Congressional Outreach on Proposed GYE Grizzly Delisting

Overall, the Congressional reception to the grizzly bear announcement was positive. Many Members requested that we finalize the delisting as soon as possible. All affected offices were individually provided with advanced copies of the Service's news release and FAQs and invited to a congressional briefing call.

Member Calls
Calls were offered to all Members of the Montana, Idaho and Wyoming delegations, as well as the chair and ranking member of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

- Dan spoke with Sen. Daines (R-MT), Sen. Tester (D-MT) and Sen. Risch (R-ID)
- Jim Kurth spoke with Sen. Crapo (R-ID) and Rep. Grijalva (D-AZ, Ranking Member, Resources Committee)
- Matt Hogan spoke with Sen. Enzi (R-WY)
- Michael Bean spoke with Sen. Barrasso (R-WY) and Rep. Lummis (R-WY)
- Staff-level calls were made to the offices of Rep. Zinke (R-MT), Rep. Labrador (R-ID) and Rep Bishop (R-UT)

Staff is currently working on following up on questions and meeting requests resulting from those calls.

Congressional Tele-Briefing
On Thursday, Region 6 hosted a call for interested staff of Members and Committees. Deputy RD Matt Hogan and Ecological Services ARD Michael Thabault presented the announcement on the call and fielded questions. Approximately XXX people participated in this call. Questions were limited and focused on how the current proposal differs from the 2007 proposal; demographics of the Yellowstone population; and coordination with state management plans.

Congressional Reactions
A number of Members put out statements on the proposal. Below are those Members' statements:

Sen. Risch (R-ID)
"After a preliminary briefing, it appears this plan will require the three states to work together collaboratively to manage the bears to the average number", said Risch. "I really believe that with Idaho's experience managing other difficult species, such as cats and wolves, I have every confidence we can manage the grizzly bear species at the sustainable level agreed to.

Sen. Simpson (R-ID)
"For more than three decades, local, state, and federal partners have worked together to revive the population of the Greater Yellowstone Area Grizzly Bear," said Simpson. "I am pleased the Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed delisting the bear

and returning management to state agencies. Today, the best scientific evidence proves the bear's habitat and population have fully recovered and no longer warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act. While this is a positive development, I will thoroughly review the agency's full proposal and work with state and local partners to learn more about how the decision will impact Idaho."

Sen. Daines (R-MT)
"It's great news that the Fish and Wildlife Service is taking the important step forward in working to delist the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear after their population has significantly rebounded. I hope this announcement helps clear the way for responsible management of the species and more responsible management of our natural resources, including our National Forests. I will continue to encourage the Fish and Wildlife Service to reconsider the listing of the other populations of grizzly bears across our state."

Sen. Enzi (R-WY)
"I'm glad action is once again being taken to return grizzly bear management back to the states," Enzi said. "Experts and wildlife officials agree grizzly bears in the Yellowstone region have been recovered for many years, but previous efforts to delist the bear were held hostage by litigation. This is no way to manage wildlife. As grizzly bear populations increase beyond capacity in Wyoming, so does the danger posed to livestock, property and humans. That is why it is so important that we turn over management of the species to state authorities."

Sen. Barrasso (R-WY)
"After repeatedly moving the goal posts for years, the Obama administration is finally moving in the right direction on grizzly bears," said Barrasso. "Wyoming and other states have worked hard to make sure the grizzly bear is fully recovered. The West – not Washington – is the most effective place to manage grizzly bears."

Rep. Murkoski (R-WY)
"Science has shown that the grizzly bear has been recovered for years and it has become ever more evident as the bears have spread far beyond the intended ranges," said Lummis. "Grizzly bear management belongs in the hands of the State of Wyoming, where we have the knowledge and expertise necessary to maintain a balanced and healthy grizzly bear population. While it is a good first step for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to propose delisting the grizzly, the service must work promptly to collect and incorporate more input from Wyoming and its citizens on the new proposal and complete this rule in a timely manner. Wyoming has put in years of hard work and waited long enough for responsible state stewardship of the grizzly bear to be restored."