the Hebgen Basin and flew the 14 evidence samples taken from the decedent to Cody, Wyoming. Samples were handed directly to staff from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), who transported the samples to the WGFD Forensics Laboratory in Laramie, Wyoming for DNA analysis. The samples arrived that same day and were received by lab personnel.

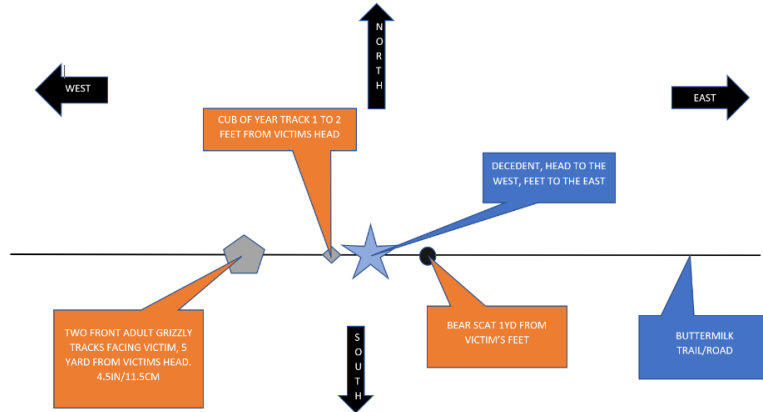


Figure 3. Diagram of the attack scene.

Figure 3. Diagram of the attack scene.

For Detailed Findings of Initial Site Investigation, Evidence List, Decedent Recovery, and Decedent Field Examination and Identification refer to Gallatin County Coroner Davis's, MTFWP warden Pohle's, and GCSO deputy Slingsby's individual case reports. Appendix A, B, and C

FOLLOW UP SITE INVESTIGATION: 7/22/2023

1400 hours-MTFWP, USFS enforcement, IDFG, GCSO, WYPD and bear management trapping crew arrives at attack site. Once scene was secured and safety lookout observers posted, a follow-up site investigation was completed, to examine the initial scene and to conduct an expanded perimeter search for evidence. Warden Pohle briefed the team and provided findings from the initial site investigation. USFS enforcement briefed the team that a second OHV had disregarded the closure order and driven to the scene, contaminating evidence between the initial scene investigation, and the follow up investigation. The evidence tents and findings were left undisturbed between the initial and follow up site investigations. No wildlife or other type carcasses were found in the area, nor any daybeds. Bear Management confirmed the partial adult grizzly bear (4.5 inches or 11.5cm) and cub tracks next to the decedent's body. The vegetation to the south uphill from the trail/road directly above where the decedent was found was disturbed and the grass on the rim of the trail/road, next to where the decedent was found was smashed down. The team did not find any obvious signs of a bear running through the vegetation on either side of the trail/road above or below where the decedent was laying east or west of the attack site. It is important to note the area immediately south of where the body was found is a 30-degree upward slope with heavy green vegetation including grass, shrubs, and thick timber, and the area north of where the body was found slopes slightly downhill consisting of grass for approximately 10 yards before it turns into heavy vegetation and thick timber. Approximately 250 yards east of the body the team found a partial set of adult grizzly bear (4.5in/11.5cm) and cub tracks walking west towards the attack site both on and off the trail/road. The track size was consistent with the tracks found next to the victim. During the follow up site investigation the team noticed hearing doors being closed, people talking and vehicles driving around the Lazy Acres subdivision. The closest house was measured at 184 yards/168m from the attack site.

Evidence found during the initial and follow up scene investigation appeared to show the decedent had a surprise encounter with a female grizzly bear with at least one cub resulting in a defensive attack. The follow up investigation produced additional grizzly bear track evidence identified further west down the trail/road. No evidence was discovered of the decedent being consumed, cached, or dragged. Due to the proximity of the attack site to the Lazy Acres subdivision, a campground, multiple residences, and

the area's history of high recreational use, bear management in consultation with FWS made a decision to begin bear capture operations. MTFWP bear management set three culvert traps immediately next to the attack site and deployed a remote trail camera at the attack site to monitor capture operations and any associated bear activity. Additional remote trail cameras were deployed east and west of the attack site along the Buttermilk Trail.

