

NORTH CASCADES ECOSYSTEM SUBCOMMITTEE

Hybrid Spring Meeting 2024: North Bend, WA

May 29th, 2024

ATTENDEES (IN-PERSON DENOTED BY AN *):

Subcommittee

Don Striker (NPS^[1])*
Ann Froschauer (USFWS)
David Farmer (USFS^[3], OWNF)
Jody Weil (USFS, MBS, Vice-Chair)*
Brock Hoenes (WDFW^[6])*
Brendan Brokes (WDFW, Chair)*
Hilary Cooley (USFWS Recovery Coordinator)
Tiffany Gering (Chelan County Commissioner)
Lisa Janicki (Skagit County Commissioner)
Garth Mowat (WLRs^[8] (BC))

Information, Education and Outreach

Andrew Lavalle (USFWS)*
Denise Shultz (NPS)*

Other agency participants:

David Diamond (IGBC Executive Coordinator)
Jason Ransom (NPS)*
Caitlin Clark (WDFW)*

Audience:

Paul Reynolds (Defenders of Wildlife)*
Josie McLaurin (on behalf of Rep. Newhouse)
Tom Eastep*
Kathleen Callaghy (Defenders of Wildlife)
Graham Taylor (NPCA)*
Nick Jorg*
Madelyn Hamilton (Methow Valley Citizens Council)

Technical Team

Abby Sage (USFWS^[2], chair)*
Anne Braaten (NPS)*
Janel Scharhag (USFS, MBS)*
David Topolewski (USFS, OWNF)*
Wayne Kasworm (USFWS)
Mackenzie Clarke (Okanagan
Nation Alliance (BC^[7]))

Lori Roberts (Montana Fish, Wildlife &
Parks)

Lydia Allen (USFS)
Diane Probasco (USFS)
Benjamin Jimenez (USFWS)

Anna Santo (UBC PHD Student)
Jack Oelfke
Michael Wright (Spokesman Review)
Gordon Congdon
Steve Taber
Michelle

¹ National Park Service

² US Fish and Wildlife Service

³ US Forest Service

⁴ Colville National Forest

⁵ Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

⁶ Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

⁷ British Columbia

⁸ BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRs)

PowerPoint presentations are available for many agenda items found [here](#) or by clicking the links in the title lines.

Appointment of Vice Chair: Brendan Brokes

- Jody Weil, Forest Supervisor, United States Forest Service Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, accepted the role of Vice Chair.

REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF MEETING MINUTES FROM THE FALL 2024 SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

- No comments, accepted as recorded.

UPDATE ON NCE GRIZZLY BEAR RESTORATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT: ANDREW LAVALLE

- NPS and USFWS initiated an EIS process in November 2022 to “evaluate various approaches for the restoration of a grizzly bear population to the NCE”. Simultaneous rulemaking by USFWS consider designating population as experimental under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Draft EIS to evaluate various approaches for the restoration of a grizzly bear population to the NCE was released for public comment on September 29, 2023.
- ~12,700 comments were received on the Draft EIS and ~12,200 comments were received on the proposed 10(j) rule. All comments were reviewed during winter of 2023-2024 and the Final EIS was released on March 21, 2024.
- The Record of Decision (ROD) was announced April 25th, 2024, concluding the EIS process. The ROD selected “Alternative C” designating grizzly bears in the US portion of the NCE and surrounding area as a 10(j) nonessential experimental population which entails:
 - Translocation of grizzly bears to the NCE from other ecosystems.
 - 3-7 bears per year for 5-10 years to reach an initial population of 25 bears. Bears should be sourced from similar ecosystems with similar food economies such as the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, Interior British Columbia, or Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.
 - Bears will be subadult, 2-5 years old, without a history of conflict, and all translocated bears will be radio collared.

- The population of grizzly bears is expected to be 200 within 60-100 years.
- Release sites will be NPS or USFS lands including areas within the Stephen Mather, Pasayten, and Glacier Peak wilderness areas.
- The 10(j) Rule was published on May 3rd, 2024, aiming to provide for the maximum management flexibility on non-federal lands outside the ecosystem and to provide a “larger toolbox” that can be deployed earlier to address and prevent conflict. This allows for customized measures to reduce impacts to stakeholders while providing for the conservation of the species.
 - FWS may designate an “experimental population” before reestablishing a federally listed species.
- The 10(j) Rule would differ within three management areas:
 - Management Area A: For restoration of grizzly bears on *federal lands*.
 - North Cascades National Park Service Complex
 - Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, Okanogan-Wenatchee, and Colville National Forests north of Interstate 90 and west of Washington State Route 97
 - Management Area B: to accommodate natural movement or dispersal by grizzly bears on federal lands.
 - Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF and Okanogan-Wenatchee NF south of Interstate 90
 - Gifford Pinchot NF
 - Mount Rainier National Park
 - Colville NF and Okanogan-Wenatchee NF lands east of Washington State Route 97, within the experimental population boundary
 - Management Area C: to further ensure the safety of humans, bears, and property in areas that may be incompatible with grizzly bear presence.
 - All private, state, and local lands
 - All other lands outside Areas A and B within the experimental population boundary
- The take allowed in 10(j) management areas differs:
 - All areas:
 - Defense of life
 - Deterrence

- Unintentional take, provided such take is non-negligent and incidental to an otherwise lawful activity.
 - Research and recovery actions.
 - Relocation of bears, including as a preemptive action to prevent imminent conflict or habituation.
 - Lethal take by an authorized agency of bears involved in conflict.
 - Areas B and C:
 - Conditioned lethal take by an individual authorized by USFWS when depredation of livestock has been confirmed.
 - Area C:
 - Conditioned lethal take by an individual authorized by USFWS when a grizzly bear presents a demonstrable and ongoing threat to human safety or to lawfully present livestock or other property.
 - Conditioned lethal take by any individual of a bear in the act of attacking livestock or working dogs on private land.
- As of today, there is no set timeline for when translocations will begin. Updates will continue to be published on NPS websites and agencies will work with partners as plan develop.
- Next steps:
 - Coordination with partners
 - Education and outreach
 - Equipment acquisition such as radio collars, etc.

UPDATE FROM THE IGBC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: DAVID DIAMOND

- A summary of the IGBC Mission and subcommittees was reviewed emphasizing the need for collaboration.
- The [IGBC's mission](#) is to support recovery, delisting and ongoing conservation of grizzly bear populations and their habitat in areas of the western US through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management, research and communication now and after delisting, including:
 - Coordination among ecosystems to ensure best utilization of resources and prevent duplication of effort, including:
 - Developing universal safety messages

- Maintaining a comprehensive website for all six recovery areas
 - Working on developing BearSmart community frameworks and a handbook
 - Interagency Science Teams identifying needed, and conducting ongoing, research in/for all of the recovery areas.
 - Work on increasing sanitation measures throughout all of the recovery areas.
 - Maintaining a living database of sanitation devices (waste receptacles, food storage lockers/canisters, etc.) demonstrated to be grizzly bear-resistant. The program uses captive grizzly bears at the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center (GWDC) in West Yellowstone, Montana or the Washington State University Bear Research Center in Pullman, WA, who are given 45 minutes to try to break into the devices. If the bears fail the devices are conditionally approved, subject to success/failure in the field.
 - There is a common understanding among member agencies of the IGBC Executive Committee that successful grizzly bear recovery and conservation requires a shared responsibility with all parties.
- The Executive Committee is made up of the same agencies as the Subcommittees and meets every June and December. Subcommittees meet early Spring and Fall. The five IGBC Subcommittees include:
 - Bitterroot
 - North Cascades
 - Northern Continental Divide
 - Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak
 - Yellowstone
- The 40th anniversary of IGBC was celebrated in December 2023. Following this, an Information, Education, and Outreach (IEO) summit was held on January 24th, 2024, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. There will be an assessment done on the success and impact of the IEO summit to support the potential for more in the future.
- Upcoming events and information on the IGBC Executive and Subcommittees, as well as materials presented in this meeting, can be found on the [IGBC news and events page](#).

Update from US Fish & Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Office: Hilary Cooley

- Currently have two court ordered processes:
 - The first is a legal settlement agreement to revise or remove the listed entity of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states by January 31, 2026. This would require a status evaluation, an updated status assessment, and a formal rulemaking process, which would include producing a proposed rule and holding public comment period.
 - The second is requiring a new EIS process for grizzly bear restoration in the Bitterroot ecosystem.
 - There was an EIS done for this ecosystem, and it was finalized in 2000. The decision was made to reintroduce grizzly bears as a nonessential population with the 10(j) rule.
 - This was never implemented, and was challenged in court, leading to the judgement that the EIS process would need to be redone.
 - There was a public scoping in January 2024, and the final EIS is required to be published in October 2026.

