United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/R6/ES

MAILING ADDRESS:
P.O. BOX 25486, DFC
Denver, Colorado 80225-0486

STREET LOCATION:
134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228-1807

Dear Chairperson:

We would like to take this opportunity to let you know that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is in the early stages of considering the listing status of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

While we recently reached out to tribes in close proximity to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), we did not initially appreciate the breadth of historical, cultural, and spiritual connection that some tribes outside that geographic area have with the grizzly bear and the GYE.

As a result, the Service is redoubling its efforts to engage interested tribes in government-to-government consultation regarding potential actions we may take concerning the status of Yellowstone grizzly bears under the ESA.

As you know, the grizzly bear came under the protection of the ESA in the lower 48 states in 1975 when it was listed as a threatened species. Recovery efforts began in 1981, and since that time, the Yellowstone grizzly bear population has nearly tripled in number and currently occupies approximately twice the geographic area that it did at the time of listing. The scientific data, population surveys, and on-the-ground monitoring show us that Yellowstone grizzly bears are now a healthy, self-sustaining population that has almost completely occupied the suitable habitat available for them in the GYE.

The objective of the ESA is to recover listed species to the point that they no longer need ESA protection. We do not have a formal proposal to delist the species at this time. However, if the science demonstrates that the present threatened status of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population warrants delisting, this action would only impact this species in the Yellowstone area. All other grizzly bear populations would remain listed under the ESA.

If delisting is proposed, our overall goal at the Service would be to work to ensure that the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is sustainably managed so that it never again becomes necessary to be managed under the ESA.

As our valued tribal partner, we would appreciate knowing the level of interest your tribe has in government-to-government consultation on this matter. If you are interested in formal consultation, we would like to know where and when you would like that to occur, whether you would be willing to meet individually or jointly with other interested tribes, and if you have any formal tribal resolutions related to the Yellowstone grizzly bear population.

To request consultation on this matter, please send a letter to:

Matt Hogan, Deputy Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region
134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

Matt Hogan, Deputy Regional Director will also be calling you in the next few weeks to discuss the consultation process and to ask about your interest in formally consulting with us about the status of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. If you are interested, he will work with you to arrange a time and location for these consultations.

Sincerely,

Original Signatures on Postal Letters

Regional Director