

Chapter 4 Management and Monitoring of Grizzly Bear-Human Conflicts

Introduction

Grizzly bears will occasionally come into conflict with humans and livestock in areas where they encounter one another. One objective of the signatory agencies to the Conservation Strategy is to minimize grizzly bear conflicts with humans and livestock. In the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, conflict bear management is essential to successful grizzly bear conservation and is often necessary to prevent property damage, livestock losses, and human injury or death. [PJVW1]

Management of conflict bears requires rapid responses by state and federal agencies to address conflict situations. Agency response will address the sources of the conflict through public education, removal of attractants, aversive conditioning, hazing, or preventive sanitation of human use areas. Agencies will also capture, relocate, or remove conflict grizzly bears when necessary.

Conflict bears often result from bears seeking and finding human related foods and garbage, pets, pet foods, bird feeders, and livestock. Occasionally, bears damage buildings, vehicles, tents, and campers to access food and garbage.

Although aggression toward people and human injury or death are rare, bears will occasionally harm people. Incidents of injury are usually the result of a surprise encounter, protection of cubs, defense of a food cache, harassment, or when bears have become accustomed to obtaining food from humans.

Management of grizzly bear-human conflicts is based upon the existing laws and authorities of the state and federal land management agencies as detailed in Chapter 7. Strategies to respond to conflict bears usually fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Removing or securing the attractant and modifying human behavior/practices that contributed to the conflict. [PJW2]
- Deterring the conflict bear from the site through the use of aversive conditioning or hazing techniques
- Capturing and relocating the conflict bears. [GKA3]
- Removing the conflict bear from the wild, including lethal removal

Definitions:

- **Grizzly bear-human conflicts** are incidents in which bears move into developed areas where they are not wanted, injure people, damage property, kill or injure livestock, damage beehives, obtain anthropogenic foods, damage property, or damage or obtain garden and orchard fruits and vegetables. [PJW4]
- A bear is classified as **food conditioned** when it has received a significant food reward of human foods such as garbage, camp food, pet food, or processed livestock food, and persistently seeks these foods.
- A bear is classified as **habituated** when it does not display avoidance behavior around humans or in human use areas such as camps or town sites or within 100 meters of open roads.
- **Relocation** is the capture and movement by management authorities of a bear involved in a conflict with humans or human-related foods, to a remote area away from the conflict site. [PJW5]

- **Repeat offense** is the involvement of a bear that has been previously relocated in a conflict situation or, if not relocated, is a bear that continues to repeat a behavior that constitutes a grizzly bear-human conflict.
- **Removal** is the capture and placement of a bear in an authorized public zoological or research facility or euthanizing [PJW6] of that bear.
- **Management authorities** are the designated representatives of the agencies in the GYE including: Yellowstone National Park; Grand Teton National Park (GTNP); [PJW7] Wyoming Game and Fish Department; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team; each of the GYE national forests— Custer-Gallatin, Shoshone, Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge; the BLM; and USDA Wildlife Services. These authorities will employ one or more of the four strategies listed above to manage the conflict. Outside Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and the JDR, management actions will be coordinated and completed by state wildlife agencies that [PJW8] have responsibility for the management action. When conflict bears are in YNP, GTNP, or John D Rockefeller Parkway (JDR) decisions will be made by park representatives, and coordinated with state and Forest Service representatives when necessary, e.g., for bear relocations. Management of conflict bears outside the PCA will be conducted as described in the state grizzly bear management plans.

Management of conflict grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem will vary depending on whether they are inside or outside the PCA. This system will provide increased security for grizzly bears inside the PCA, as bears will be given greater consideration in most conflicts inside the PCA. [PJW9]

In circumstances that result in a conflict bear situation outside the PCA, more consideration will be given to existing human uses. [PJW10] Site-specific conflict areas within and outside the PCA will be documented and prioritized to focus proactive management actions to minimize grizzly bear-human conflicts and address existing and potential human activities that may cause future conflicts. Past conflict management has demonstrated that grizzly bears can coexist with most human activities.

Outside National Park units and the PCA, state management plans [GKA11] will govern how conflict grizzly bears are handled. Site-specific conflict areas within and outside the PCA will be documented routinely and prioritized to focus proactive management actions to minimize grizzly bear-human conflicts and address existing and potential human activities that may cause future conflicts. [PJW12] The following conflict grizzly bear standards apply only to the PCA. All grizzly bear conflicts that occur outside the PCA will be managed according to guidelines in each of the state and NPS management plans (Appendices I, J, and K).

Conflict Bear Standards

The focus and intent of conflict grizzly bear management inside and outside the PCA are predicated on strategies and actions to prevent grizzly bear-human conflicts. It is recognized that active management aimed at individual conflict bears will be required in both areas.

Management actions outside the PCA will be implemented according to state management plans in coordination with landowners and land management agencies. These actions will be compatible with grizzly bear population management objectives for each state for the areas outside the PCA. [PJW13]

General Criteria

Location, cause of incident, severity of incident, history of bear, health/age/sex of bear, and demographic characteristics of animals involved will all be considered in any relocation or

removal. Removal of conflict bears will be carefully considered and consistent with mortality limits for the GYE as described in the Conservation Strategy. Recognizing that conservation of female bears is essential to maintenance of a grizzly bear population, removal of conflict female bears will be minimized.

Within the Primary Conservation Area

Within the PCA, but outside of the National Park units, management of conflict bears will be addressed according to the following standards:

- Bears displaying food conditioning and/or habituation may be relocated or removed based on specific details of the bear and the incident. State wildlife agencies, will make this judgment after considering the cause, location, and severity of the incident or incidents.
- Bears may be relocated when and as many times as judged prudent by the state wildlife agency. All relocations outside the PCA will be governed by state management plans.[PJW14]

Within the PCA, but inside the National Park units, management of conflict bears will be addressed according to the following standards:

- Authorized National Park Service authorities will implement removals and relocations within YNP and GTNP.[PJW15]
 - State and tribal wildlife agencies in coordination with the appropriate federal agencies will predetermine adequate and available sites for relocations outside of the National Park units. Relocation sites should be agreed upon before the need for relocation occurs. In order to deal with conflict bears more efficiently, managers should have full access to relocation sites without having to conduct individual consultation for each relocation.[PJW16]
 - State wildlife agencies shall coordinate with and notify the appropriate land management agency when conflict bears are relocated.

Specific Criteria for Removals

Captured grizzly bears identified for removal may be given to public research institutions or public zoological parks for appropriate non-release educational or scientific purposes as per regulations of states and national parks. Grizzly bears not suitable for release, research, or

educational purposes will be removed as described in appropriate state management plans or in compliance with national park rules and regulations.

Outside of national parks, conflict bears deemed appropriate for removal may be taken by a legal hunter in compliance with rules and regulations promulgated by the appropriate state wildlife agency commission, as long as such taking is in compliance with existing state and federal laws, and as long as mortality limits specified for the GYE as described in this Conservation Strategy are not exceeded. This could include licensed hunters or property owners or their agents who have obtained appropriate permits from the state. Licensed hunters will be allowed to possess bear parts for bears that are legally harvested under a state permit.

Monitoring Protocol

All conflict bear management actions will be summarized annually in the Annual Report of the IGBST. This report will detail the cause and location of each conflict and management action and display an annual spatial distribution of conflicts that can be used by managers to identify where problems occur and to compare trends in locations, sources, land ownership, and types of conflicts.