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Hi all,

I know it has been a while, but I wanted to send out sort of a mid-winter update for the conflict program. There obviously hasn't been much in the way of actual grizzly bear conflicts during the winter, but our crew remains plenty busy with various other program related work. I did not send this update out to the greater "conflict update" email list that I generally would during the conflict season, but certainly feel free to pass this along to anyone you think might interested. I can send around another update at the beginning of March if people would like, or I can wait until we get back into actual conflict season in early April-ish... up to you all. Either way, please see the update below and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or for additional information.

### **GBRP Conflict Update February 6, 2023**

Tetonia

- 1/13/2023 - FWS and IDFG took part in an after-action meeting in Boise, ID. In attendance were Hilary, Ben, Sandi Fisher, Lisa Ellis, and Lydia Grimm from the USFWS; Ed Schriever, Jim Fredricks, Toby Boudreau, Jon Rachael, and Kathleen Trever from IDFG; and London Boquist from the Governor's OSC. The meeting focused on events leading up to and immediately after the removal of the sow and her two cubs of the year outside of Tetonia in early November. Most everyone in the room agreed things did not go well, and acknowledged there were substantial breakdowns in communications and much room for improvement. Beyond a review of the actions and events during that period, the intent of the meeting was to focus on how we move forward, and what we can do collectively, to avoid such a situation in the future. Main topics included the use of threats to human safety as a justification for the removal of the cubs, a clarification that neither cubs of the year nor yearlings pose a demonstrable threat to human safety, a review of how communication works between FWS and other state agencies, clarifying the chain of command within IDFG should the need arise to move future conversations beyond local personnel, and how and where the IGBC guidelines are applied to private lands outside of recovery zones.
- Both USFWS Region 1 and the Grizzly Bear Recovery office have received multiple FOIA requests over the past several months. These requests are being handled accordingly, and we all expect more to follow. We are also working with Stacey Cummins on the potential of establishing a "Reading Room" where we could post relevant materials for public viewing. The intent would be to make information readily available to interest parties, perhaps reducing the number of

future requests.

#### Bear Smart

- Amber Kornak and Rory Trimbo have been selected as the FWS leads for the Bear Smart program. They will be working with Lori Roberts from FWP, Hilary, Ben, and others to identify how best to move forward.

#### Partners Program

- In consultation with Hilary and Ben, Morgan Vance will begin working with Greg Neudecker and the Partners Program on the development of a collaborative effort between the Grizzly Bear Recovery Program and the Partners Program. The impetus for this would be to expand our collective reach in areas identified by both programs as important for grizzly bear connectivity, land conservation, and grizzly bear conflict management. At least initially, this effort would likely focus in and around the Upper Clark Fork and Flint Creek areas (roughly the area bound by the Blackfoot Valley to the north, the Sapphire Mountains to the west, the Deerlodge area and I-90 to the East, and the Big Hole Valley to the south).

#### Conflict Summit

- Becca Lyon was chosen as the FWS lead on coordinating the first annual Conflict Summit. At several of the most recent IGBC meetings, members of the Conflict Subcommittee (MTFWP, IDFG, WGF, WS, USFS, and FWS) recognized the lack of communication between field personnel across state lines, and expressed a desire to hold a regular "summit" intended for those people working directly on grizzly bear conflict management and mitigation. FWS offered to take the lead on this, and Becca has been working with members from each agency to identify dates, location, attendees, and agenda topics for this first summit. While it may expand in the future, there was strong sentiment to start small and have this be an opportunity for the "practitioners" on the ground to gather and discuss what people are working on, issues they are facing, new ideas, novel methods, etc., throughout grizzly bear range. The summit is tentatively set for March 8/9 in Butte.

#### FWP/FWS Grizzly Bear Meeting

- In coordination with Ken McDonald and Lauri Hanauska-Brown of FWP, FWS conflict personnel will be attending a joint Grizzly Bear Research and Management Check-In. This meeting will include a review of existing agreements between FWP, FWS, and WS; discussions on grizzly bear relocation logistics and practices; a review of WHART protocols; discussion on current database management, documentation, and public information requests; and discussions on interagency communication as well as how we communicate with the public. The meeting has been set for February 24<sup>th</sup> in Missoula.

## USFS Communication Plans and Relocation Sites

- Ben is currently meeting with Forest Leaderships Teams on the various National Forests that overlap grizzly bear recovery zones in Montana. The intent of these meetings is for Ben and FS personnel to meet in person and facilitate conversations that will hopefully help Forests proceed with the communication plans that Jennifer started working on over a year ago. A large component of these plans and these meetings is the establishment of relocation sites not only in and adjacent to recovery zones, but also in the Demographic Connectivity Areas (DCA) and areas within the “May Be Present” boundary. In addition to Forests within Montana, we are working on expanding these meetings to Forests in Idaho.

I hope everyone is well, and thanks as always.

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