1515 hours- Official Emergency Closure Order for Buttermilk Trail and surrounding area/s signed by Forest Supervisor Mary Erickson goes into effect - Order Number: 01-11-07-23-02 (Appendix D).

1700 hours- Team leaves and is clear of the attack site. Traps and cameras set.

AREA CLOSURES: 7/22/2023

All trails and roads that intersect the Buttermilk Trail were closed by Custer Gallatin National Forest order number 01-11-07-23-02. The emergency closure orders are posted at trailheads, roads, and trail intersections (Photo 3).

1709 hours- Closure order signs posted at Buttermilk Trailhead

1718 hours- Closure order signs posted at Targhee Pass Trailhead

1726 hours- Closure order signs posted on south side by Mule Deer.

1726 hours till 2130hrs (dark)- MTFWP and GCSO canvas area interviewing neighboring subdivisions, businesses, individuals, and individual landowners informing them of the incident and emergency closure of the area.

Please refer to MTFWP Warden Pohle and CGSO deputy Slingsby's case reports. (Appendix B and C)



Photo 3. Photo of the Custer Gallatin National Forest Closure Order number 01-11-07-23-02.

TRAPPING OPERATIONS 7/22/2023 to 7/29/2023

MTFWP bear management set with three culvert style bear traps, two cubby type snare sets and one trail type snare at the attack site from July 22, 2023 through July 29, 2023 (Photo 4).

On the night of July 22, 2023 a female grizzly bear and two cubs of the year (COY) were detected by remote trail cameras at the attack site at 2203hrs. The family group of grizzly bears investigated the traps but did not enter the traps. The bears left the attack site at approximately 2233hrs. Trail camera photos showed ear tag markers on the adult female grizzly bear, which prompted consultation with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST). IGBST determined that one previously collared female grizzly bear (GB#909) had been captured in the area for research purposes over the past 10 years. GB#909 had a home range that included the south side of the Hebgen Basin. MTFWP bear management

requested a DNA sample of GB#909 from a previous IGBST research capture held at the IGBST be sent to the WGFD Forensics Lab to compare with DNA collected at the attack site.



Photo 4. Photo of three culvert type bear traps being set at July 22, 2023 attack site.

7/25/2023

0420 hours- A female grizzly bear cub of the year (COY) (IGBST mortality number 202321) is hit by a vehicle on United States (US) highway 20 in Idaho approximately 2.3 miles/3.7 kilometers west of the July 22, 2023 attack site. WYPD Deputy, IDFG, MTFWP Warden and Bear Management respond to area. In the interest of public safety, IDFG closed the area including Howard Springs to vehicles stopping. After sunrise the response team searched the area further for an adult female grizzly bear and possible associated cub/s. None were observed. Partial bloody adult grizzly bear tracks (4.5in/11.5cm) and one cub track were observed heading west on the highway shoulder farther into Idaho (Photo 5) before leaving the road and disappearing. It was unknown which direction the bears traveled once they left the road.

MTFWP bear management and IDFG collected samples from the dead female grizzly cub and sent them via Fed Ex to the WGFD Forensics Lab for DNA analysis.

Later that day, WGFD Forensics Lab receives GB#909's banked blood q-tip (lab number 23-24-W-CAF item#15) swab sent from IGBST via Fed Ex.



Photo 5. Photo of accident scene on U.S. Highway 20 in Idaho where a female grizzly bear cub of the year was hit and killed by a vehicle on July 25, 2023.

7/26/2023

0012 hours-Cameras identify a female grizzly with ear tags and one COY visiting the attack site. Culverts and snare traps were again investigated but neither of the bears were captured. No bears were documented to have visited the attack site after this event.

