Y.E.S. Conservation Strategy Revision Steering Committee

Meeting minutes-Conference call-June 24th, 0830

In attendance: Loren Grosskopf, Patricia O'Connor, Brian Nesvik, Dan Wenk, Jodi Bush (had to leave at 1000), Dalissa Minnick

Brian started by outlining the intent for the meeting. He articulated the need to move through major themes identified for the Steering Committee and confirmed availability of each participant to meet through the morning. All were available except for Jodi who had to leave at 10:00 a.m. for another meeting.

The group discussed the process that would be used to develop recommendations for the YES committee based on the major themes identified for the Steering Committee. All agreed that the group would strive to achieve consensus so that recommendations represented agreement by all Steering Committee members. All also agreed that if any member felt it necessary to represent a view different than what was decided by the Steering Committee, they could provide their thoughts to the YES committee.

Jodi provided an update on the USFWS analysis of draft delisting rule public comments and the peer review. Jodi stated the USFWS received 165,000 comments and that 90-95% were form letters. She stated there were approximately 12,000 individual comments.

Jodi also stated that the most recent plans by the USFWS would include an re-opening of the public comment period following the completion of state management plans. She indicated the USFWS desire to allow the public to comment regarding the 3 state management plans and their relation to the Conservation Strategy.

The committee then began discussing each theme (reference list updated and attached to these minutes).

Theme #1---Brian outlined the issues and the desire by the states to ensure the Conservation Strategy approach is adaptive in nature and is flexible enough to be changed based on new science. He asserted a need for there to be a clear process for making necessary changes in the future. Dan expressed his support for the Conservation Strategy approach as long as the process is defined in advance. Other committee members expressed support for the Conservation Strategy approach.

The group also discussed changes to chapter 6 regarding how future changes would be made. Items for discussion were: What is a majority? Who are the members of YGCC? What is a quorum? Do members need to be present to be a part of the quorum?

The group discussed the idea of charging the YGCC with developing their own by-laws and approving them with a super-majority. Tricia articulated the need for individual members to be prepared to live with whatever process is identified and realize most members will not have it

exactly the way they would like to have it. Tricia recommended that we move forward with making changes to P. 98 in Chapter 6 outlining these processes. All members present agreed.

Nesvik will make recommended edits for the groups review

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #2---The group discussed the issue briefly and decided the executive summary already included the major components of this theme. Dalissa expressed concerns with the lack of language regarding land use plans. She asked that if the issue comes back up, land use plans and their role in the Conservation Strategy should be narrowly defined. All members present agreed with removing this theme.

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #3---Brian outlined the issued and reviewed the science indicating a flattening of the growth rate over the past 10 years. Brian stated that growth in the Yellowstone GB population changed from 4-7% per year to 0-2% over the past 10 years. Brian stated it is misleading to continually refer to the population as stable when it continues to grow. Brian also pointed out there are portions of the ecosystem within the DMA with unoccupied habitats and so growth will likely occur until into the near future. Brian recommended adding language to more accurately describe the population is approaching carrying capacity.

Dan agreed with the change, but asked clarifying questions about biological vs. socially acceptable habitat. Loren agreed with change. Jodi stated she didn't have the background to take a position. Dalissa was agreeable to change. Tricia agreed and stated that it was misleading to use the word stable.

Nesvik will make recommended edits for the group's review

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #4---Brian outlined the issue regarding the fact that anyone can petition for delisting. He stated that specifically charging the YGCC with making decisions on petitioning for relisting is unrealistic and unnecessary.

Jodi agreed and believes the language should be struck stating it doesn't add anything. Tricia and Dalissa stated they could go either way and don't really think it matters. Dan stated he wasn't opposed to removing the language. Loren agreed with Dan.

Bush will make recommended edits for the group's review

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #6---Loren outlined the issue stating that the Conservation Strategy should have a specified review clause. Loren cited the peer review and the fact that the review should be

consistent with the table. Loren stated that he felt the YGCC should review on a 5 year basis and make other changes as they become necessary.

Jodi stated she agreed it should be consistent and supported 5 years. Other members present supported 5 years. Brian did provided his thoughts on where the 10 year timeframe came from and related it to the work of the IGBST and their development of rates and ratios used for the development of mortality limits. All agreed that the IGBST review can continue to be 5-10 years.

Grosskopf will make recommended edits for the group's review

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #7---Loren outlined the issue regarding the need for specificity in roles and responsibilities and also in identifying who is financially responsible for specific monitoring data collection activities. Following brief discussion, all members present agreed with Loren recommendation.

