

Interagency Conservation Strategies for Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 States



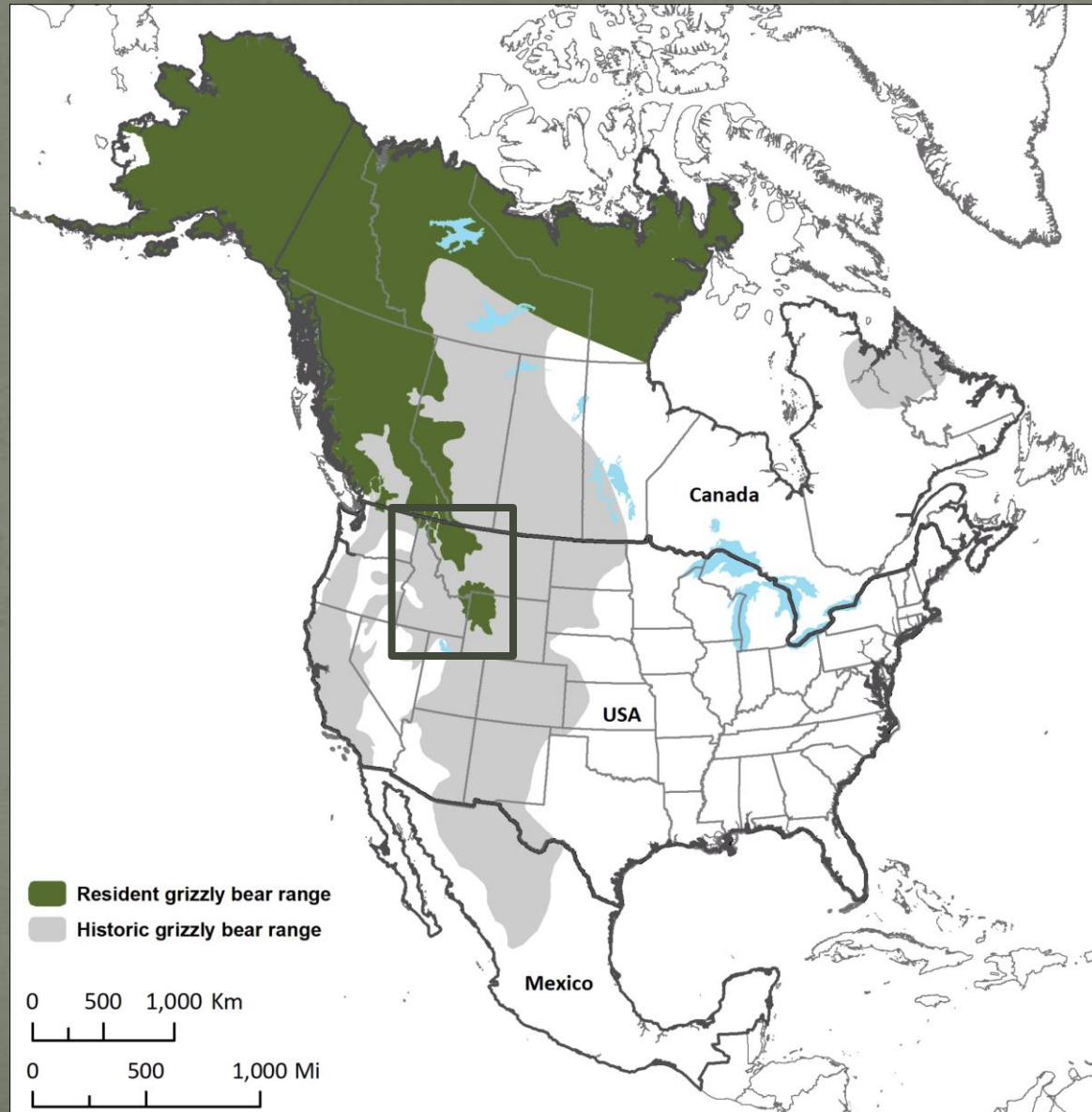
Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Update 2026



Introduction

David Diamond, Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee

Grizzly Bears in North America

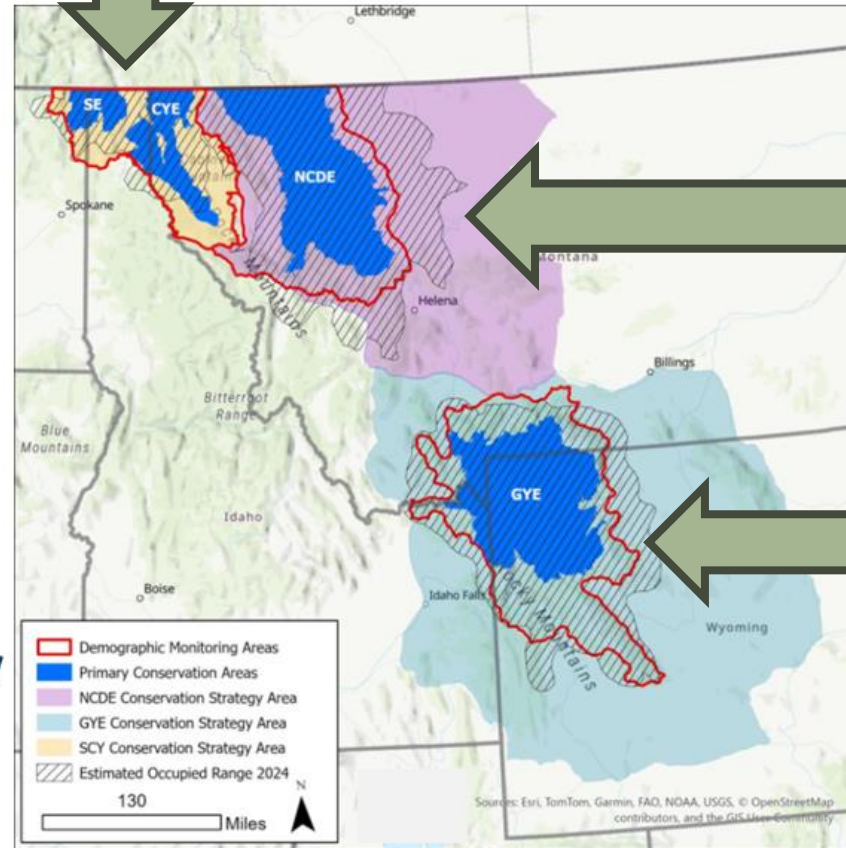
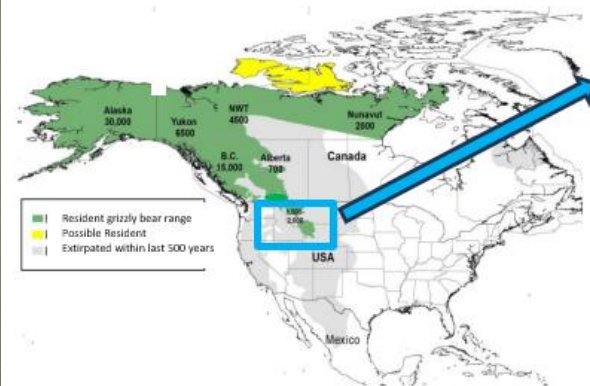


~55,000 grizzly bears in
Alaska and western
Canada.

~2,200 grizzly bears
in the lower-48
(ID/MT/WA/WY)

Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 – Conservation Strategies

Selkirk-Cabinet Yaak – 2026 draft



Northern Continental Divide – 2018
(2021 admin review; 5-year review in progress)

Greater Yellowstone – 2007, 2016, 2024

Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 – Conservation Strategies

	Greater Yellowstone	Northern Continental Divide	Selkirk- Cabinet-Yaak
Population estimate (FWS 2024)	>1,000 bears	>1,000 bears	120 bears (minimum)
Estimated occupied range (mi ²) (2024)	26,104	24,049	7,069
PCA (mi ²)	9,210	8,933	3,669
% PCA occupied	100%	100%	96%
DMA (mi ²)	19,278	16,454	8,813 (proposed)
% DMA occupied	97%	93%	72%

Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 – Other Areas

Two nonessential experimental population areas:

Bitterroot:

- 10(j) Designation in 2000 currently the subject of a FWS NEPA process

North Cascades:

- 10(j) Designation in 2024

Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 – Other Areas

State:

- Legal requirements for grizzly bear conservation
- Conflict Management, IEO
- Habitat on State-Owned Lands & Conservation Easements

Federal:

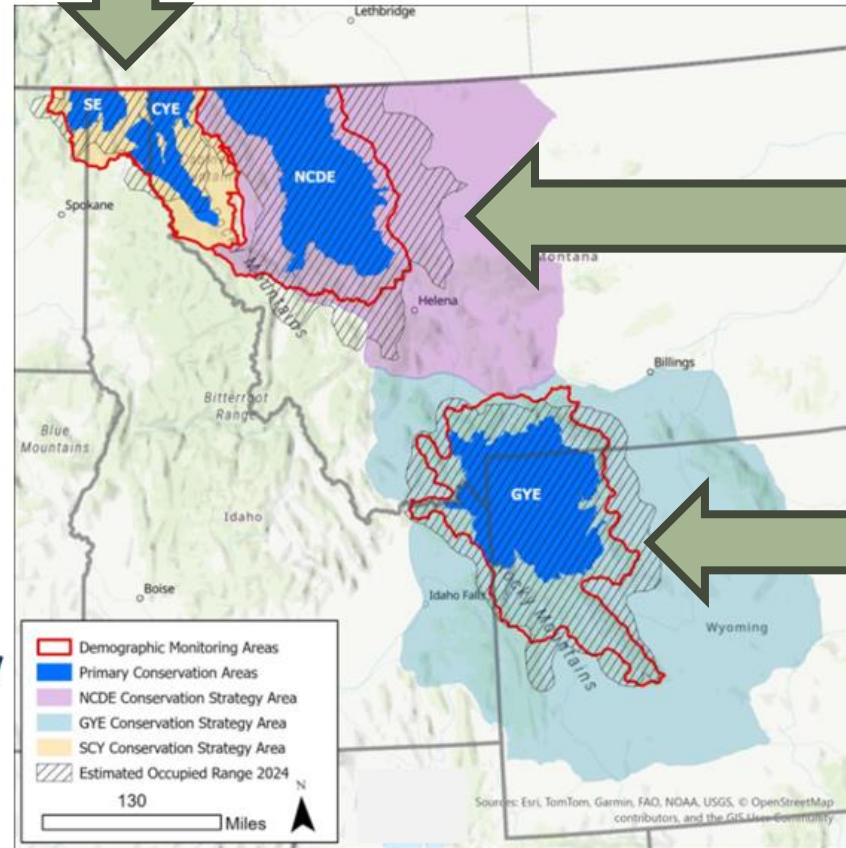
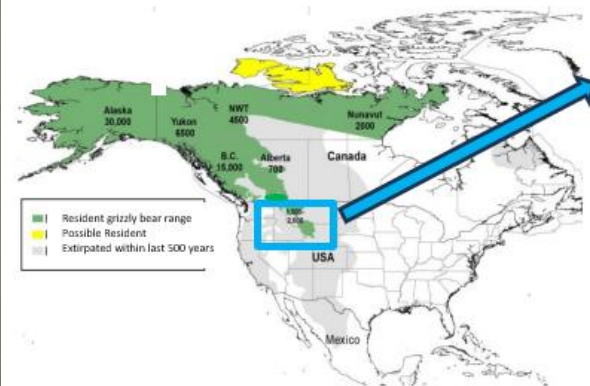
- Public land management plans

Private:

- Other Conservation Measures

Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 – Conservation Strategies

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Northern Continental Divide – 2018
(2021 admin review; 5-year review in progress)

Greater Yellowstone – 2007, 2016, 2024

Conservation Strategy Functions

- Population & habitat objectives by Strategy Areas
- Describe agency and interagency regulatory mechanisms, conservation actions and monitoring
- Ongoing commitment for interagency coordination
- Could serve as Post-Delisting Monitoring Plans

