**USFWS Grizzly Bear Relocation Response and Communication Plan**

Grizzly Bears are listed as a Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act. A special rule (50 CFR 17.40) allows state, tribal, and federal agencies to manage (e.g., relocate, euthanize, haze) grizzly bears in accordance with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines (1986). A new Montana law (Senate Bill 337), signed in 2021, limits Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) involvement in grizzly bear relocations outside of recovery zones. In 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) established a field presence to relocate grizzly bears as documented in an MOA between the FWS and FWP. This document outlines the roles, responsibilities, and communication plan for FWS relocations of grizzly bears, between FWS, FWP or other state wildlife agency (State), Tribes, and the US Forest Service (FS).

The FWS Conflict Coordinator or Recovery Coordinator, in concert with State, Tribes, and Wildlife Services (WS) will determine appropriate management actions for conflict bears. These actions may include release on site, relocation, or removal. If a bear has been trapped and the decision has been made that the FWS will relocate a grizzly bear, the following actions will be taken:

1. FWS Conflict Coordinator or Recovery Coordinator, local Conflict Specialist, and appropriate State and WS personnel will start a group chat/email/phone conversation detailing the:
   * Nature of the conflict.
   * Number of bears involved.
   * Number of bears captured.
   * Estimated time of capture.
   * Anything of note on the condition of the bear(s) or any other details.
   * Potential release sites.
     + Should include primary release site as well as suitable backup options.
   * Plan for transferring the bear(s) to FWS.
     + Time and location of transfer.
     + Type of trap being used.
     + If FWS will be required to provide trap or trailer.
2. FWS Staff will contact the FS or National Park Service (Park) to request permission to relocate and discuss potential release sites. FWS should attempt to contact FS Staff in the following order:
   * District Ranger and Wildlife Biologist or their “Acting” on the district of the proposed release site.
   * If none of these staff can be reached, FWS Staff will contact personnel at the Supervisor’s Office, and they will contact District Staff to discuss potential release sites.
   * For sites near District, Forest, or Park boundaries (less than 1 mile), FWS Staff will communicate with FS Staff from both Districts or Forests and Park Service Staff from nearby National Parks.
   * National Park communication…
3. FWS Conflict Specialists will arrange for additional personnel (other federal employee, volunteer from pre-approved volunteer list, etc.) to accompany them on the release, as required in the Regional Director’s Order No. 25.

Once these steps have been taken and a release site and plan for transferring the bear(s) to FWS have been established, FWS Conflict Specialist will take the following steps in communicating with the Conflict Coordinator:

* Call or text when leaving “home” office to pick up bear.
* Turn inReach unit on and leave on until back in cell service after bear has been released.
* Call, text, or inReach message when transferring bear from State, Tribal, or WS Staff.
* If previously in service, call or text en route to release site BEFORE leaving service.
* Call, text, or inReach when at release site.
* Call, text, or inReach when bear has been released.
* Call or text when back in cell service.
* Call or text when back at home office.

During a FWS relocation, FWS Conflict Specialists will be responsible for recording the following data:

* FWS Staff and volunteer(s) present.
* FWP Bear ID.
* Date and time of capture.
* Location of capture.
* Nature of capture.
* Date and time of transfer.
* Location of transfer.
* Date and time of release.
* State, Tribal, or WS Staff that captured the bear(s).
* Relocation site info.
  + - Name of site and Lat/Long.
    - Any notes on capture site, incl. access issues, deviations from initial location, etc.
    - FS District and Forest.
    - FS or Park Staff contacted.
  + Notes on condition of bear(s).
  + Time bear left trap.
  + Time FWS Staff leaves area.

Upon returning to home office, FWS Staff will notify the following agencies and personnel that the release has been completed:

* FWS Conflict Coordinator.
* State, Tribal, or WS Staff involved in capture and processing of bear(s).
* FS or National Park Staff previously involved in approving relocation site.