



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Bitterroot  
National Forest

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File Code: 2670

Date: October 21, 1997

Dr. Chris Servheen  
Grizzly Bear EIS  
P.O. Box 5127  
Missoula, MT 59806

RECEIVED BY  
AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY  
COORDINATORS OFFICE

OCT 22 1997

Dear Dr. Servheen:

Please consider these comments as you prepare the Final EIS for grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem.

1 The success of grizzly bear reintroduction is dependent upon the support of the public, particularly the local public. I do not believe we have a majority of public support in Ravalli County for reintroduction. The effort does not have the support of the Ravalli County Commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, and several other groups that are active in public policy matters in the Bitterroot Valley. If the local public doesn't support reintroduction, the project has a high probability of failure. I agree with Governor Racicot's comment in his September 30, 1997 letter to you which states the EIS fails to adequately analyze the impacts of grizzly bear reintroductions when such bears move into the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana.

The DEIS public involvement efforts in the Bitterroot have not been well planned and, in my opinion, have not captured all the concerns of Valley residents. Attempts to rectify this situation have not been successful. The EIS process is flawed in regard to adequate involvement of those individuals and groups who could be adversely affected by a reintroduction decision.

Most of the negative public reaction involves fear of the bear and fear of additional government regulations that will be necessary if bears are reintroduced. There is a strong anti-government sentiment in the Valley and imposing additional regulations that will restrict public use of the Bitterroot National Forest will not be well accepted. The Forest Service will become the focus of adverse public reaction to any new regulations that will be necessary following grizzly bear reintroduction. Controversy surrounding reintroduction could be in direct conflict with our Regional goal to **"Enhance Community Relationships and Improve Public Confidence"**. I believe the reintroduction of grizzly bears into the Bitterroot Ecosystem has the potential to harm the fragile community relationships the Forest has worked hard to establish and maintain. These relationships are critical to our Forest Service Mission and the accomplishment of the Forest's annual program of work.

2 Recovery of the grizzly bear is an important goal to be attained. Reintroducing them into an area where the majority of the public does not want them, local and state elected officials are opposed to the effort, and habitat conditions are in question does not appear to be a very logical and appropriate expenditure of tax dollars. If reintroduction occurs, the budget situation on the Bitterroot National

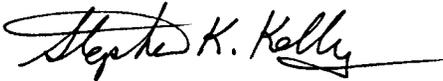


Forest is such that support and implementation of the effort will be very difficult to achieve due to lack of personnel and other resources necessary for success.

3 I do not believe the No Action Alternative (Alternative 3) has been taken seriously by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Most of the discussions have centered around how bears will be reintroduced, not if they will be reintroduced. It does not appear that the No Action alternative has received the same consideration as the other alternatives.

4 In conclusion, it is my recommendation that **Alternative 3, No Grizzly Bears**, be selected as the approach to grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem until such time as public support significantly increases, and the question of habitat suitability is satisfactorily answered. If a decision is made to naturally or artificially reintroduce bears, all of Governor Racicot's recommendations in his letter to you dated September 30, 1997 should be implemented.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN K. KELLY  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Regional Forester  
Kemper McMaster, USF&WLS