Conservation Strategy Contents

- Regulatory and Conservation Framework
- Population/Demographic Objectives and Monitoring
- Habitat Objectives and Monitoring
- Conflict Prevention, Response and Management
- Information, Education, and Outreach
- Implementation and Evaluation

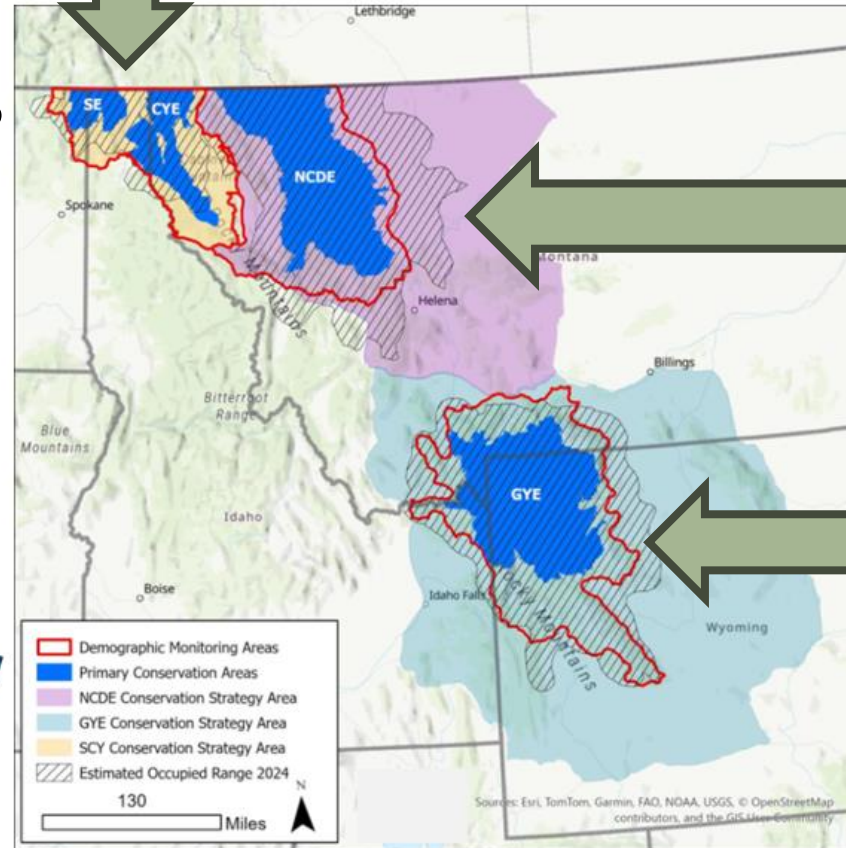
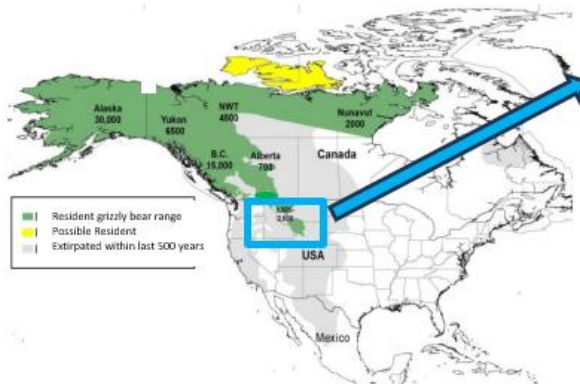
Today's Presentations

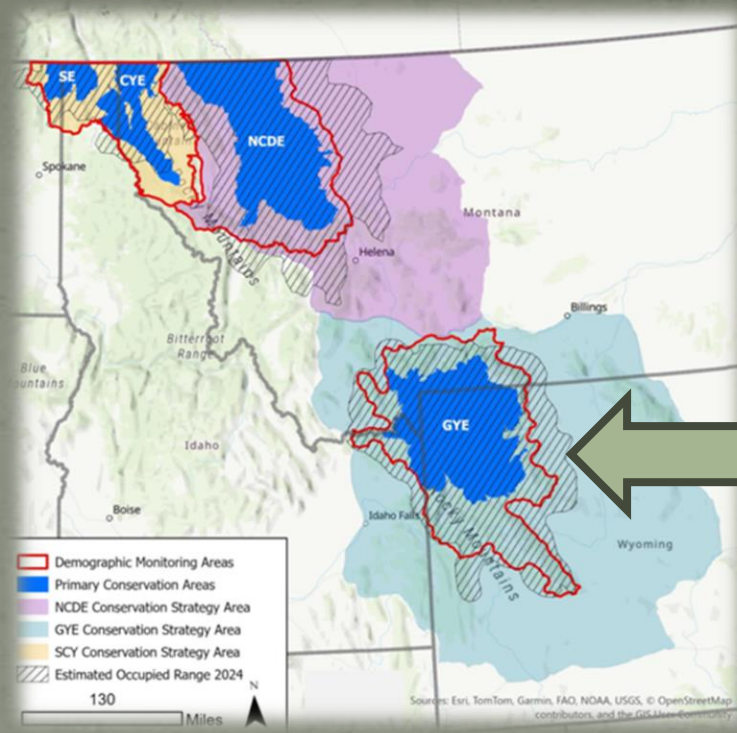
- Geography
- Demographics
- Habitat

Selkirk-Cabinet

Northern Continental Divide

Greater Yellowstone





Greater Yellowstone

Yellowstone

Dan Thompson, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Andy Pils, US Forest Service

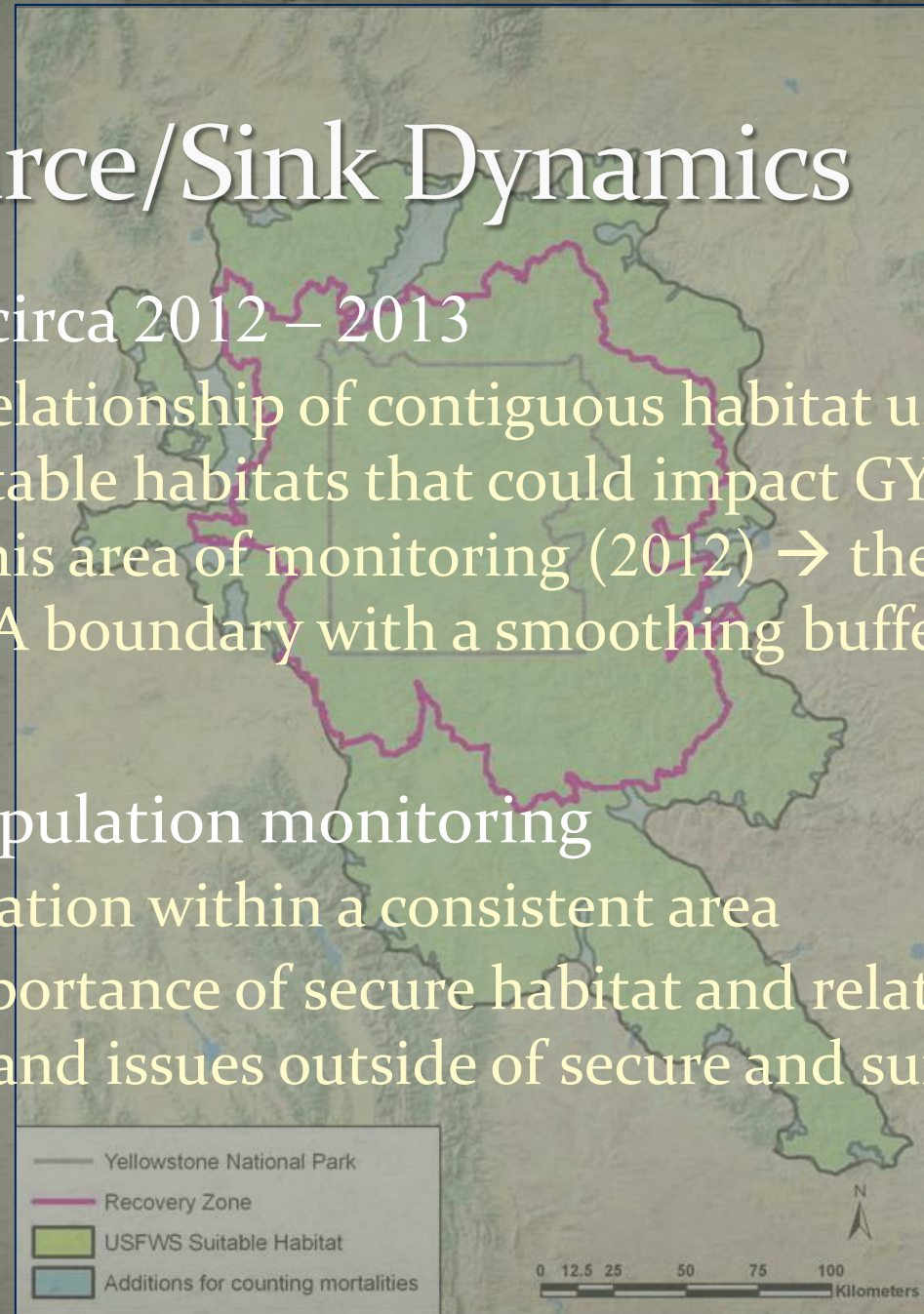
2016 – Incorporating a “Demographic Monitoring Area”

Chapter 2 Population Standards and Monitoring

To maintain a healthy (recovered) grizzly bear population in the GYE, it is necessary to have adequate numbers of bears that are widely distributed with a balance between reproduction and mortality. This section details the population criteria in the *Recovery Plan* that were necessary to achieve recovery, and the population standards necessary to maintain it (USFWS 2017). The Conservation Strategy will continue to assess demographic recovery criteria within the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA) created by the *Recovery Plan*. Because grizzly bears are a difficult species to monitor and manage, multiple standards with additional monitoring items are identified to provide sufficient information upon which to base management decisions. It is the goal of the agencies implementing this Conservation Strategy to manage the GYE grizzly bear population within the area called the DMA, to ensure a recovered population in accordance with the established Recovery Criteria.

DMA and Source/Sink Dynamics

- Deriving the DMA circa 2012 – 2013
 - IGBST evaluated relationship of contiguous habitat use and suggested inclusion of unsuitable habitats that could impact GYE grizzly bears for inclusion within this area of monitoring (2012) → these areas incorporated into the outer DMA boundary with a smoothing buffer on the perimeter
- GYE grizzly bear population monitoring
 - Monitor the population within a consistent area
 - Emphasize the importance of secure habitat and relationship to conflict potential/private land issues outside of secure and suitable habitat



Chapter 2 Post-Delisting Demographic Criteria and Monitoring

Introduction

To maintain a healthy (recovered) grizzly bear population in the GYE, it is necessary to have adequate numbers of bears that are widely distributed with a balance between reproduction and mortality. Because grizzly bears are a difficult species to monitor and manage, this Chapter identifies multiple criteria to provide sufficient information upon which to base management decisions after delisting, and describes monitoring that will occur during—and after—the ESA-required post-delisting monitoring period. The agencies are committed to be responsive to the needs of grizzly bears through adaptive management based on the results of detailed annual population and habitat monitoring.

Post-Delisting Demographic Criteria

- Based on feedback regarding previous recovery/demographic criteria and current proposed management framework, we revised to Demographic Criterion 1 and 2:

- *Demographic Criterion 1* —Maintain the population within the DMA to within or above a range of 800 to 950 grizzly bears (applying the IPM population size estimate) by determining and applying annual mortality thresholds for independent females and independent males ($\geq$ 2 years old), according to the management framework in Table 2 (see Appendix O).