1500 hours-MTFWP Bear Management drives through Lazy Acres subdivision and notices bear resistant trash cans are knocked over. MTFWP discovers two dumpsters with broken locks and one dumpster with a partial grizzly bear track on it. MTFWP secures dumpsters and alerts trash company. The trash company replaced dumpsters the following day.

WGFD Forensics Lab receives DNA samples (lab number 23-24-W-CAF item#16) from IGBST grizzly bear mortality database.

Results confirm the bear involved in the fatality of Ms. Amie Jennifer Adamson is GB#909.

7/29/2023

No bears have returned to the site since July 26, 2023. Traps are shut down, and all gear and bait are removed from the site. Remote trail cameras are left in place to monitor, and the area remains closed to all entry.

7/31/2023

Multi-agency Microsoft Teams meeting held. All evidence, timelines, trapping operations, interviews, and flight operations discussed.

8/1/2023

No further bear presence was detected. After consultation with multiple agencies involved in the investigation, CGNF reopens Buttermilk Trail to the public. Onsite investigation ends.

MONTANA CORONER DEATH INVESTIGATION REPORT AND SUBSEQUENT POSTMORTEM EXAMINATION REPORT (APPENDIX E&F)

Brief Synopsis of Death Investigation Report: July 22nd, 2023

Death Date: 7/22/2023

Position Found: Lying on Buttermilk Trail

Death Manner: Accident

Cause of Death: Exsanguination/Mauling by bear

Injury Occurred Description: Victim was possibly running on a back country road and apparently surprised a female grizzly bear with cub. The bear attacked the victim and inflicted fatal wounds.

Brief Synopsis of Postmortem Examination Report: July 24th, 2023

Pathologic Diagnosis:

Grizzly bear mauling

Circumstances of Death and Opinion:

The decedent is a 48-year-old female who was reportedly running on a trail when she was attacked by a grizzly bear. At the scene was reportedly a large amount of blood. Based upon the findings of the external examination and the history available, it is my opinion that the cause of death is grizzly bear mauling. The manner of death is accident.

WYOMING GAME AND FISH WILDLIFE FORENSIC LABORATORY TEST RESULTS FOR THE DETAILED FORENSIC LAB ANALYSIS REFER TO THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH WILDLIFE FORENSICS LABORATORY REPORTS (APPENDIX G). THIS INCLUDES A DETAILED EVIDENCE LIST.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS:

Lab Number: 23-24-W-CAF

SPECIES IDENTIFICATION:

Hair from the scene, item #2, was sequenced. The sequence of hair was 96% similar (max identity) to grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) sequences in the GenBank database over 251/261 base pairs indicating the sample originated from grizzly bear.

DNA ANALYSIS RESULTS

Items #1,2,5 and 15 resulted in identical genotypes (genotype A); indicating the items originated from the same female grizzly bear.

DNA analysis of items #1and #2(hair from the scene), item #5(hair from left buttock of decedent) and item #15(known q-tip blood sample of GB#909) resulted in genotype A. Based on a database of grizzly bears tested, the likelihood that another grizzly bear, chosen randomly from the same population, has the same DNA profile as the DNA profile obtained from the evidence (genotype A) is less than one in eleven million.

Hair from the scene, items #1and #2, and hair from the body item #5 is a DNA match to the q-tip blood sample submitted from GB#909, item #15. All four samples came back as genotype A.

CONCLUSION:

GB#909 and her two cubs were the bears involved in the apparent surprise attack at Buttermilk Trail.

Grizzly Bear Activity After the Attack

On August 18, 2023, IDFG personnel received a report of a female grizzly bear with cub breaking and entering a garage northwest of Henry's Lake, Idaho. After investigating the scene, IDFG personnel set culvert traps on site. The cub was captured and released on site, but the female was not captured. Camera photos from the trap site showed a female grizzly bear with two red ear tags and a single, piebald cub were on scene.

