

## **About the Document**

**Title:** Draft Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan Supplement: Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.

**Brief summary:** We have drafted a supplement to the 1993 Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan that includes habitat-based recovery criteria using the best available science to address habitat-based threats to the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bear population. These draft habitat criteria are consistent with other draft management documents (i.e., the draft Conservation Strategy and the National Forest Plans).

## **Timeline of the Peer Review:**

**Estimated dissemination date:** October 2017

**Peer review initiated:** October 2017

**Peer review to be completed by:** Close of the public comment period

**Final determination regarding the supplement to the Recovery Plan expected:** Winter 2017

## **About the Peer Review Process**

**Type of review:** USFWS policy

In accordance with our July 1, 1994 peer review policy (59 FR 34270), the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 [Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review](#), and our August 2, 2016 Peer Review Process Guidance, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to seek peer review on the draft Recovery Plan Supplement: Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria.

These reviews will occur concurrently with the public comment period for the draft supplement. Because this peer review will occur concurrently with public review, peer reviewers will not be provided with copies of public comments.

A Service employee outside of the field office and that is not associated with the decision will be responsible for the solicitation and coordination of the independent peer review. The independent peer reviewers shall be experienced senior-level ecologists, bear biologists, population modelers, or bear managers who have previously conducted similar reviews or regularly provided reviews of research and conservation articles for the scientific literature. Potential conflicts of interest include: employment or affiliation with the Service, the State of Montana, the Western Governors Association; and peer reviewers directly or indirectly employed by or associated in any way with any organization that has either litigated the federal government concerning grizzly bears or wolves or taken a position on one side or the other about recovery and delisting of grizzly bears or wolves. In addition, the reviewers should have no financial or other conflicts of interest with the outcome or implications of the report.

The non-involved Service program and office will be responsible for assigning an experienced, senior and well-qualified manager to lead this review and for the selection of 3 well-qualified, independent reviewers.

We requested that these reviewers provide individual, written responses on the document referenced in the Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register: the draft Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan Supplement: Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria for the Northern Continental

Divide Ecosystem. Individual peer reviews, once all are completed, will be available upon request (see Contact section below). We will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the peer reviewers in the record.

The purpose of seeking independent peer review is to ensure that the best biological and scientific data are being used in this revision process, as well as to ensure that reviews by recognized experts are incorporated into the final Recovery Plan Supplement: Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria. Peer reviewers were asked to consider, but not limit their responses, to the following questions and provide any other relevant comments, criticisms, or ideas:

1. Are the assumptions and conclusions logical and do they reflect the best available science?
2. Are the habitat protections provided in these criteria adequate to assure the long-term viability of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bear population?
3. Are the habitat management mechanisms scientifically sound and sufficiently detailed?
4. Did we include all the necessary and pertinent literature to support our assumptions and conclusions?

### **About Public Participation**

This contracting was initiated upon publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Recovery Plan Supplement: Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria in the Federal Register. Public comments are scheduled to be accepted for 45 days after the NOA is published. You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- **Electronically:** Submit by email to:  
NCDE\_grizzlies@fws.gov.
- **By hard copy:** Submit by mail to:  
Grizzly Bear Recovery Office  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
University Hall, Room 309  
Missoula, MT 59812

Faxed comments will not be accepted. Comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in preparation of this proposed action, will be available for inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours, at our Missoula office (see address above).

### **Contact**

For more information, contact Dr. Hilary Cooley, Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, or Dr. Jennifer Fortin-Noreus, Wildlife Biologist.

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