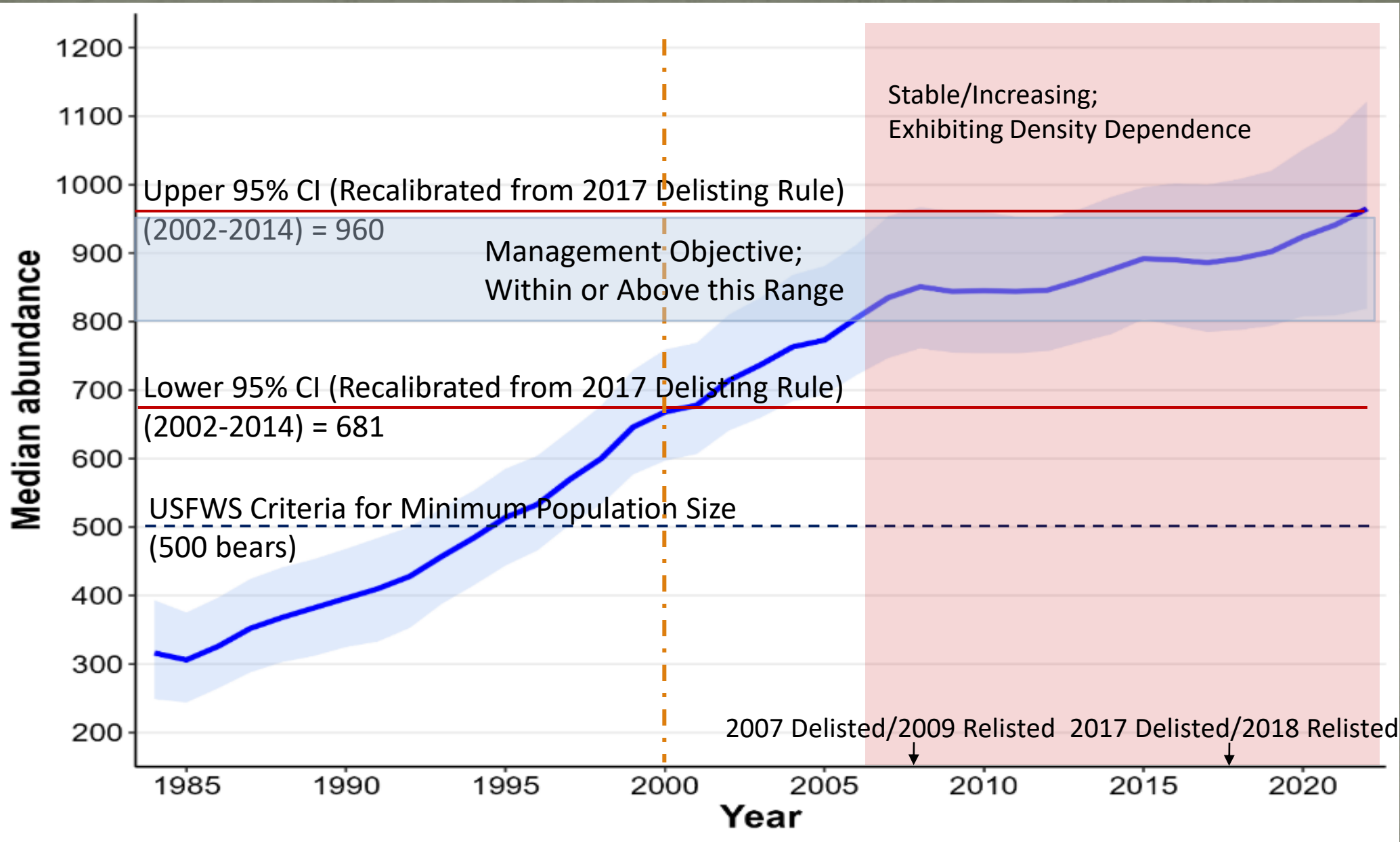
- *Demographic Criterion 2*—Sixteen of 18 bear management units within the PCA (Figure 2) must be occupied by females with young, with no two adjacent bear management units unoccupied, during a 6-year sum of observations. This criterion is important as it ensures that reproductive females occupy the majority of the PCA and are not concentrated in only one portion of the ecosystem.

**Table 2. Management Framework based on DMA Population Size
(IPM Population Size Estimate)
(See Appendix O, Tri-State MOA)**

800* – 950	> 950
➤ Manage to maintain the population within or above this range. ➤ Use IPM to determine mortality limits for population stability, slight increase, or slight decrease, remaining within or above the population range: $0.98 \leq \lambda \leq 1.02$ ➤ Manage conflicts and authorize hunting at individual agency discretion, based on allocated mortality limits.	➤ Manage to maintain/reduce population. ➤ Use IPM to determine mortality limits for population stability or decrease. $0.95 \leq \lambda \leq 1.00$ <i>If mortality limits are determined for a population decrease, the decrease will not exceed 5% ($\lambda \geq 0.95$).</i> ➤ Manage conflicts and authorize hunting at individual agency discretion, based on allocated mortality limits.

* See below for management strategies if the population falls below 800.

Note: Lambda (λ) denotes the change in population size from one year to the next: $\lambda = 1.0$ represents no change in population size between two years; $\lambda > 1.0$ indicates population increase and $\lambda < 1.0$ indicates population decrease.



Chapter 3 Habitat Standards and Monitoring

Background

Habitat standards and monitoring protocol in this Conservation Strategy identify provisions that Federal and State land managers throughout the GYE are committed to for habitat preservation of a recovered GYE grizzly bear population. Between 1986 and the initial 2007 delisting of the GYE grizzly bear population, grizzly bear habitat in the GYE was managed under standards and guidelines established by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC 1986) and specified in National Forest and National Park management plans. Acknowledging that humans are the primary agent of grizzly bear mortalities, a principal objective of the IGBC was to improve survival rates by implementing management strategies that minimized anthropogenic influences and grizzly bear-human conflicts. The IGBC measures implemented inside the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (GBRZ) led to improved management of garbage and food attractants, reduced sheep grazing, and restrictions on motorized access and human development. These standards and guidelines that were imposed upon public lands were instrumental in the recovery of the grizzly bear in the GYE throughout the mid-1980s and into the 1990s.

Habitat Standards



*Standards apply to Bear Management Units
in the PCA*

- ◆ **Three Habitat Standards:**
1. **Secure Habitat**
 2. **Developed Sites**
 3. **Livestock Grazing Allotments**



Reduce human-caused mortalities

◆ **Measured against 1998 Baseline**

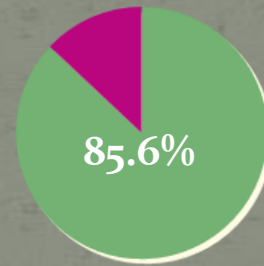
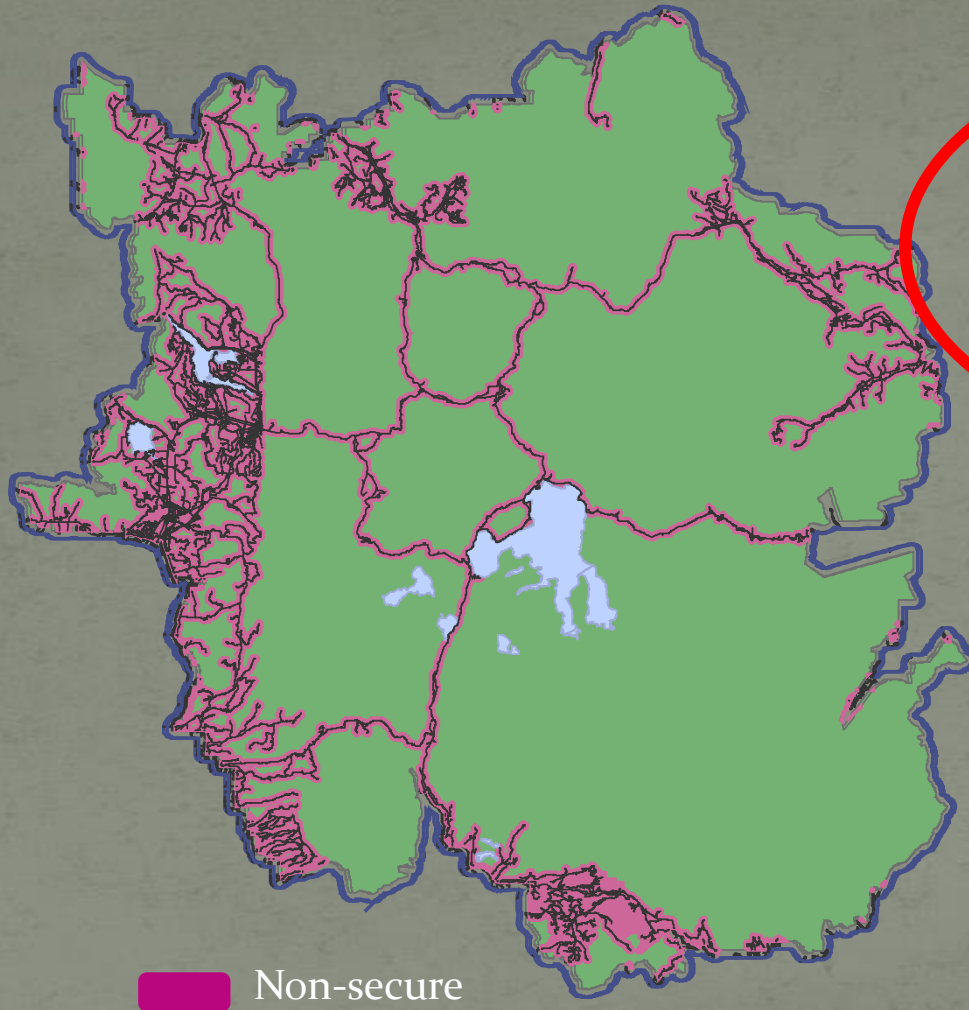
- **Maintain or improve upon 1998 habitat conditions**
- **Rationale: 4-7% growth rate (mid 1980s – 1990s)**

Habitat Standards – 1. Secure Habitat

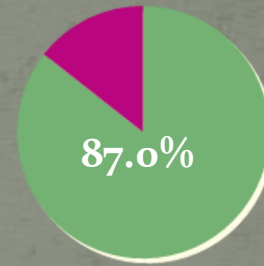
Metric for Human Presence

Definition of Secure Habitat:

Area ≥ 10 acres and more than 500 meters from motorized route



1998



2018

Buffer open & gated motorized routes

Habitat Standards – 2. Developed Sites

Developed Sites Standard

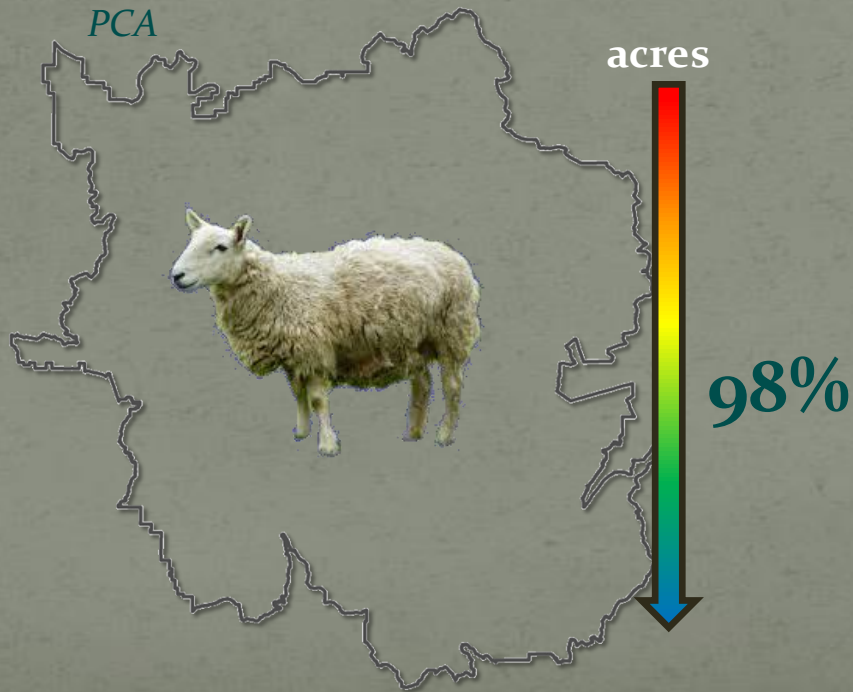
Use footprint approach to maintain number and capacity for human use at or below 1998 levels