On 9/3/2023 an ear tagged female grizzly bear with one cub opens a window and drags a container of dog food out of a house approximately ½ mile from the July 22, 2023, fatality site (Photo 6). The homeowner records a video of the bears through the open window. MTFWP reviews the video footage and identifies red ear tags in the adult female. The cub had a unique color phase (piebald) that produced a white marking on the head and a white neck band.

MTFWP reviewed the video footage during the conflict at the private residence. MTFWP also reviewed the photos from the August 18, 2023, conflict in Idaho and the remote trail camera footage from the attack site on July 22, 2023 in Montana. One remote trail camera photo from the July 22, 2023, attack site showed these same distinguishing marks on one of the cubs. MTFWP contacted IDFG Bear Management Specialist and both agencies reviewed the footage from July 22, 2023, August 18, 2023, and the current conflict taking place on September 3, 2023. MTFWP and IDFG determined that GB#909 and her cubs were involved in all three conflicts.

MTFWP personnel set two culvert type bear traps approximately 40yds/36.5m from the house (Photo 7). MTFWP Grizzly Bear Specialist contacts the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Grizzly Bear Recovery Program Conflict Coordinator Ben Jimenez and recommends a lethal removal of GB#909 and a live removal of her cub due to immediate human safety concerns. USFWS concurs with the recommendation and gives authority to lethally remove any grizzly bear that breaks into a house due to the conflict type and human safety concerns.



Photo 6. Photo of house that was broken into on September 3, 2023 by GB#909.



Photo 7. Photo of traps set at Montana conflict site on September 3, 2023.

9/3/2023

2036 hours-Grizzly bear family group (sow with one COY) returns to the private residence at 2036hrs. GB#909 was shot on site by MTFWP and GCSO personnel stationed on site (IGBST mortality 202337), due to an immediate human safety threat (Photo 8). GB#909's male piebald cub is live captured (IGBST mortality 202338) and transferred to the MTFWP Wildlife Center for placement in a zoo. GB#909's cub had a unique color phase. This produced the identifiable marks seen by the remote trail camera photo (Photo 9) and in the trap during the capture on September 3, 2023 (Photo 10). Inspection of the carcass found red ear tags (number 1072) on the adult female grizzly bear that was lethally removed (Photo 11).



Photo 8. Scene photograph of lethal removal of GB#909 September 4, 2023.



Photo 9. Remote trail camera photo of piebald cub (center of photo) at attack site, July 22, 2023.

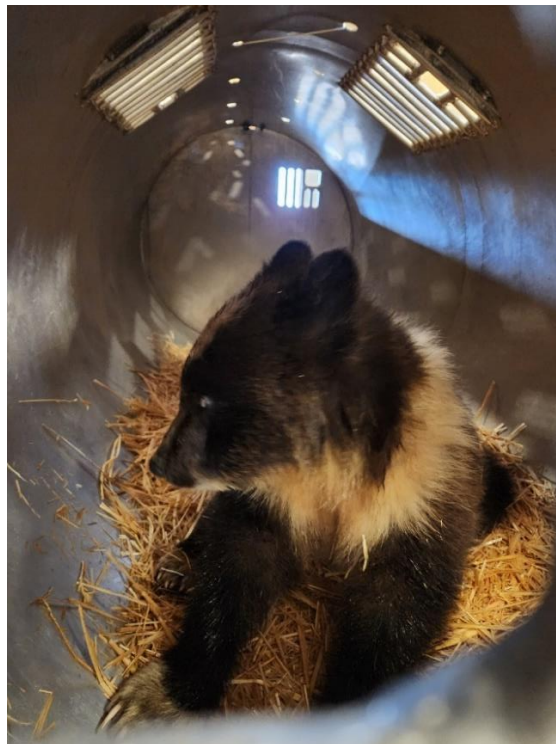


Photo 10. Photo of male piebald grizzly bear cub of GB#909 in culvert style trap, September 3, 2023.



