

# News Release



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## **SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY EFFORTS BRING YELLOWSTONE GRIZZLY BEARS OFF THE ENDANGERED LIST**

After nearly disappearing three decades ago, grizzly bears are thriving in the Yellowstone ecosystem and no longer need the protection of the Endangered Species Act, Deputy Interior Secretary Lynn Scarlett announced today.

“The grizzly’s remarkable comeback is the result of years of intensive cooperative recovery efforts between federal and state agencies, conservation groups, and individuals,” Scarlett said. “There is simply no way to overstate what an amazing accomplishment this is. The grizzly is a large predator that requires a great deal of space, and conserving such animals is a challenge in today’s world. I believe all Americans should be proud that, as a nation, we had the will and the ability to protect and restore this symbol of the wild.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is removing the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears from its status as “threatened” on the U.S. list of threatened and endangered species. Four other grizzly populations in the lower 48 states have not yet recovered and will continue to be protected as threatened species under the Act.

Grizzly numbers in the Yellowstone ecosystem have increased from an estimated population of 136 to 312 when they were listed as threatened in 1975, to more than 500 bears today.

Yellowstone grizzlies will now be managed under a comprehensive conservation strategy developed by state and federal scientists and managers that includes intensive monitoring of Yellowstone bears, their food, and their habitat. The conservation strategy incorporates the best available science and allows state and federal agencies to adjust management in response to new scientific information or environmental and bear population changes. State and federal managers will continue to work cooperatively under this framework to manage and maintain healthy grizzly bear populations throughout the Greater Yellowstone area.

“This comprehensive conservation strategy, agreed to by all state and federal players involved in grizzly recovery, will ensure that the future of the bear remains bright,” Scarlett noted.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear was listed as a threatened species because of loss of habitat and high mortality resulting from conflicts with humans. An interagency scientific study team was formed in 1973, and over the years the Yellowstone grizzlies have become the most intensely studied bear population in the world. In the 1980's a multi-agency team, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC), was established. The IGBC managed bear mortality and habitat, worked to build public support, and helped develop adequate regulatory mechanisms for the bears. The IGBC includes the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state wildlife agencies of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Washington; and the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. Universities and private organizations have contributed to the study and conservation of the Yellowstone grizzlies as well.

Since the early 1990s, the Yellowstone population has grown at a rate of 4 percent to 7 percent per year. Grizzly range in the Yellowstone Ecosystem has increased 48 percent since they were listed, and biologists have sighted bears more than 60 miles from what was once thought to be the outer limits of their range

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to delist grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem in November 2005. The proposal was reviewed at four open houses and two public hearings; more than 193,500 public comments were received.

Notification of the delisting of the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears will be published in the Federal Register in the near future. More information about today's announcement can be found at <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/mammals/grizzly/yellowstone.htm>

Grizzly bears are generally larger and heavier than other bears. They can be distinguished from black bears by longer, curved claws, humped shoulders and a face that appears to be concave. A wide range of coloration from light brown to nearly black is common. The bear's coat features longer guard hairs over a dense mat of underfur with tips that are usually silver or golden in color - hence the name "grizzly." In the lower 48 states, the average weight of grizzly bears is generally 400 to 600 pounds for males and 250 to 350 pounds for females. They generally live to be approximately 25 years old, although some wild bears have lived over 35 years.

Grizzlies are opportunistic feeders and will consume almost any available food including living or dead mammals or fish, grasses, roots, bulbs, tubers and fungi. The distribution and abundance of these grizzly bear foods vary naturally among seasons and years.

Biologists believe the Yellowstone area grizzly population and other remaining grizzly bear populations in the lower 48 states and Canada are markedly separate from each other, with no evidence of interaction with other populations. There are approximately 1,100 to 1,200 grizzly bears in the lower 48 states, in five separate populations in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Washington. In addition to the Yellowstone area, grizzlies also occur in the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem, where grizzly populations are stable or increasing and number 400 to 500 bears; in the Selkirk ecosystem where there are 40 to 50 bears; in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem,

with 30 to 40 bears; and in the Northern Cascade ecosystem where there are approximately 5 bears.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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