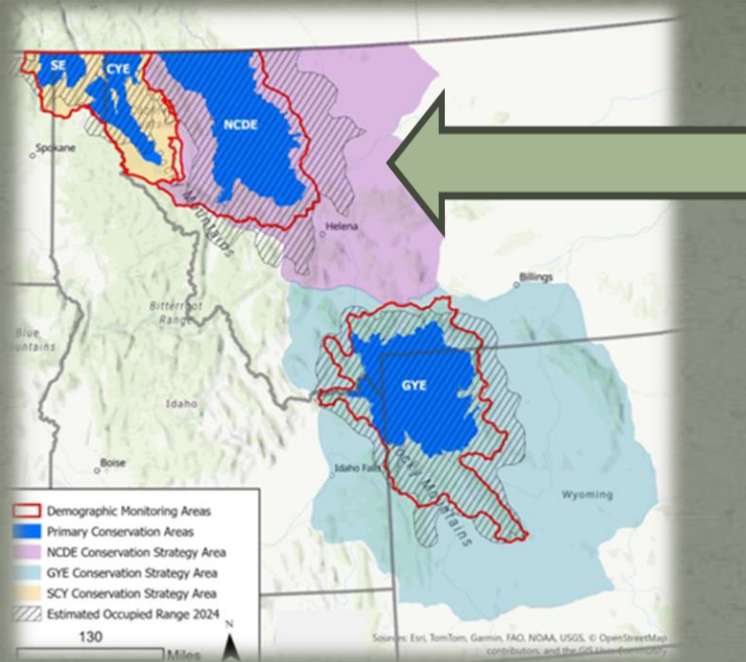


Habitat Standards – 3. Cattle & Sheep Allotments

Livestock Grazing Allotment Standard:

- Maintain number / acreage at or below 1998 levels
- Recommends phase out existing sheep allotments





Northern Continental
Divide

Northern Continental Divide

Cecily Costello, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Mark Ruby, US Forest Service

NCDE Trend Monitoring Program: Demographic Monitoring Area & Beyond

Capture and radio-mark independent bears throughout DMA (red outline)

- Survival rates
- Reproductive rates
- Periodic population modeling to estimate population size and trend (probability above 800 bears)

Document mortalities

Obtain genotypes of bears whenever possible



NCDE Demographic Objectives: Demographic Monitoring Area

Maintain documented presence of females with offspring (cubs, yearlings, 2-year-olds) within units:

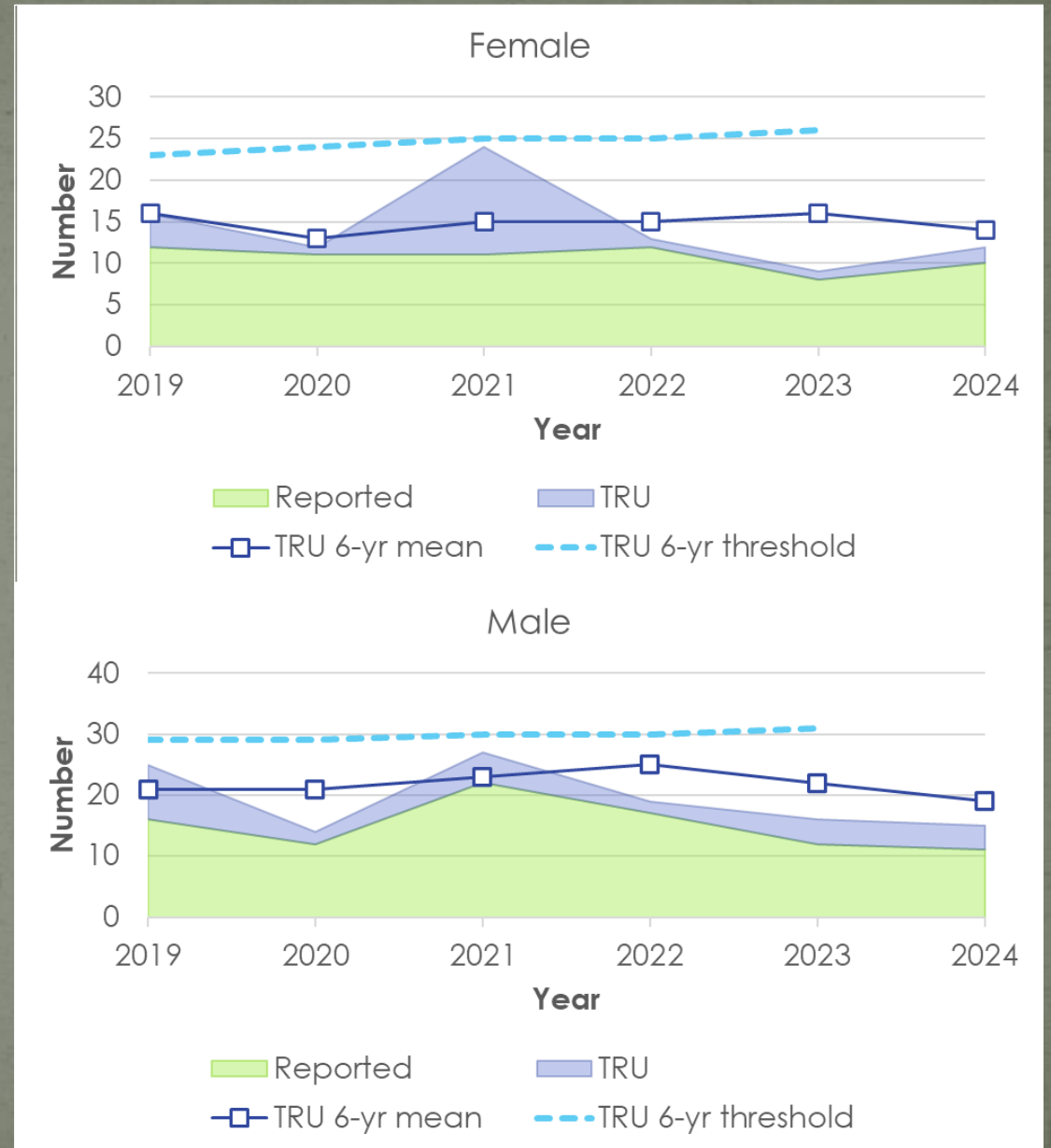
- Tallied across a running 6-year period
- 21 of 23 Bear Management Units in the PCA
- 6 of 7 Occupancy Units in Zone 1

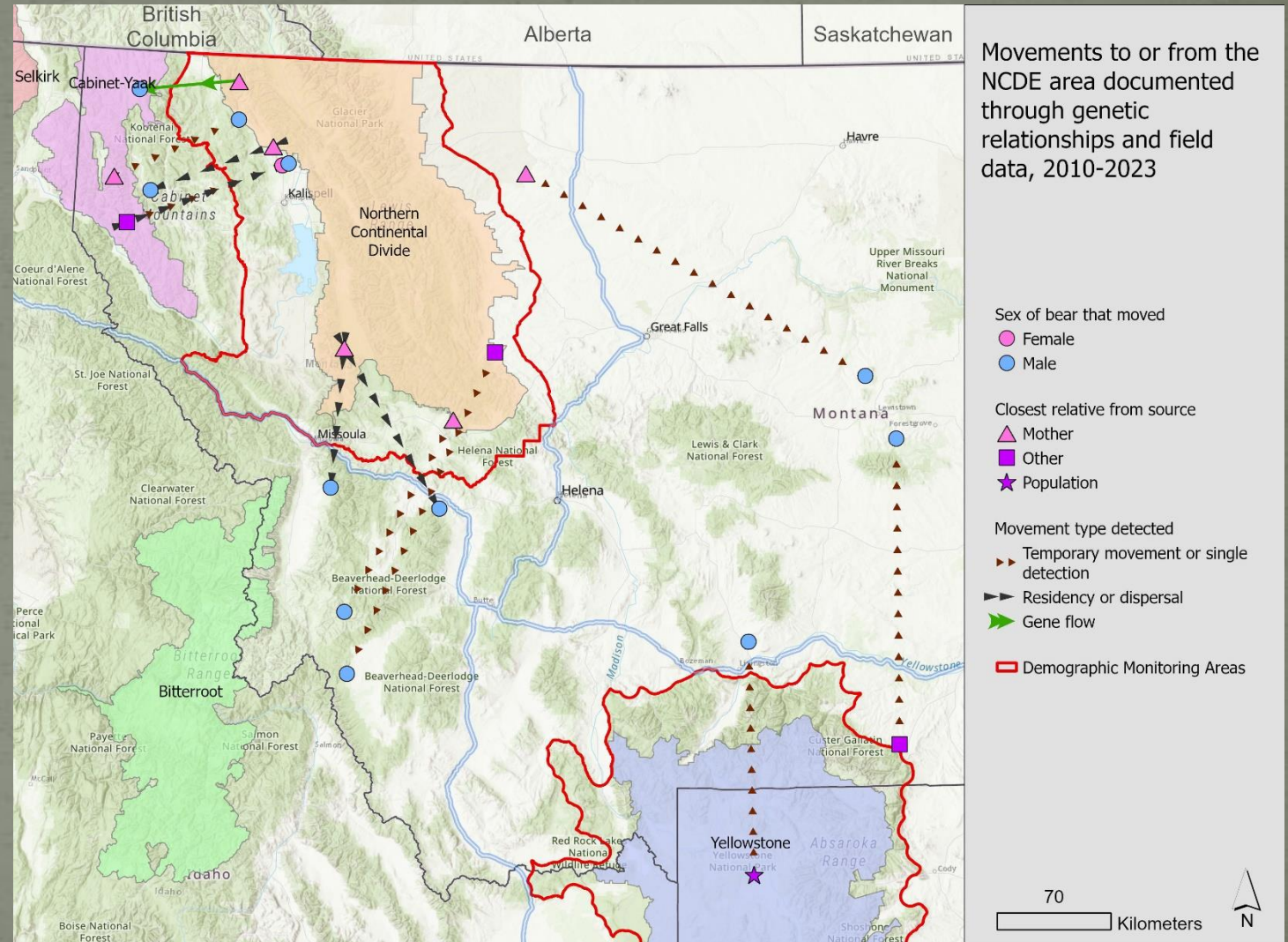


NCDE Demographic Objectives: Demographic Monitoring Area

Manage mortalities to maintain a 90% probability that the population is above 800 bears:

- Independent female survival threshold
- Independent female mortality threshold
- Independent male mortality threshold