Photo 11 Red round ear tag reading 1072 in left ear of adult female grizzly bear GB#909 after being lethally removed on September 3, 2023

Bear Findings: 9/3/2023

Left ear tag: 1072 red round

Right ear tag: 1072 red round

Tattoo: 1072 green both upper lips

Pit Tag: 982.000364296090

Sex: Adult Female

Weight: 297

Front Pad Width: 5 inches/12.7cm

The ear tags found in the adult female grizzly bear were a match to those placed into the ears of GB#909 when she was captured for research purposes on August 2, 2017. MTFWP collected hair and tissue samples (lab number 23-28-W-CAF items #1 and 2)) and submitted them to the WGFD Forensics Lab on September 4, 2023 via FEDEX. The samples were received by the lab on September 8, 2023. Lab number 23-28-W-CAF items #1 and 2 and sample label 23-24-W-CAF items #1, 2, 5 and 15 resulted in identical

genotypes (genotype A); indicating the items originated from the same female grizzly bear. This was an identical genotype (genotype A) match to the bear hair samples (23-24-W-CAD) submitted on July 22, 2023 collected from the attack site and the body of the decedent. The DNA analysis confirmed GB#909 and both her male and female cubs were the bears involved in the Buttermilk trail human fatality (Appendix H).

The skull/brain of GB#909 was submitted for rabies testing to the Montana Department of Livestock, Montana Veterinary Diagnostic laboratory in Bozeman, Montana. The results were negative for rabies (Appendix I).

The male grizzly cub (IGBST mortality# 202328) arrived at the Montana Wild Wildlife Center in Helena Montana on 9/6/2023. The male grizzly cub was sedated, microchipped with a pit tag (982000410561395), and blood samples were taken per the intake policy. Blood samples were submitted, and the results can be found in the appendices of this report. The male grizzly cub was held at the Montana Wild Wildlife Center until 9/17/2023 when it was sedated and transferred to the Wildlife Safari Zoo transport vehicle on 9/17/2023. The transport vehicle left Montana Wild Wildlife Center and began transport to Wildlife Safari Zoo. Sometime during this transport, the male grizzly cub died. Wildlife Safari Zoo veterinarian performed a gross necropsy on the male grizzly cub and submitted samples for serology to a diagnostic laboratory. These results are noted in the appendices.

Grizzly Bear 909 Capture History:

Grizzly Bear #909 was a 4-year-old sub-adult when captured for the first time on 8/2/2017 at Cream Creek, CGNF by the IGBST during annual research capture efforts. GB#909 was given a lip tattoo in both inside upper lips with green ink (1072), ear tagged with two round red ear tags reading 1072, fitted with a GPS/VHF radio collar and implanted with a micro-chip (982.000364296090). Her collar dropped on 8/7/2018 up Watkins Creek, CGNF.

GB#909 was recaptured as a 7-year-old on 8/12/2020 at Timber Creek, Caribou Targhee National Forest (CTNF) by the Idaho Fish and Game during annual research capture efforts. She was fitted with a VHF collar and released on site. She had two yearlings present when captured, G270 and GB#1012. G270 and GB#1012 were both captured the day before and handled. GB#909 was observed via a monitoring flight with 2 two-year-olds on 4/8/2021.

GB#909 dropped her collar on 7/14/2021 up the West Fork of Denny Creek, CGNF. This was the last known location of GB#909.

DNA results (g2199) from the 8/12/2020 capture, completed in 2021 suggests that GB#909 may have been involved in a human injury incident on 5/29/2020 in Henry's Lake State Park involving a defensive attack while guarding a moose carcass.

GB#909 had no other known previous conflicts.

CONCLUSION:

On July 22, 2023, Ms. Amie Adamson was attacked and killed by adult female grizzly bear #909 and her 2 cubs while traveling alone along the Buttermilk Trail, CGNF. She was found deceased by two people hiking the trail at 0811hrs. Investigators could not determine if she was walking or running at the time of the attack. No firearm, bear spray or noise making device were found. No evidence of a wildlife carcass, consumption of her body, caching of her body, or dragging of her body by the bear(s) were discovered. There was minimal sign of bear or human track evidence at the attack site. The attack site was approximately nine (9) feet in diameter. The bear and human track evidence was contaminated by an OHV that passed within a few feet of the body before the investigation took place. Based on the injuries sustained by Ms. Adamson, the fact that she was alone, did not have a bear deterrent, and she was not

fed on by the bear(s) indicated that she was killed in a defensive attack by the sow and 2 cubs. The cause of the defensive attack was likely a result of either a surprise encounter or defense of young, or a combination of the two.