UPDATE FROM NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK: Don Striker

- Signed ROD and thankful for all neighbors and partner agencies. Learning from the experience of other states was beneficial during this process.
- ROD is the first step and moving forward it is crucial to build out next steps and implementation collaboratively. The NPS and USFWS are working together closely to ensure the implementation is done in the most respectful way.
- Feels the presentation done at the start of the meeting by Andrew Lavallo was a good summary of the progress so far.

Update from WA Department of Fish & Wildlife: Brendan Brokes / Brock Hoenes

- Looking forward to collaborating and being a cooperating agency as this process moves forward.
- WDFW has established a new position: Wolf and Grizzly Bear Policy Lead

- Subhadeep Bhattacharjee will be in this position. Unsure if the position will be a part of any IGBC Subcommittees or the Executive Committee but may be in the future.
- Continued legislative funding is needed to support research into how techniques that currently work for black bears could translate to grizzly bears and support hazard assessments and conflict management models.

Update from Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest: Jody Weil

- USFW has officially signed on as a cooperating agency since the previous Subcommittee meeting in October 2023.
- Signs are being drafted for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS) around this cooperation for review and printing.
- The first year of the MBS food storage order has been successful and has had no major issues. Planning to continue the order moving forward and enforcing as needed.
- Food storage lockers and bear safe receptacles are present at many developed sites. They are now prioritizing high use campgrounds.
- Educational opportunities are being provided at WBS recreation sites.
- Beginning work on MOU pertaining to 10(j) Rule and ROD.

UPDATE FROM OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST: David Farmer

- David Farmer is replacing Kristin Bail on the Subcommittee. Kristin has moved to a Deputy Regional Forester position in the Southwest United States.
- Food storage order for OWNF is pending implementation and in legal review.
- Continuing to add wildlife friendly canisters, dumpsters, and infrastructure throughout the forest.

Update from the Okanagan Nation Alliance – Cailyn Glasser/Mackenzie Clarke

- Joint Nations Grizzly Bear Initiative update:

- Working to support United States and other operations/agencies since the ROD. Recognizes this is a transboundary ecosystem and working make the habitat north of the border is healthy and secure. Waiting to implement plans to see where bears will be translocated to in the U.S under 10(j) rule.
- Finalizing priority habitat areas and restoration plans as well as implementing hazard assessments.
- Outreach and communications are a priority, such as community engagement.
- Stewardship Strategy
 - Finalized and will be implementing and released along with an associated website.

Update from British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship - Garth Mowat

- Have been working on two research projects:
 - Mapping huckleberry presence in NCE using remote sensing. Currently includes a 40-year time series that was meant to lead into temporary supply analysis and cumulative effects analysis with hopes to continue habitat planning in NCE.
 - Mapping diet of grizzly bears in NCE analyzing four general classes that will be released in 2025.
 - Commitment to grizzly bear recovery in NCE not fully supported by B.C. Government. Upcoming election may impact support.

Update from the Technical Team – Abby Sage

- Introductions of tech team members.
- The Technical Team has been having continued discussion and work through of No Net Loss MOU and NCE Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan/EIS and 10(j) experimental population designation.
- National Forests within grizzly bear Recovery zones use 3 main standards to maintain habitat and human access:
 - Core area.
 - Open motorized route density
 - Total motorized route density