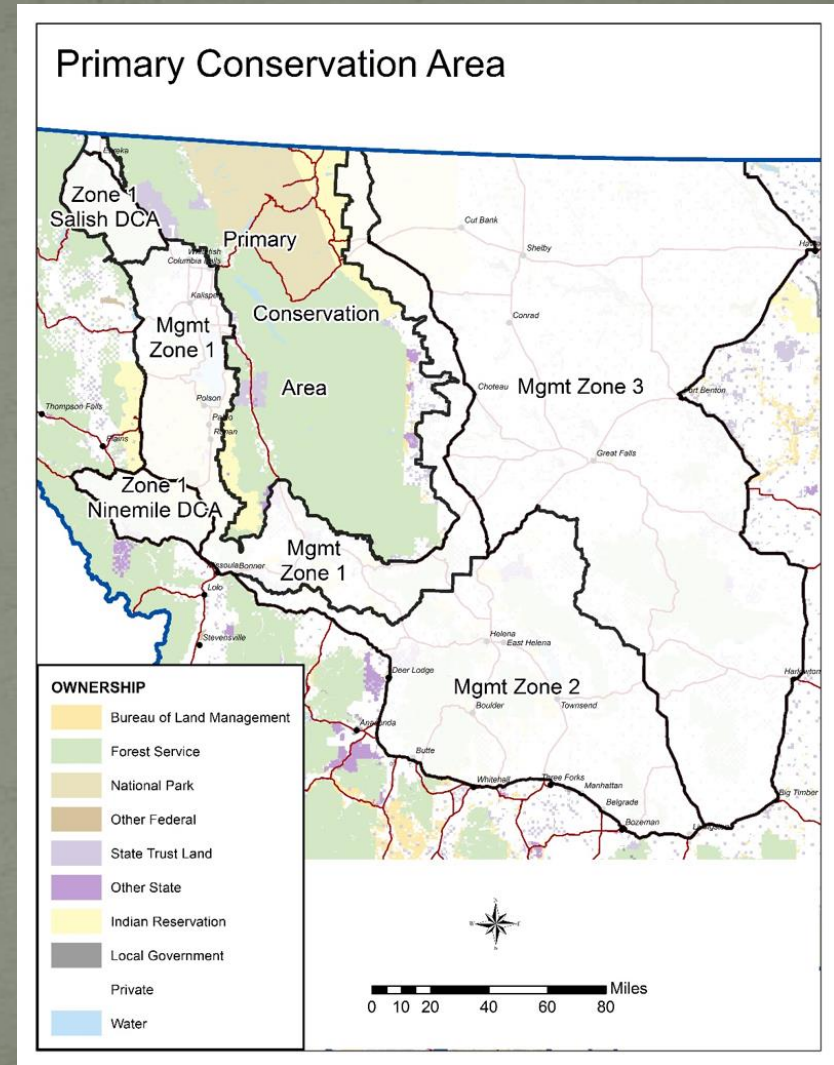




NCDE Habitat Management: Primary Conservation Area

On Federal Lands:

- **No Net Change** Open and Total Motorized Route Densities (OMRD/TMRD) or Secure Core
- **Limited temporary changes** to OMRD, TMRD and/or Core for project work
- **Limited increase** of Recreational Overnight Developed Sites 1x per decade
- **No net increase** in cattle or sheep grazing authorizations



NCDE Habitat Management: Zone 1 and DCAs

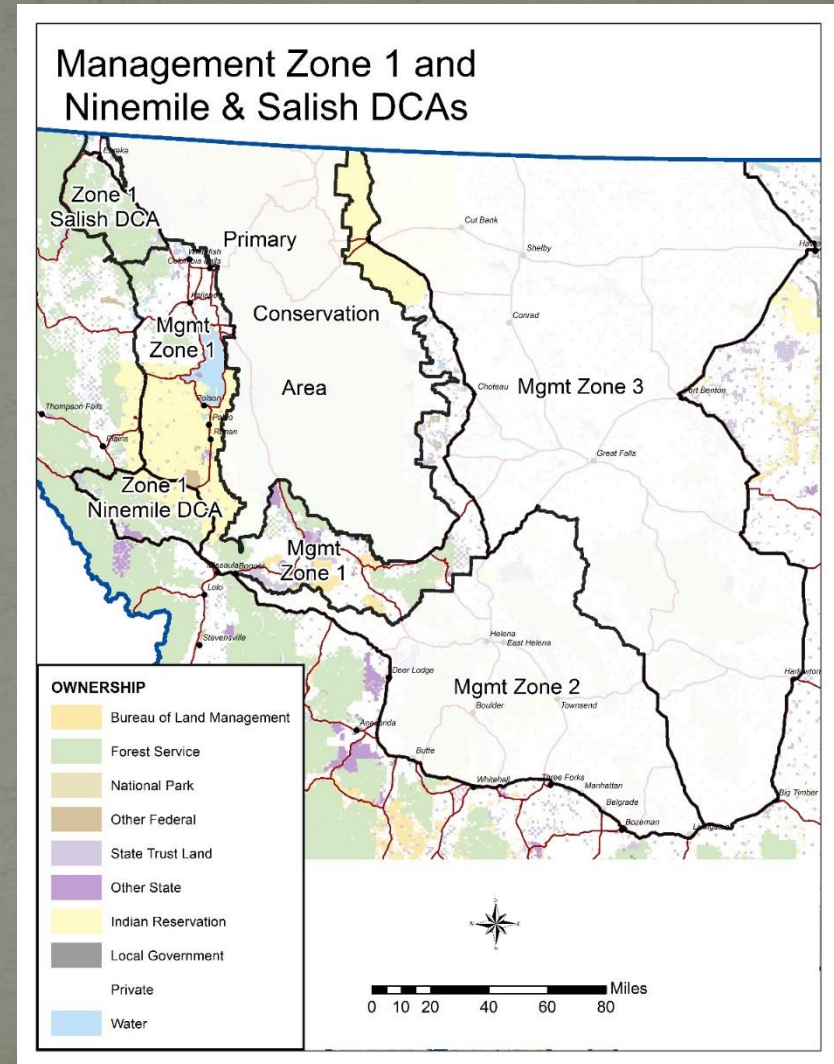
On Federal Lands:

- **No increase** in linear miles of open motorized roads.
- In Demographic Connectivity Areas (DCAs), **no increase** in linear miles of open motorized roads or motorized trails.
- **No net increase** in sheep or cattle allotments

FOR PCA, Zone 1 and Zone 1 DCAs:

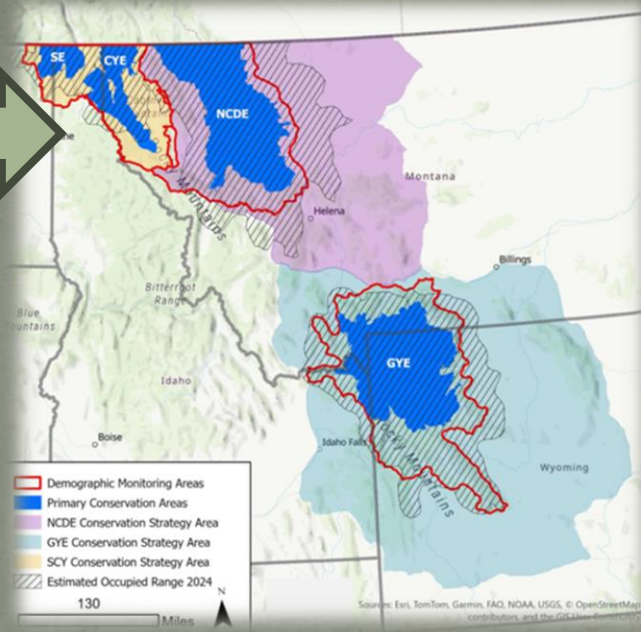
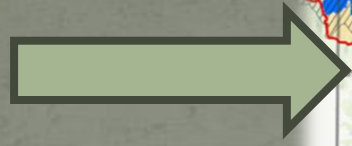
All application rules have been incorporated into Federal land management plans and MT DNRC HCPs

Biennial Land Management Plan reporting



Selkirk-Cabinet Yaak

– 2026 draft



Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak

Morgan Pfander, Idaho Fish and Game

Jeremy Anderson, US Forest Service

Draft Conservation Strategy for Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak

THEN (1975)

- no specific mention of grizzly bears in the SCY

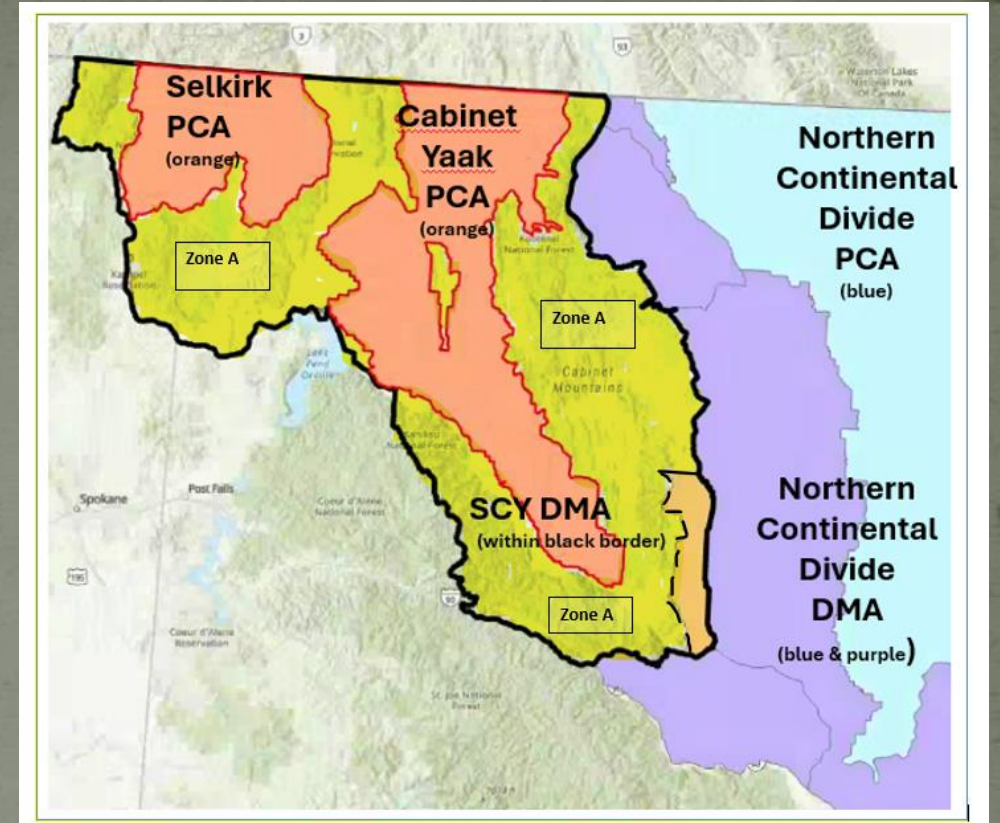
NOW:

- Estimated minimum of 120 grizzly bears
- Increased distribution of females with young in the PCAs
- Individual bear home ranges including parts of both PCAs
- Expansion of occupied range to 96% of the combined PCAs, extending to areas outside the PCAs
- Increased habitat security in the PCAs (30 of 31 Bear Managements in the PCAs with national forest plan direction for motorized access management are meeting standards)
- Increased motorized access management on national forest lands in Secondary Habitat Area
- Gene flow among populations and increased genetic diversity (movement among the PCAs, NCDE, and adjacent areas in British Columbia)

Draft Conservation Strategy for Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak

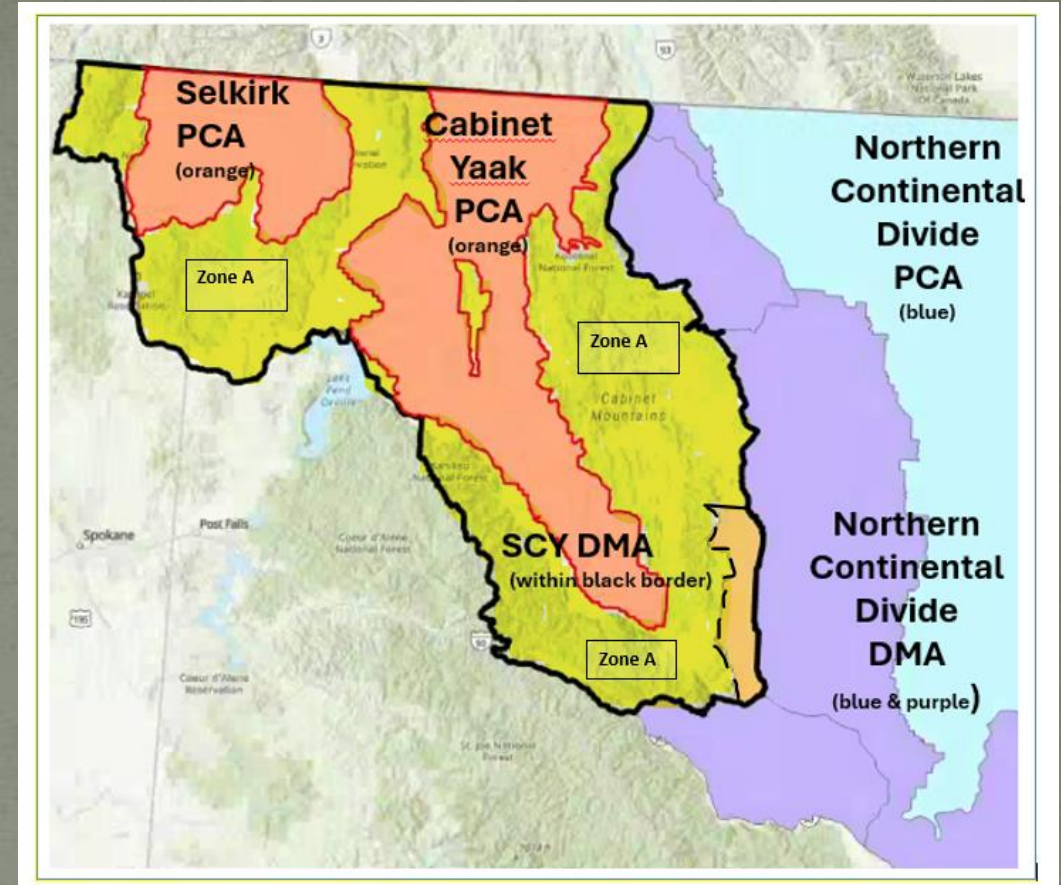
Intent of Strategy

- Continue to conserve grizzly bears as an integral part of the SCY Area in Montana, Idaho, and Washington.
- Continue SCY's contribution to the long-term resiliency of grizzly bears in the lower-48 United States as part of the larger occupied range of grizzly bears extending northward through western Canada to Alaska.
- Manage grizzly bears and their habitat through interagency cooperation.
- Respect the interests and values of those who live in, visit, and use the SCY Area, as well as the needs of local communities and the varied missions of land and wildlife management agencies.



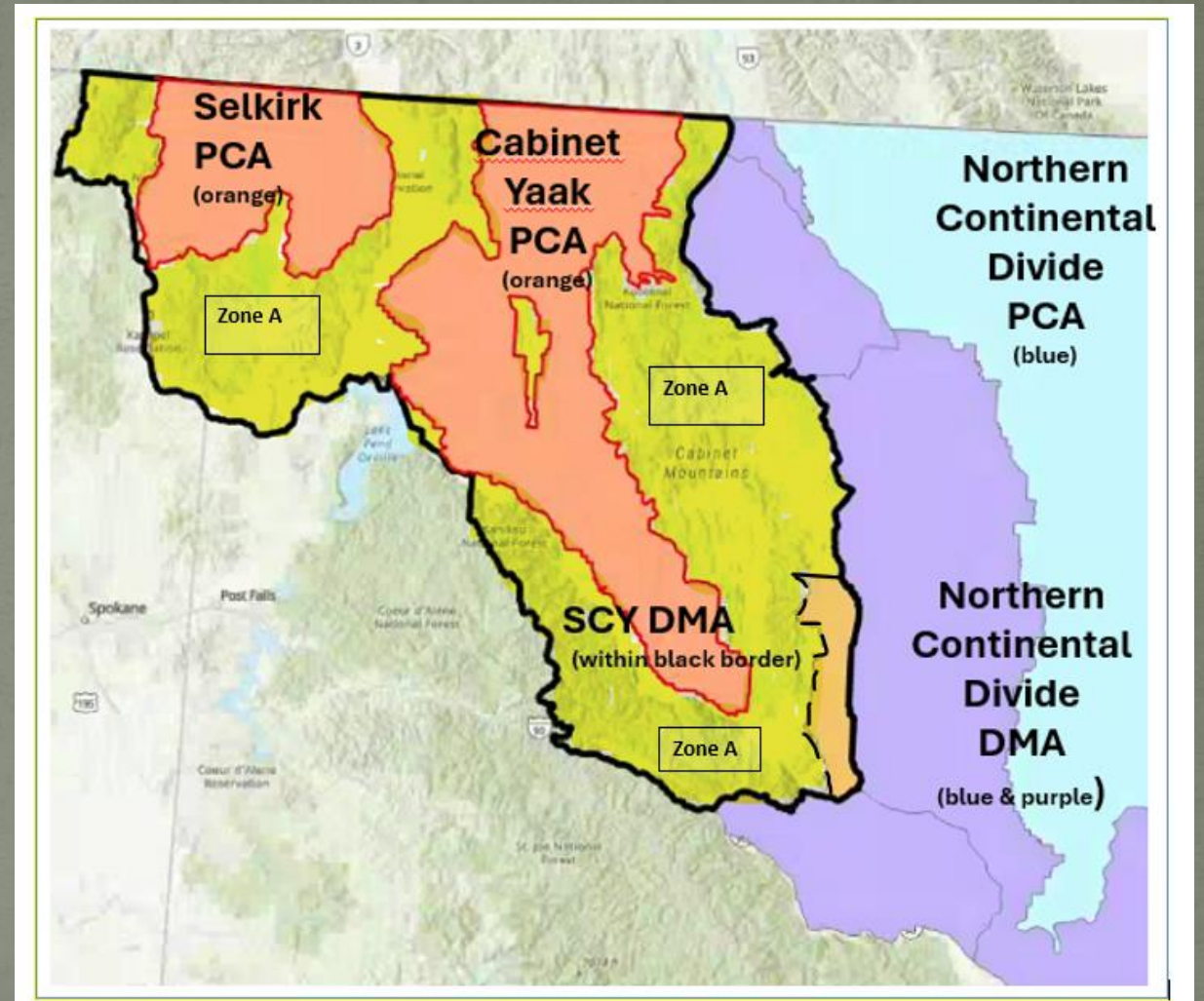
SCY – Overview

- Manage for sustainable mortality levels.
- Manage for distribution within PCAs.
- Monitor for population-level genetic health.
- Support habitat security in PCAs – protect secure core and manage public motorized access.
- Reduce human-bear conflict potential and promptly address conflicts.
- Support information, education, and outreach.
- Support connectivity and permeability outside of PCAs, with human-mediated connectivity if necessary for population-level genetic health.



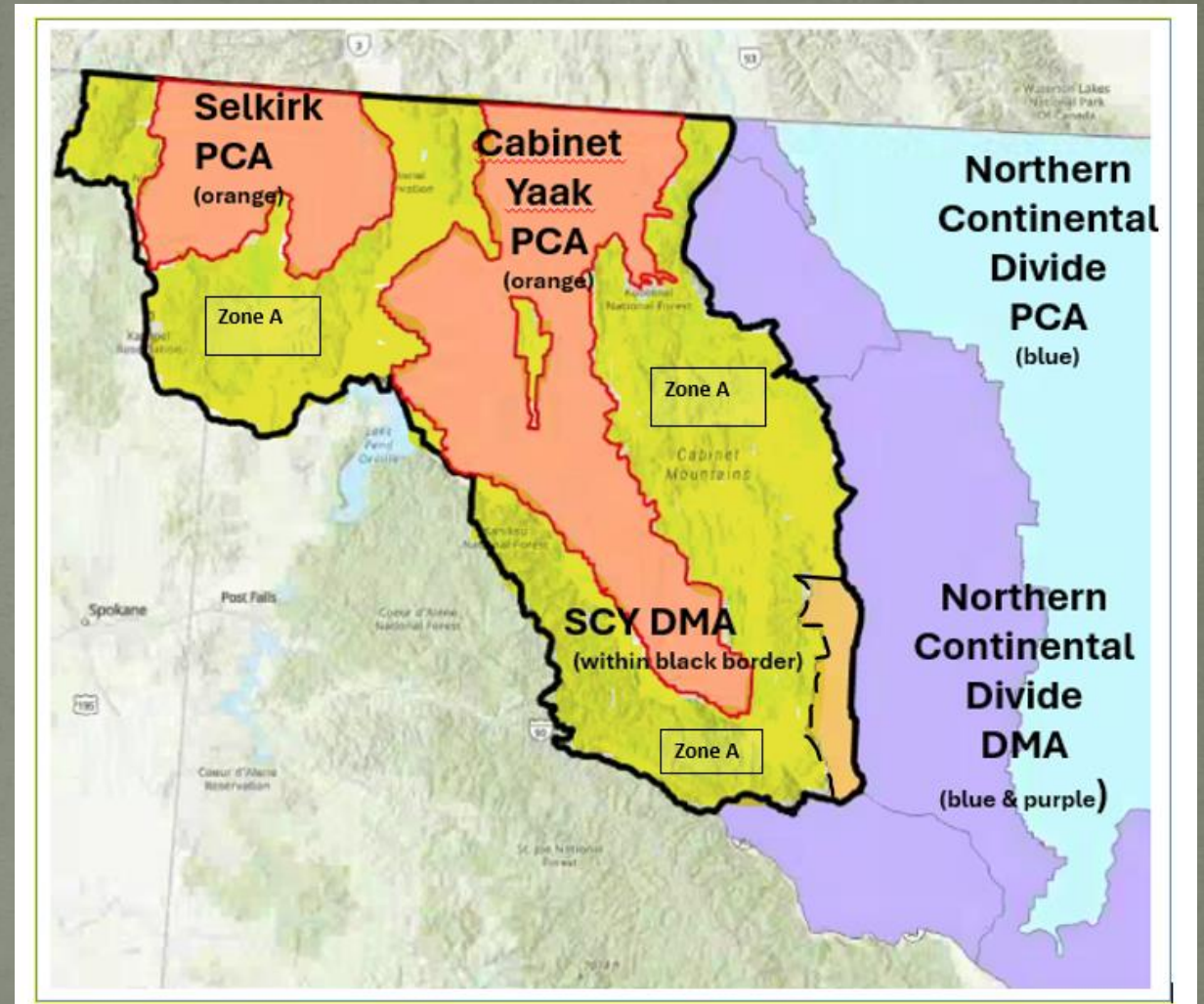
SCY - Geography

- Single Demographic Monitoring Area
- Two Primary Conservation Areas
- Zone A
 - Includes Secondary Habitat area on National Forest Lands



