United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/R6/DCN 062421

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Denver, Colorado 80225-0486

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134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228-1807

MAR 3 2016

Dear Tribal Leader:

During the last three decades, the grizzly bear population in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho has increased from as few as 136 bears, when they were listed under the ESA in 1975, to an estimated 700 or more bears today. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced a proposal to delist the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of grizzly bears. This proposed delisting only affects the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. All other populations of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states will remain listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Given the historical, cultural, and spiritual connection many tribes have to the grizzly bear, we are especially interested in gathering your input on any potential actions the Service may take concerning the status of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. The Service is hosting two government-to-government consultation meetings for federally recognized tribes on the dates and locations below:

April 28, 2016
11:30 a.m., - 3:30 p.m., MT
Homewood Suites by Hilton
1023 E. Baxter Ln.
Bozeman, Montana 59715

May 5, 2016
11:30 a.m., - 3:30 p.m., CT
Best Western Ramkota Hotel
2111 N. Lacrosse St.
Rapid City, South Dakota 57701

Information for these consultation meetings will be available online at http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/ea/tribal-grizzly.php.

The Service will also be hosting a tribal conference call on March 10, 2016, to provide an overview of the proposed delisting and discuss any questions or concerns you may have. We do not consider this conference call to be government-to-government consultation. Participation information for the conference call is as follows:

March 10, 2016
10:30 a.m., MT
Call-in Number: 1-800-857-5016
Passcode: 1127604

In addition to the proposed delisting rule, the Service is releasing two other documents for public comment: 1) a draft supplement to the 1993 Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan for the Yellowstone

grizzly bear population, and 2) a draft of the 2016 Conservation Strategy. The proposed rule and associated documents will be published in the *Federal Register* next week and are currently available online at http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/grizzlyBear.php.

If you have questions or would like more information regarding the proposed rule, the upcoming consultation meetings or tribal conference call, please contact: Ivy Allen, Native American Liaison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (303) 236-4575 or ivy_allen@fws.gov.

Publication of the proposed rule in the *Federal Register* will open a 60-day comment period, and you will be able to submit comments electronically, by mail, or by hand delivery. Comments only need to be submitted once via any of the following methods:

(1) *Electronically*: Comments can be submitted electronically via e-mail to Ivy_Allen@fws.gov or at http://www.regulations.gov where you will enter Docket Number FWS–R6–ES–2016–0042 in the Search box, and then click on the "Comment Now!" button. If your comments will fit in the provided comment box, please use this feature, as it is most compatible with our comment–review procedures. If you attach your comments as a separate document, our preferred file format is Microsoft Word. If you attach multiple comments (such as form letters), our preferred format is a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel.

(2) *Hard copy*: You can submit comments by U.S. mail or hand deliver by either sending to: Native American Liaison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 134 Union Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80228, or to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R6–ES–2016–0042; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

All submitted information received, including any personal information provided, will be made available to the public at http://www.regulations.gov.

We look forward to consulting with you and discussing your comments and concerns regarding our proposed delisting of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population.

Sincerely,

Deputy Regional Director