Grosskopf will make recommended edits for the group's review

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #8---Dan outlined the issue stating that he felt strongly that NPS managers should be included in annual discussions regarding the allocation of discretionary mortality and more specifically be allowed to articulate NPS thoughts on where discretionary mortality occurs. Brian reminded the group that the three state wildlife agencies included language in their MOA to include the NPS and the USFS in their annual meeting regarding discretionary mortality and other biological updates. Dan stated he was cognizant of the need for states to maintain the ability to make those decisions within their authority for a delisted population, however, components of discretionary mortality could have impacts on the grizzly populations in the National Parks. Loren brought up many of the allocation issues that are outlined in Theme #13. Dalissa articulated her interest in the BLM being included in the annual meeting for their situational awareness and to allow them to articulate any concerns they may have. Brian stated he would support formalizing in the Conservation Strategy, but they he wasn't sure if the other states would support it at the YES meeting.

Nesvik will make recommended edits for the group's review

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #5---Tricia outlined the issue and recommended that the group place this theme on hold until she does more research. She stated that she believed the issue was likely resolved. All agreed to hold until the next meeting.

Theme #9---Brian began by stating he agreed with the Agency Coordination/Conflict Management sub-group that there is no need for additional language in the Conservation

Strategy regarding genetic connectivity. Brian also reminded the group that the state of Montana and the USFWS discussed this issue at length and added mutually agreed upon language in the draft Conservation Strategy that went out for public comment. Brian outlined the most recent science regarding genetic viability of the Yellowstone GB population and the fact that there appears to be no threat to genetic viability.

Tricia stated that the USFS supervisors recently discussed the issue and felt there was uncertainty in what is meant by the facilitation of genetic movement. Dan questioned whether this issue would make delisting vulnerable. Dan stated he would like to see something that promotes the idea of genetic material interchange between the NCDE and the Yellowstone population and that this type of message is positive.

Brian stated that while it is not necessarily a preferred method, there is always the option of mechanically moving genetic material from one ecosystem to the other. Tricia articulated that genetic monitoring is important. Brian also cautioned the group against over-reaching into decisions that would impact Montana's ability to manage grizzlies in their state. He stated there could be political consequences.

All agreed to place this theme on hold so that members could look closely at language on p. 52-54 and 85-86. The theme will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Theme #10---Dan introduced this theme stating there needs to be federal influence now to ensure this issue continues to be considered in future decisions. Dan stated this is a major issue for his constituents and that harvest near National Park boundaries will be extremely controversial. Dan also reminded the group of the concerns surrounding famous roadside bears.

Tricia stated she can't make the link between discretionary mortality and the conservation of the grizzly bear population. Brian stated that he supported the sub-group's recommendation in that this isn't an issue for the conservation strategy. Dan stated he thought there should be language describing the value of grizzly bears to the ecosystem. Tricia articulated the fact that p. 3 and the PCA language achieved this. Dan agreed to draft language highlighting the value of grizzly bears for inclusion in the introduction and vision of the strategy.

Wenk will make recommended edits for the group's review

Theme #11---Dan briefly introduced the issue and asked the group to pull the theme from consideration. Dan stated the decisions regarding hunting in the John D. Rockefeller Parkway will be made at higher levels.

All members present agreed to pull the theme from the list.

CONSCENSUS ACHIEVED

The group set the next meeting for July 6th at 1:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

	Theme	Originator	Sub-group
1	Agree to conservation strategy approach, and that updates will be necessary	States	SC
2	Function of the Conservation Strategy needs to be clear---it is a post-delisting management plan to ensure continued grizzly recovery. Portions of the Strategy need to focus on this and need to recognize the authorities of the different agencies	States/USFS/ County Commissioners	
3	Description of population that is stable vs. at carrying capacity	States	SC
4	Remove references that the Y.E.S. committee can petition for relisting	States	SC
5	Sensitive Species Reference	USFS	SC
6	Conservation Strategy should have specified review clause detailing when it will be revisited and updated	County Commissioners	SC
7	Make it clear who has what responsibilities regarding who does what, who pays, time periods/deadlines.	County Commissioners	SC
8	NPS Managers included in the discussions and decision making process…..allocation of harvest	NPS-Initially referred to AC subgroup-referred back to SC	SC/AC
9	Connectivity/Linkage/Genetic Management	Initially referred to AC subgroup-referred back to SC	SC/AC
10	Harvest focused away from park boundaries in areas where human bear conflicts are prevalent.	NPS- Initially referred to PM subgroup-referred back to SC	SC/PM
11	Hunting will not be permitted in the John D Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway	NPS- Initially referred to PM subgroup-referred back to SC	SC/PM
12	If a new estimator other than Chao 2 is used in the future, the states will recalibrate the population thresholds and proportions of allocated hunter harvest based on the estimates provided by the new model in comparison to Chao 2	NPS- Initially referred to PM subgroup-referred back to SC	SC/PM

13	Harvest will be based on the number of grizzly bears available to be hunted outside of NPS units rather than the entire population. - 21% of DMA are NPS managed units - 39% of PCA are NPS managed units, and stated as "secure habitat" in the conservation strategy. What does "secure habitat" mean?	NPS- Initially referred to PM subgroup- referred back to SC	SC/PM