SCY - Demographics

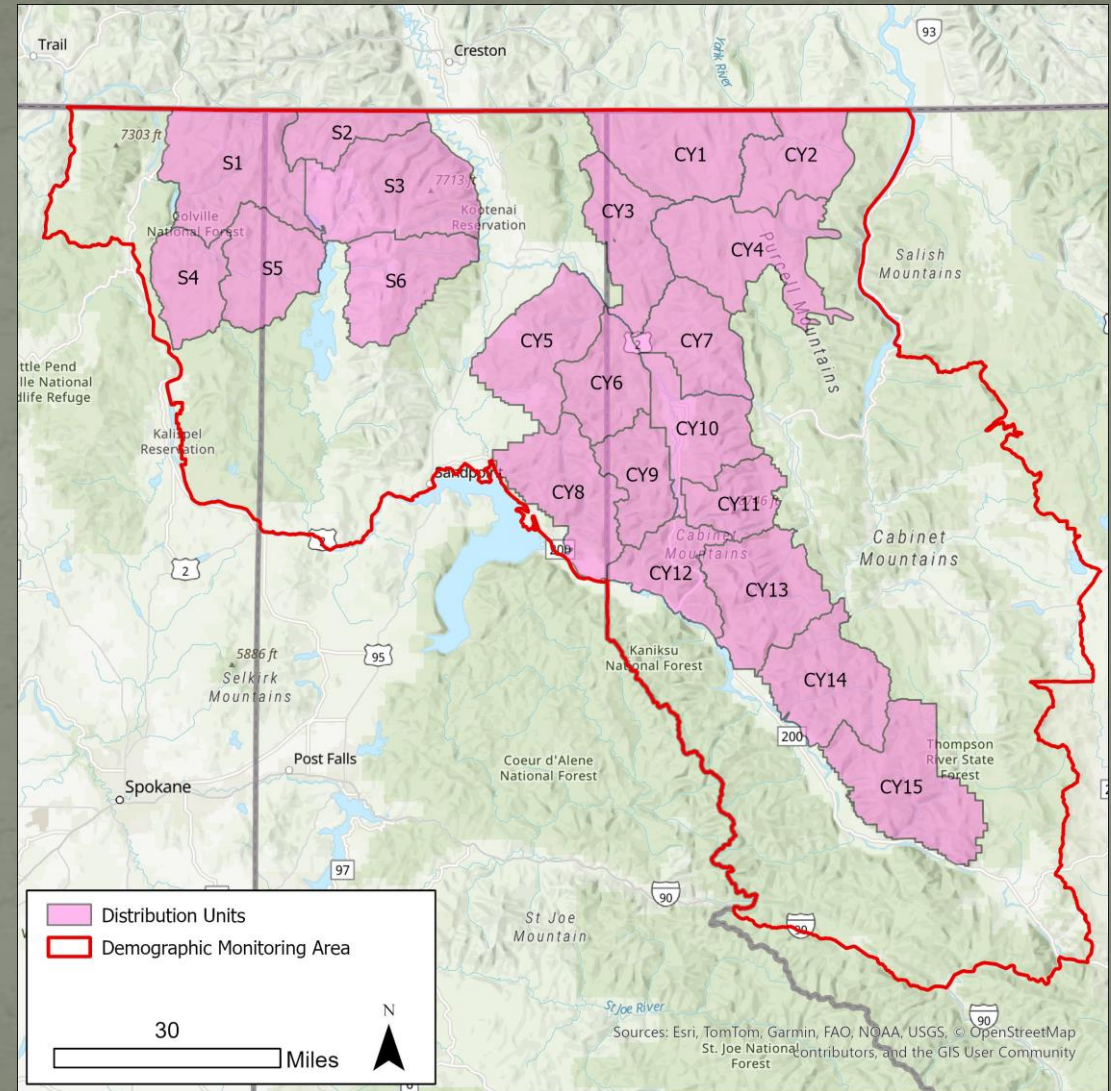
1. Maintain distribution within PCAs.
2. Manage for sustainable mortality levels in the DMA.
3. Maintain long term, population-level genetic health.



SCY - PCAs

Maintain distribution of females with young in each PCA

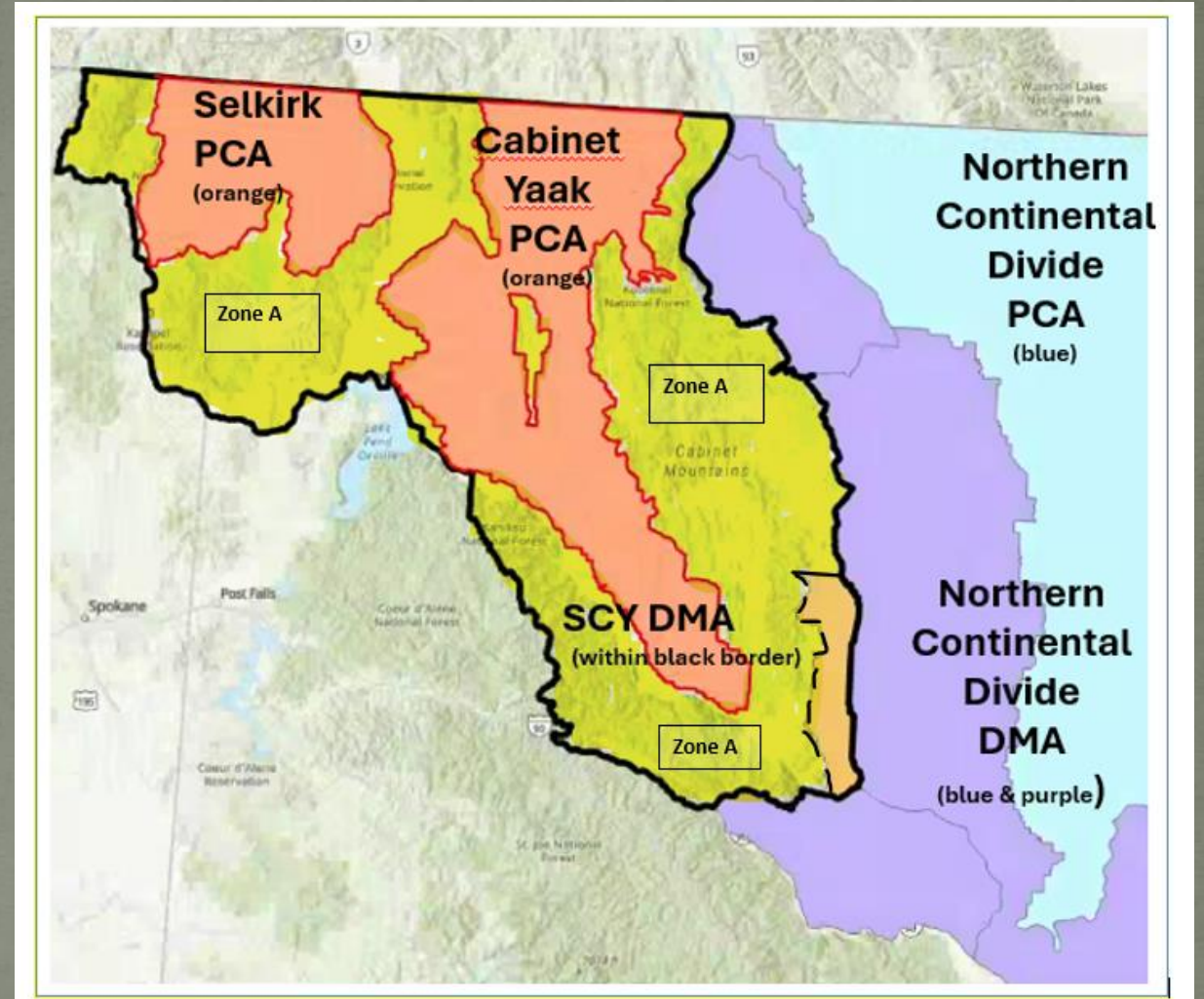
- Occupancy in at least 5 of 6 DUs in the Selkirk PCA
- Occupancy in at least 11 of 15 DUs in the Cabinet-Yaak PCA
- Use 6-year rolling window



SCY - DMA

Objective: Manage mortality within SCY Area DMA at sustainable levels.

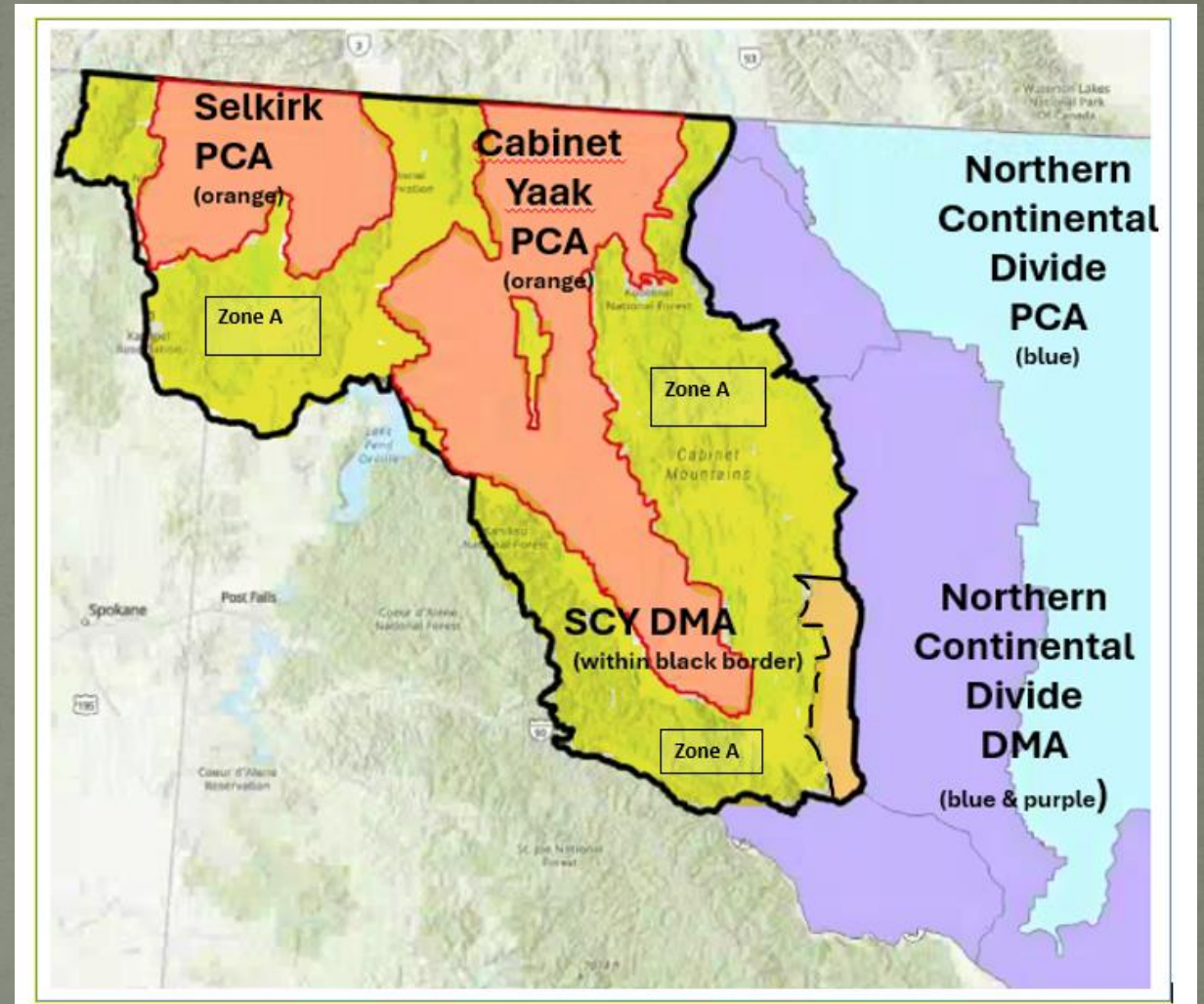
- Mortality thresholds for independent-aged females
- Mortality thresholds for independent-aged males
- Use rolling 6-year window
- Estimate sustainable rates using population modeling and observed vital rates
- Apply to minimum estimated population size obtained from population reconstruction