GB#909 was lethally removed for repeated life-threatening behavior exhibited at two confirmed conflict situations in both Idaho and Montana. On 8/18/2023, GB#909 and her male cub broke into a garage near Henry's Lake, Idaho and received a significant food reward. IDFG personnel attempted to capture the then unknown female but capture attempts were unsuccessful. On 9/3/2023 GB#909 broke into an occupied house in Montana again receiving an unnatural food reward. During this conflict situation the female attempted to attack the homeowner by lunging through a second story window. Neither Montana nor Idaho had any confirmed conflicts involving GB#909 before these events or the fatality that occurred on 7/22/2023. The behavior that GB#909 exhibited during the Idaho conflict on 8/18/2023, the Montana conflict on 9/3/2023, and the confirmation of her involvement in the Buttermilk fatality resulted in the decision to lethally remove this bear. This bear's behavior is indicative of a bear that is habituated, food conditioned, and exhibiting little to no fear of humans.

PRESS RELEASES:

The following is summary and timeline of public communications from MTFWP and news media inquiries to MTFWP after the July 22, 2023, human fatality.

MTFWP's initial external communications on WHART incidents are often published as social media posts. This is one of the quickest ways for the agency to disseminate critical information as a primary source directly to the public. It also allows for subsequent time-sensitive updates to be given that may require the public's immediate attention or action in a dynamic situation.

After the initial management response and when most details of an incident are confirmed, a news release becomes the preferred communication tool for providing a more comprehensive summary of the incident, agency response, relevant context, and safety messages. News releases are sent via email to a wide audience that includes media outlets and the public. Each news release is also published on the agency's website and social media channels.

Each responding agency takes the lead on public communications and media relations regarding their respective role in the incident response. In this case and similar to other WHART incidents, the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) handled communications on the area closure, FWP on bear management, and the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) on the victim.

Because of the significant impact of and public interest in the July 22 incident, many updates were given over multiple platforms. Some communications from partner agencies are also included in this timeline.

July 23: Facebook post with initial details and USFS area closure -

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=657203459767270&set=a.301371652017121>

July 24: News release, attached to this email and available online:

<https://fwp.mt.gov/homepage/news/2023/july/0724-woman-killed-in-bear-encounter-near-west-yellowstone>

July 24: Facebook post with content from July 24 news release-

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=657609626393320&set=a.301371652017121>

July 24: We shared a post by Gallatin County Sheriff's Office -
https://www.facebook.com/MontanaFWP.R3/posts/657854623035487?ref=embed_post

July 25: Facebook post announcing capture operations were discontinued -
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=658226732998276&set=a.301371652017121>

Aug. 17: Facebook post for West Yellowstone with general bear safety messages -
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=670604825093800&set=a.301371652017121>

Sept. 6: News release, attached to this email and available online:
<https://fwp.mt.gov/homepage/news/2023/sep/0906-grizzly-bear-euthanized-near-west-yellowstone-following-multiple-conflicts-with-people>

Sept. 6: Facebook post with content from Sept. 6 news release -
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=680985997389016&set=a.301371652017121>

Board of Review Bear Safety Recommendations

Increasing numbers and distribution of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem increase the possibility of bear-human encounters and potential for bear-inflicted human injuries and fatalities. There is no guarantee of safety when recreating in bear country, even when all recommended safety procedures are followed. However, the BOR members believe that due to the unfortunate death of Ms. Amie Adamson, it is important to restate the recommended best practices to reduce fatal encounters with grizzly bears. We believe that these safety practices for recreating in bear habitat can reduce the risk of injury or death due to bear encounters.