- In 1997, the USFS and NPS agreed to “No Net Loss” of core area for grizzly bears in the NCE.
- Core area is defined as the area which is greater and 0.3 miles (500 meters) from any open motorized access route or high use non-motorized access route.
- The No Net Loss agreement included a definition of a high-use, non-motorized routes as “any route that receives more than 20 parties per week, at least once during early or late season”.
 - The zone of influence was the same (500 meters) as motorized roads.
 - Determining “high use” was by qualitative assessments by recreation staff from both the NPS and USFS. There were (and are) no quantitative data on trail use in the NCE.
 - High-use trails have increased substantially in the NCE since 1997, both in trail miles (new trails) and in usage.
- The Technical Team has been evaluating how/does non-motorized recreation affect grizzly bears, and how this relates to how core area is measured.
 - Of 26 scientific publications reviewed, 14 reported distances at which grizzly bears were displaced by non-motorized recreation: four found no effect or a weak effect. Ten found displacement. Including the four studies that found no effect, non-motorized recreation (for example hikers) displaced grizzly bears by distances ranging from 0-750 meters, with an average of 213 meters and median of 122 meters. Not included in the analysis was a technical review paper that found an average displacement distance at 270m.
- Tech team conducted a literature review to revisit the effects of high use trails on grizzly bears and the definition of high use. Currently: 500 m zone of influence around trails with >20 parties per week.
- Recommendation: High-use trails
 - Reduce the zone of influence from 500 meters to 250 meters.
 - Consider all maintained trails as high-use for the new baseline, except for trails that are unlikely to become high-use. Treat unmaintained trails as low use. Non-system or user-created trails and winter recreation are not included in this calculation. If better information or data become available this definition should be updated.
- 37 BMUs analyzed for core area changes with recommended change to give approximate estimate. Analysis is a draft until road and trail data are more definitive.

- Approximately 79% increase in core area was seen when the recommended change of high use trails was implemented.
 - East side of Cascades:
 - 18 BMUs analyzed.
 - 13 % increase in core
 - West side of the Cascades:
 - 19 BMUs analyzed.
 - 66% increase in core
- Grizzly bear sighting criteria developed in the late 1980s need to be updated to provide those evaluating reports stronger guidance to do so. The Technical Team compiled direction for interviewing reporting parties and is recommending a change in ranking sightings:
 - Currently we use:
 - Class 1 (confirmed)
 - Class 2 (probable)
 - Class 3 (unknown)
 - Class 4 (not a grizzly bear)
- Recommendation: to change the criteria and classifications for grizzly bear sightings:
 - Class 1 (confirmed, with more stringent criteria than currently used)
 - Class 2 (indeterminant)
 - Class 3 (not a grizzly bear)
- Technical Team recommendations were approved for both high use trails and to change the grizzly bear sighting criteria and classifications. No opposition from Subcommittee members.

Update from the IE & O Team– David Diamond presenting for Lori Roberts

- The second Grizzly Bear Information, Education, and Outreach Summit was held in late January/early February 2024, discussing social science and messaging. There is a need to know if we are reaching the appropriate audiences and what works to get results-driven messages across. This is a broader issue for all land and wildlife management agencies.

- Scholarships were made available and support from federal, state, foundation, and private corporation contributions were made for the event.
- The summit was largely focused on communities coming together with an emphasis on [BearSmart Communities](#), which now has a manual available on the IGBC website.
- Hoping to host a Summit every 3-5 years moving forward and need help from other agencies/organizations to facilitate.
- A list of planning committee members can be found on page 2 of the presentation linked above and the full Summit program can be found [here](#).

EIS ROD-Implementation and Next Steps– Ann Froschauer/ Don Striker/ Subcommittee Members

- Group feels that this topic was covered in previous updates.

Public Comment

Kathleen Callaghy (Defenders of Wildlife):

- Thanked the agencies for their work and the focus on core habitat but would like to see more current and available data from cities and agencies on road/trail mapping. Mentioned a workshop happening in mid-October through her agency, day one focused on agencies/NGOs and day two would be anyone interested in attending.

Graham Taylor (National Parks and Conservation Association):

- Stated he has been following this process for many years and is excited to see the process completed. Gave a call to action to all cooperating agencies to keep the momentum from the ROD and continue moving forward. Was pleased the funding was given for bear hazard assessments and encouraged others to keep pursuing alternative funding opportunities. Expressed interest in the public posting of grizzly bear release photos when translocation begins.

Madelyn Hamilton (Methow Valley Citizens Council)

- Working to increase bear aware education in the Methow Valley and working on conflict/garbage solutions. Would love to increase efforts with cooperating agencies and communities. Currently pointing others to the IGBC website for more information and would like to collaborate more with this group.

Jack Oelfke

- Thanked the agencies for their hard work. Encouraged all participating to persevere and keep up the courage to continue moving forward.

Anna Santo (UBC PHD Student)

- PhD student focusing on grizzly management and human dimensions.
- Working on dissertation and will share as she continues moving forward with peer review process. Willing to share a summary with anyone who is interested.

MEETING ADJOURNED