SCY - DMA

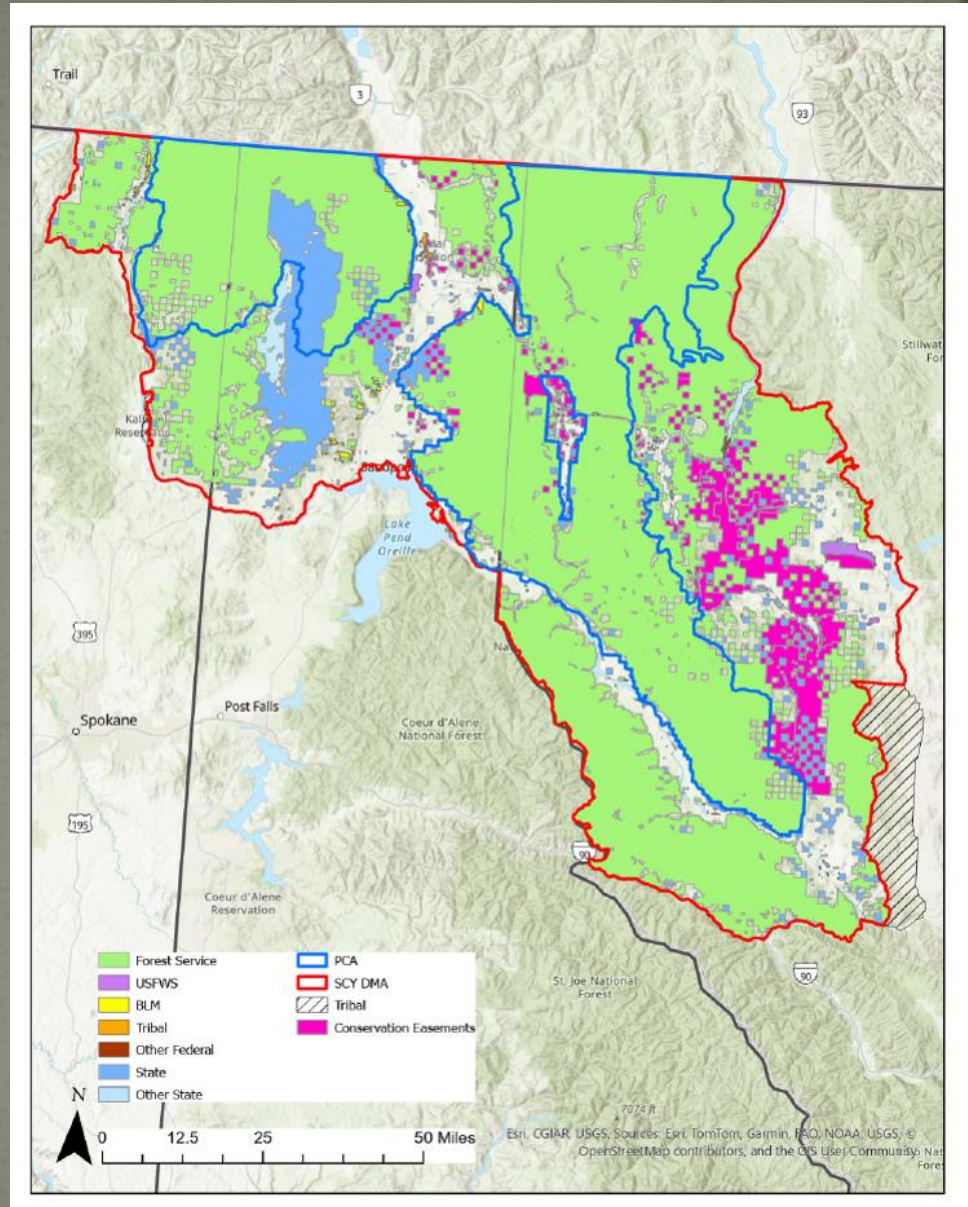
Objective: Maintain the long-term, population level genetic health of grizzly bears in the SCY Area.

- Document movements and gene flow
- Estimate metrics of genetic health



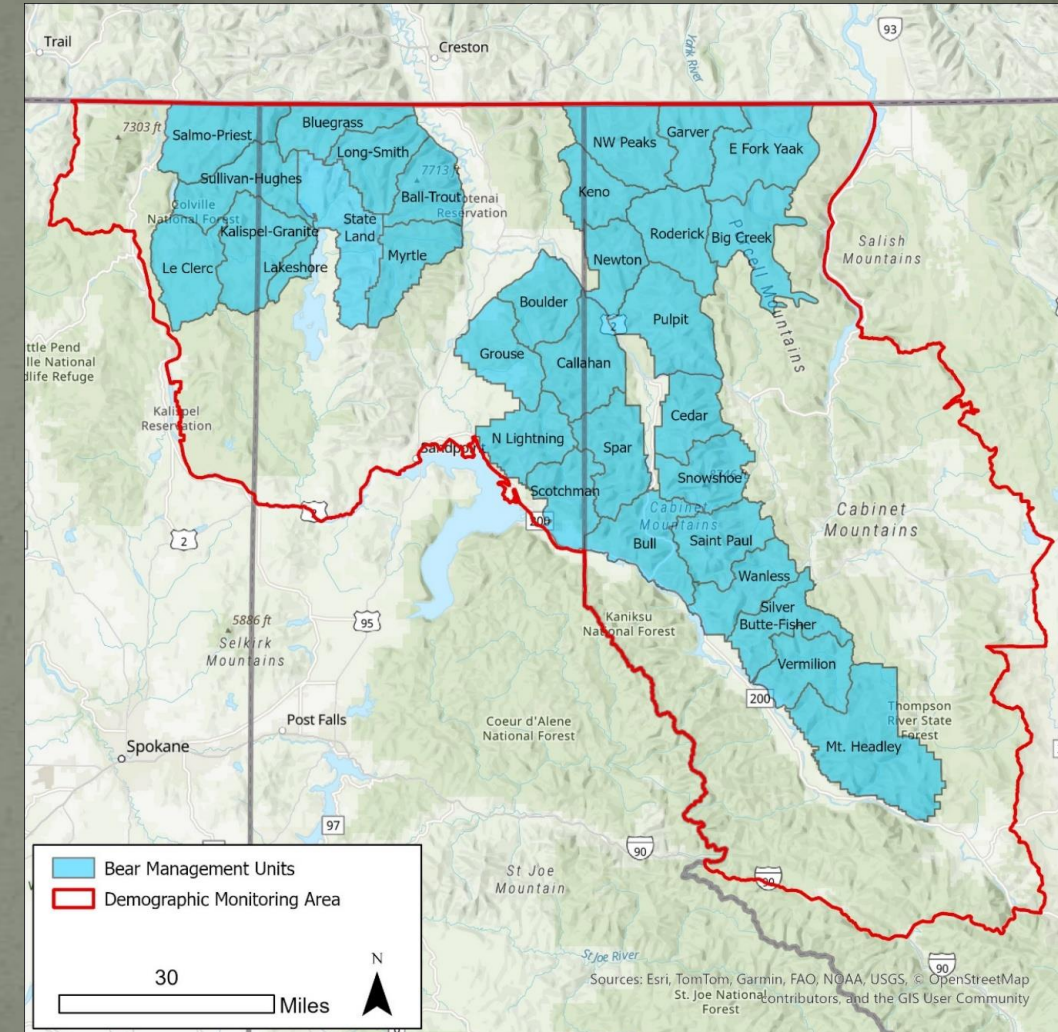
SCY Habitat Management:

- Interagency Commitment: This strategy aims to sustain the SCY Area's current contribution to grizzly bears in the lower-48 states through continued commitment to habitat-based conservation outcomes reflective of the current condition.
 - 88% of the PCA is National Forest.
 - State Lands – one Bear Management Unit in PCA is primarily Idaho state endowment land
 - Tribal Lands (Obtaining updated info from tribes)
 - Conservation Easements (e.g. private timberlands)
- Habitat management on federal lands will continue to be focused on maintaining or improving secure core, managing public motorized access, and attractant storage.
- Monitoring and adaptive management to respond to habitat, conflict, and population changes as they arise



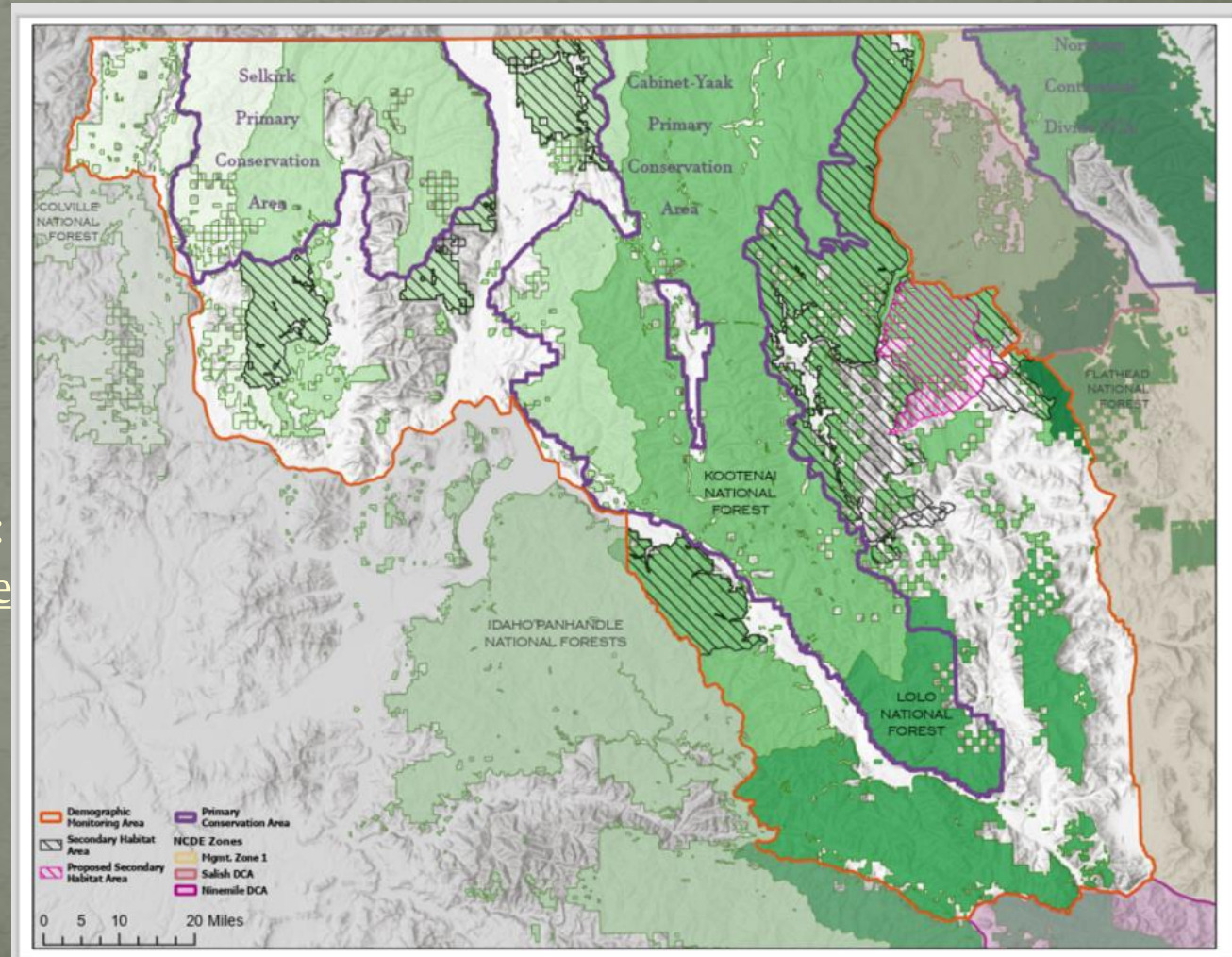
SCY Habitat Management: Primary Conservation Area

- No permanent net decrease in the amount of secure core within any BMU.
- Manage publicly accessible open motorized route densities on NFS lands such that grizzly bear population growth or stability would be expected to occur.
- Attractant storage rules will be maintained on all Forest Service lands.
- Biennial monitoring reports: changes in secure core and open motorized route density.



SCY Habitat Management: Zone A and Secondary Habitat Areas

- Zone A: Prevent and respond to human-grizzly bear conflicts and continue supporting population expansion where suitable. Agencies are committed to continuing **attractant storage rules**.
- Secondary Habitat Areas (Forest Service): **no permanent net decrease** in secure core within what is currently “BORZ” and an additional 79,306 ac on the Kootenai NF.
- On federal lands, attractant storage rules are in place.



Interagency Conservation Strategies for Grizzly Bears in the Lower-48 States



Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Update 2026