The recommended best practices for recreationists in bear habitat to reduce the risk of a bear attack are:

- 1) **Carry a Bear Deterrent** – Although the type of deterrent (bear spray or firearm) to carry is a personal choice, bear spray requires little training, has proven easy to use, and has been highly effective at stopping or reducing the length and severity of most grizzly bear attacks when the person involved has had time to deploy it. Additionally, bear spray can be used by party members to terminate bear attacks without endangering the life of the person being attacked. Bear deterrents should be carried so that they are readily available and can be rapidly deployed.
- 2) **Do not Recreate Alone** – Group sizes of 3 or more people when walking, hiking, running, or participating in other recreational activities in grizzly bear habitats 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 chances of surprise encounters and risk of bear attacks. When recreating in a group there is also a better chance of getting prompt medical attention and rescue if a member of the party is injured by a bear.
- 3) **Make Noise** – Making noise while walking, hiking, running, or recreating, 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.

- 4) **Be Vigilant** – Being vigilant for bears can reduce the chances of surprise encounters with bears at close distances, thereby reducing the risk of bear attack. Be especially vigilant when hiking off trail. 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 recreating in all bear country.
- 5) **Report all Bear Conflicts** – In some cases, bears that have injured or killed people had previous experiences, unbeknownst to bear managers, that caused them to become highly habituated or food conditioned. Such bears can be very dangerous. Given timely and accurate information, bear managers can work to alleviate this threat. Not reporting conflicts with bears, for example bears obtaining human or livestock foods or damaging property, increases the risk that someone may be injured or killed.
- 6) **Avoid being Fast, Silent, or Distracted** – Activities such as trail running, and mountain biking are inherently risky in grizzly country because speed and silence increase the likelihood of having a surprise encounter with a grizzly bear. Such encounters can be devastating for bears and people alike. In addition, the use of earphones or earbuds while recreating reduces your ability to hear ambient noises, rendering you less aware of your surroundings. The BOR recommends avoiding being fast, silent, or distracted during any activity where grizzly bears are known to reside. Failure to do so may increase the likelihood of an encounter.
- 7) **Secure All Attractants** – All property owners, including business owners and owners of rental properties must ensure all attractants are secured and unavailable to bears. There is the potential that grizzly bear 909's access to unsecured attractants in the area resulted in habituated, food-conditioned behavior that contributed to this fatality. Renters must have the information and infrastructure available to secure all garbage, pet and livestock food, and birdseed.
- 8) **Employee Training for Staff** - The BOR members also encourage all employers in occupied grizzly bear habitat to make basic bear safety training and/or information available to their staff. Safety training should contain information on preventing bear encounters and basic bear behavior including defensive and predatory behavior. There are many sources of bear safety information including but not limited to:
 - a. Staying Safe in Bear Country produced by the Safety in Bear Country Society and the International Association for Bear Research and Management.
 - b. Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance, revised edition (2002), written by Dr. Stephen Herrero, The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut, USA.
 - c. <https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/bear/be-bear-aware>
 - d. <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/bear-wise-wyoming>
 - e. <https://idfg.idaho.gov/press/simple-precautions-camp-and-home-can-help-avoid-bear-problems>

- f. [A Bear Spray Story - Yellowstone National Park \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/learn/education/activities/a-bear-spray-story-yellowstone-national-park)
- g. [WYOGA: Hunting Safely in Grizzly Country \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Additionally, new innovative strategies may be needed to inform the public of bear safety practices that result in human behavior change. State and federal agencies as well as many non-government organizations provide an abundance of bear safety information. It is strongly recommended that all people who live or visit areas occupied by grizzly bears become educated and actively engage in the 7 bear conflict avoidance measures listed above. Failure to do so can result in negative human-bear interactions, including human and bear deaths.

The Board reiterates that there is no guarantee of safety when recreating in bear country and that these bear safety practices may not have changed the outcome of Ms. Adamson'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 recreationists.

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