



Bitterroot Subcommittee

Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee

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 US Fish and Wildlife Service (Idaho)

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 Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks

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 Bitterroot National Forest

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 Idaho Panhandle National Forest

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 Lolo National Forest

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 Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

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 Salmon-Challis National Forest

Ben Conard
 US Fish and Wildlife Service (Montana)

TBD
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Jacob Strohmeyer
 Sawtooth National Forest

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 Bureau of Land Management (Idaho)

Jim Teare
 Idaho Department of Fish and Game)

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ADVISORS
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 US Fish & Wildlife Service

Scott Jackson
 US Forest Service

David Diamond
 US Forest Service

AGENDA

8:30 am (Pacific)/9:30 am (Mountain), 23 October 2024

Time (MST)	Topic	Presenter
9:30 – 9:45	Welcome & Subcommittee Member Introductions	Sandi Fisher
9:45 – 10:00	IGBC Executive Committee Summer Meeting Update	David Diamond
10:00 – 10:15	BE EIS Status Update	Dave Wrobleski
10:15 – 10:35	Information, Education and Outreach Subcommittee Report	Ally Turner
10:35 – 11:00	Science Subcommittee Report	Jennifer Fortin-Noreus
11:00 - 11:10	Break	
11:10 – 12:00	Predicting Grizzly Bear Habitat in the BE – Modeling Connectivity Areas	Sarah Sells
12:00 - 1:00	LUNCH	
1:00 – 1:30	Food Storage Working Group Update	Scott Jackson
1:30 - 2:00	Ongoing Conflict Prevention Updates	Jamie Jonkel
2:00 – 2:30	Review of Subcommittee Goals and Objectives	David Diamond
2:30 – 2:40	Break	
2:40 – 3:10	Agency Updates (SHOULD FOLLOW LAYOUT OF ANNUAL WORKPLAN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salmon Challis NF • Bitterroot NF • Nez Perce Clearwater NF • Lolo NF • Payette NF • Idaho Panhandle NF • Sawtooth NF • US Fish and Wildlife Service (MT and ID offices) • US Bureau of Land Management • Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks • Idaho Department of Fish and Game • Nez Perce Tribe • Counties Representatives 	Agency reps
3:10 – 3:25	Vice-Chair and IEO Committee Chair Nominations	Sandi Fisher/Liz Bradley
3:25 – 3:40	Public Comments	David Diamond
3:40 – 3:55	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action Items - FY25 planned actions 	Sandi Fisher/Liz Bradley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next meeting dates - Adjourn 	
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MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Attendees

- Highlighted names include those that were on the call. Attendee list also pulled from Teams.
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IGBC Executive Update

- Met in June 2024 and visited WA State U Bear Center, new testing site for bear resistant container program.
- Approval of YES Conservation Strategy approved by Exec Team during summer meeting.
- IEO Summit occurred, great success.
- Winter meeting in Dec in Bozeman; best way to get notified of upcoming meetings is via Newsletter – can sign up through igbconline.org website.

BE EIS Update

- www.fws.gov/bitterrootEIS provides access to updates on status of EIS
- Currently reviewing (internally through Core Team) 1st 3 chapters of EIS.
- Draft EIS expected for preliminary review (internal) beg of Dec.
- Coop agencies will then have opp to review draft during the beginning of CY25.
- Public review expected to be initiated summer CY25.
- Alternatives include: no action; proposed (nat recolonization w/ FWS actions to provide education and conflict reduction); Alt A (reintroduction as a 10j population); Alt B (reintroduction as threatened).
- Monitoring as part of EIS is still TBD, but depending on alternative selected, detection monitoring may be necessary.
- Release of draft will include public meetings TBD on schedule.

IEO Subcommittee Report Out

- Call for 2025 IEO grants has been announced. RFP due Nov 12th. 42K available through all Ecosystems. <https://igbconline.org/programs/bear-education/funding/>
- In 2024, IGBC funded \$9500 for BE IEO projects.
- Sept was Bear Aware month
- SCNF hosted a Be Bear Aware training in May (one for public and one for employees)
- South Zone of SCNF just installed 6 bear storage boxes and north zone is in process of installing 10 this fall.
- BNF updated that Forest will be expanding their food storage requirements for 2025.

Science Subcommittee Report Out

- Did not have funding for SW DNA project for 2024. But was some monitoring by other agencies in areas adjacent to BE. Hopes to implement in 2026; looking for funding now. Would then hope to do sampling every 3 years there-after.
- Having discussions now to identify what monitoring within the BE should look like, then try to identify funding options.
- Discussion of monitoring berry production. Suggestions for diff methods agencies may be using will be discussed at spring meeting to identify options.

Predicting Grizzly Bear Habitat in the BE - Modeling Connectivity Areas

- Developing movement models that include up to 7 diff covariates. Model for each individual (46 female, 19 male).
- Use models to simulate spatial behavior.
- Multi phased approach: 1) develop models, simulate for NCDE and test predictive power; 2) apply models to GYE, SE and CYE and test transferability; 3) apply models between pops; predict connectivity pathways; and 4) apply models to BE (focus of today’s presentation).

- Simulations done for 2 scenarios, natural recovery and reintroduction. Study area was 10j boundary from 2000 ROD.
- Natural Recolonization scenario: NE corner of area is most heavily selected. Big Hole Valley also receives a lot of predicted use, as does Centennial to Beaverhead Mtns.
- Reintroduction scenario: Heavier use in northern area of BE.
- Application: Decision making like Conservation Strategies, habitat manage, monitoring design.
- PLOS One has latest manuscript and also available on USGS catalog.

Food Storage Working Group

- Moving on this effort b/c recognition of this being 1st line of defense, minimize potential for conflict/improve human safety, reduce bear mortality, and relevant for more wildlife than just bears.
- Goals: integrate IEO; coop approach; be consistent across BE; be proactive; public acceptance – which led to development of implementation framework.
- Framework components: ‘may be present’ map triggers management considerations. Recommendations for federal lands (education, sanitation, regulation). Also includes suggestions for states, tribal and private lands.
- Next steps: Get feedback from subcommittee members on draft framework; work group incorporates feedback, then deliver a final draft to subcommittee during spring 2025 meeting.
- Comments: keep in mind being able to enforce kinds of rules put in place. Ensure sound, legal basis.
- Note to remember, this effort is not at all linked to development of the BE EIS. Also may be some considerations for potential links to s7 consultation requirements (potential advantages from a 7a1 and 7a2 standpoint to having this in place prior to occupancy).
- Good to give public time to ‘learn’ how to use these devices..so having them on the landscape ahead of time may be beneficial.
- Request for comments back from Subcommittee to Scott for end of November.

Ongoing Conflict Prevention Updates

- Black bear conflicts a lot lower this year.
- People and Carnivores, IGBC and Vital Ground funding have helped with installation of about 30 electric fences (in addition to Defenders of Wildlife fencing program).
- BE Disposal now has close to 500 resistant cans available to customers, in addition to what’s already on the ground.
- A lot of I&E events (bear spray training, bear aware, etc).
- Heart of the Rockies started a range rider program this year.
- *Need to provide clarity around what’s going on within the Ecosystem boundary and what’s adjacent but maybe still relevant.

Review of Subcommittee Goals and Objectives

- Executive direction to subcommittee: Get ready for bears.
- 2 goals (document presence/absence in the ecosystem and promote natural recovery of the pop through immigration). Goal 1 has 2 associated objectives and Goal 2 has 5 associated objectives.
- Consider a footnote in the Work Plan that clarifies that some actions/accomplishments may occur outside the ecosystem boundary, but it’s important to continue to participate in and showcase those efforts.
 - o Ecosystem doesn’t have a defined boundary
- A consistent approach to connectivity across individual subcommittees may be something the Executive Committee could/should provide direction on.

Agency Updates

- Salmon-Challis NF: Last spring confirmed bear in N. Fork area.
- Bitterroot NF: Implemented food storage order for remaining of BNF. Will go into effect March 1, 2025.
- Nez Perce Clearwater NF: New Forest Supervisor announced (Jon Word). Will start in January. Working through objections for forest plan revision.
- Lolo NF: In maintenance phase for infrastructure. No monitoring this year. Forest Plan revision status – through scoping and now entering alternative development phase. Looking at releasing draft to public in Sept 2025. Will address connectivity in Forest Plan.

- Payette NF:
- Idaho Panhandle NF: Related to Goal 1, Objective1 – did deploy game cams in areas monitored for may be present. Also purchased some food storage lockers for that area and completed bear spray training for district staff. Limited plans for 2025. Will add ID signs at rec sites and continue bear awareness work.
- Sawtooth NF: Have continuation of food storage order on north end of forest on SNRA.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (MT and ID offices): Service has agreed to revise or remove listed entity of grizzly bears by Jan 31, 2026 (per settlement agreement). North Cascades Ecosystem EIS published to reintroduce bears as nonessential experimental population. Working on an implementation plan now, but no date set. ID FWS recovery proposal process is upcoming so projects that may benefit conservation and recovery of grizzly bears may compete for funding.
- US Bureau of Land Management: Signage and bear proof trash receptacles installed and will continue to be installed. Linda Price retiring, no replacement yet.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Denning bear in Sapphire range – but collar dropped in spring. Collar data to be looked at by Cecily et al. Brandon Davis hired as new Bitterroot bear technician, starts Nov 4th. Statewide grizzly bear management plan released in Sept 2024; will guide management statewide (both while listed and post-delisting). Involved in a feasibility study with MDT in a couple of locations to look at connectivity.
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game: Discontinued wolf cameras and moved to modeling effort, so opportunistic grizz sightings no longer available. Did place 40 fisher scent-based cameras. Doing analysis now; no grizzly bear observed yet. No credible sightings from public. Commission approved 2 temp and proposed rules (mandatory bear identification effective Jan 1st and reporting of grizzly bears at a black bear site, then closure of black bear site for remainder of season). Still needs to go through legislature, but expected to go unchanged.
- Nez Perce Tribe:
- Counties Representatives:

Vice-Chair Nominations

- Matt Anderson will be vice-Chair starting January 1, 2025.
- Vivaca Crowser - MT FWP will be IEO committee Chair starting January 1, 2025.

Public Comment

- Sierra Club: Consider ways to reduce conflict with livestock on public lands.

Action Items

- Subcommittee comments on Food Storage Recommendations Framework due Nov 29th to Sandi or Scott.
- Subcommittee agencies that haven't yet, provide FY24 accomplishments to Sandi by 11/15 for use in report out to Exec Committee in Dec.
- Sandi to provide FY25 Planned Actions Work Plan to subcommittee by 11/15 with ask to populate.
- Spring Meeting: Hybrid (Missoula) April 23, 2025
- Fall Meeting: Hybrid (location TBD) October 22, 2025