



USFWS INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 28, 2022

TO: Martha Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FROM: Matt Hogan, Regional Director, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

SUBJECT: Grizzly Bear 399 Management Response Plan

I. KEY FACTS

Grizzly Bear 399 (GB399) has emerged from the den on March 24 with four two-year olds. Our expectation is that at some point this year, the family group will split up and the two year old offspring will be on their own and/or with one of their siblings. Although our hope is that we can prevent these young bears from coming into conflict with people, the potential for conflict is very high. Management strategies include public outreach, relocation, and removal.

II. BACKGROUND AND FWS POSITION

During the last two years, GB399 and her cubs spent a significant amount of time near residential areas and received numerous food rewards. During the fall of 2020 and 2021, GB399 and her four cubs gained access to unsecured apiaries, compost, and livestock grain on multiple occasions. The frequency of food rewards increased considerably ($n = 17$) during fall 2021 and included two incidents involving the family group accessing unsecured garbage. On November 9, 2021, the bears walked through the town of Jackson. Thereafter, the family group returned north into Grand Teton National Park (GRTE) and successfully denned after Thanksgiving. GPS collar data suggests the family group began emerging from the den on March 24, 2022. As of March 27, the bears remained close to the den site. The two GPS collars are scheduled to drop on July 1.

III. POSITION OF AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS/PUBLIC LANDS AFFECTED

GRTE and US Forest Service (USFS) are supportive of this strategy. Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGF) has expressed their intent to manage the offspring, but will not be involved in management actions related to GB399. WGF may be quick to recommend removal of offspring.

IV. DISCUSSION

Two-year-old cubs commonly disperse in spring. Siblings may separate immediately or remain together temporarily. Occasionally two-year-olds remain with their mother until later in the year. Based on previous behavior, we expect GB399 to avoid developed areas after the cubs disperse. We expect at least some of the offspring will return to human-occupied areas. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) will be research trapping in GRTE starting in May and may indiscriminately capture one or more of the offspring. If this occurs, IGBST will likely collar and release according to standard protocols.

Management Strategies

- Immediate and Ongoing Public Outreach (media releases, public service announcements)
 - Imploring the public to do their part
 - Articulating GB399's conflict history
 - Presenting a unified, interagency front
 - Methods: Press releases, PSAs, media round table
- GB399
 - In GRTE: Standard operations under the park's bear management plan and hazing policy
 - Outside GRTE: Pre-emptive conflict reduction and hazing when necessary
 - Relocation to GRTE/JODR if conflict pattern outside the park continues
 - Euthanasia or zoo placement (Woodland Park Zoo) only if GB399 becomes a threat to human safety
- Offspring:
 - In GRTE: Standard operations under the park's bear management plan and hazing policy
 - Outside GRTE: Pre-emptive conflict reduction and hazing when necessary
 - Relocation or euthanasia if conflicts occur. Details will depend on the type of conflict. Shoshone NF will accept 1-2 bears. Yellowstone NP will not accept any. Investigating availability of other relocation sites.
 - Euthanasia if conflict pattern continues.

V. TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

Outreach efforts are ongoing by partner agencies, including press releases, public service announcements, and a potential media roundtable. Timing of a potential management action will depend on bear movements. FWS will remain in communication with GRTE and WGF to determine next steps.

Prepared by: *[RD/AD name and jurisdiction/unified region] or [SME]*

☐ FYI or ☐ Requested by: *[name]*

☐ Prepared for a meeting: *[meeting date] [meeting invite title]*

Does this involve, directly or tangentially, any Director's Office recusals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please identify: