

APPLICATION PROTOCOL

Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Demographic Recovery Criteria November 2012

To evaluate Demographic Recovery Criterion #1, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team will use the following procedures to estimate total population size:

1. Raw observations of sightings of females with cubs of the year will be separated into observations of unique females and repeat observations of the same female using the methods of Knight et al. (1995, p. 246).
2. The Chao2 estimator (Keating et al. 2002, p. 173) will be applied to sighting frequencies of unique females with cubs of the year to estimate the number of females with cubs of the year in the population.
3. The number of unique females with cubs of the year obtained from the Chao2 estimator each year will be added to the dataset and the model averaging process described in the Supplement to the Reassessing Methods Document (Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team 2006, pp. 2-10)
4. The predicted number of females with cubs of the year obtained from the model fit will be used as the best estimate of the total number of independent females in the population accompanied by cubs of the year for that year.
5. The purpose of the model is to get the best estimate of the current number of females with cubs of the year borrowing information from past estimates, recognizing that with each iteration some change is expected. Estimates of females with cubs of the year for previous years will not be retrospectively adjusted with data from the current year.
6. The predicted number of females with cubs of the year will be divided by the proportion of females ≥ 4 years old estimated to be accompanied by cubs of the year (transition probability = 0.270). The resulting value represents the best estimate of the total number of females in the population ≥ 4 years old.
7. The number of females ≥ 4 years old will be divided by the estimated proportion of females ≥ 4 years old in the population of females ≥ 2 years old (0.844). The resulting value is the best estimate of the number of independent females (≥ 2 years old) in the population that year.
8. The number of independent males in the population will be based on the estimated ratio of independent males to independent females (1.000) derived via stochastic modeling described in the Supplement to the Reassessing Methods Document (Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team 2006, pp. 10-11). The number of independent females in the population will be multiplied by 1.000 and the resulting value represents the best estimate of the number of independent males that year.
9. The number of cubs of the year in the annual population estimate will be calculated directly from the model-predicted estimate of females with cubs of the year (Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team 2006, p. 17). The number of cubs of the year will be estimated by multiplying the modeled estimate by the mortality-adjusted mean litter size (2.49) observed from 2002–2011.
10. The number of yearlings will be estimated by multiplying the estimated number of cubs from the previous year by the mean survival rate for cubs (0.553) observed from 2002–2011.

11. The estimated total population size will then be calculated as the sum of the estimates of each age and sex class:
independent females + independent males + cubs of the year + yearlings =
estimate of total population size
12. Estimates of uncertainty about the number of independent females, independent males, dependent young, and total population size will be derived following methods detailed in the Supplement to the Reassessing Methods Document (Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team 2006, pp. 10–15).
13. If the AICc weight favors models indicating decline in the rate of change of females with cubs (Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team 2006, pp. 4–8), a full review of the population's demographics will be undertaken by the Study Team to better understand population status.

To evaluate Demographic Recovery Criterion #2, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team will use the following procedures to document distribution of females with offspring in Bear Management Units:

1. The distribution of reproductive females in Bear Management Units is assessed using verified observations of female grizzly bears with young. This includes young of any age and/or young of unknown age.
2. Raw observations of females with young will be compiled annually by the Study Team. All grizzly bear observations and reports of sign (tracks, digs, etc.) by study personnel and the public were recorded. Grizzly bear sighting forms were sent to a variety of field personnel from different agencies to maximize the number of reports received. Sightings of grizzly bears were rated 1-5 with 5 being the best quality and 1 being the poorest. General definitions of these categories are presented below, but it was difficult to describe all circumstances under which sightings were reported. Only sightings receiving ratings of 4 or 5 were judged credible and used in reports. Sightings that rate 1 or 2 may not always be recorded in the database.
 - 5 - Highest quality reports typically from study personnel or highly qualified observers. Sightings not obtained by highly qualified observers must have physical evidence such as pictures, track measurements, hair, or sightings of marked bears where marks are accurately described.
 - 4 - Good quality reports that provide credible, convincing descriptions of grizzly bears or their sign. Typically these reports include a physical description of the animal mentioning several characteristics. The observer had sufficient observation time and was close enough or had binoculars to aid in identification. Observer demonstrates sufficient knowledge of identification characteristics to be regarded as a credible observer. Background or experience of observer may influence credibility.
 - 3 - Moderate quality reports that do not provide convincing descriptions of grizzly bears. Reports may mention 1 or 2 characteristics, but the observer does not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of characteristics to make a reliable identification. Observer may have gotten a quick glimpse of the bear or been too far away for a good quality observation.
 - 2 - Lower quality observations that provide little description of the bear other than the observer's judgment that it was a grizzly bear.

- 1 - Lowest quality observations of animals that may not have been grizzly bears. This category may also involve second hand reports from other than the observer.

To evaluate Demographic Recovery Criterion #3, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team will use the following procedures to establish annual sustainable mortality rates and count numbers of grizzly bear mortalities:

1. The Study Team will estimate the number of individuals in the population each year that are independent females, independent males, or dependent young using steps #4 – 10 under Demographic Recovery Criterion 1 above. The Study Team will then apply sustainable mortality rates to each of these age and sex classes to obtain mortality limits for that year.
2. Based on demographic analyses using data from 2002-2011, the sustainable mortality rate for independent females is 7.6% of the population estimate of independent females. This rate will be applied to the estimate of the total number of independent females to obtain a mortality limit for that year.
3. Unknown and unreported mortality will be estimated based on the methods of Cherry et al. (2002, p. 179) and the Reassessing Methods Document (Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team 2005, pp. 39-41).
4. Based on demographic analyses using data from 2002-2011, the sustainable mortality rate for independent males is 15% of the population estimate of independent males. This rate will be applied to the estimate of the total number of independent males to obtain a mortality limit for that year.
5. Based on demographic analyses using data from 2002-2011, the sustainable mortality rate for dependent young (cubs and yearlings) is 7.6% of the annual estimate of dependent young. Only human-caused deaths (reported known and probable) will be tallied against this threshold. Unknown and unreported mortality will not be estimated for dependent young.
6. Sustainable mortality limits for independent males and females will be evaluated based on the total number of known and probable mortalities from all sources and an estimate of unknown/unreported mortality (Cherry et al. 2002). Because we are using model-averaged estimates, annual variability among years has been addressed and we recommend annual mortality limits based on the current year.
7. Dead bears reported in years subsequent to the actual year of mortality will be tallied against the estimated year of death and mortality total will be recalculated for that year. If mortality exceeds the threshold for that year, the difference (total mortality minus threshold) should be counted against the current years' threshold. If sex of the dead bear cannot be determined, sex will be assigned randomly using a ratio of 59:41 male:female, for independent aged bears, and 50:50 male:female for dependent young (Schwartz and Haroldson 2001, Annual Grizzly Bear Investigations 2000, Appendix A, page 120.).