

Subcommittee Proposal (9/12/16)

Proposed revisit of Habitat Standards and the 1998 Baseline

Since 1998, visitor use in National Park lands and surrounding National Forest lands has increased significantly. During this time we have witnessed a significant increase in grizzly bear numbers and occupied range such that we have more bears in more places. Adherence to the habitat standards and its associated sideboards to human activities has contributed to the successful recovery of the GYE grizzly bear population. However, the habitat standards associated with the 1998 baseline and the administrative mandates to manage for increased visitation have not kept pace with the recent changes in a manner that allows the stewards of these lands to responsibly accommodate the current, and likely future, increase in visitor use. In light of such recent changes, it is necessary to reconsider our role and responsibility for stewardship and resource management of public lands throughout the GYE, and more importantly inside the PCA. It is reasonable at this time to consider how future modifications to the 1998 baseline standards could be designed in such a manner that increased pressures on the landscape can be addressed without threatening the habitat and population gains we have secured. As such, it is proposed that a multi-agency effort be conducted to determine the best long-term solutions for alleviating administrative pressures associated with increased visitation. Any future management changes proposed in this effort will be evaluated in a cooperative and meaningful manner with full consideration to long-term consequences. Proposed modifications will minimize deviations to the 1998 baseline. A multi-agency planning group will be established to carry out this re-evaluation effort on or before the end of calendar year 2018. Production of a draft document enumerating proposed revisions to the 1998 habitat standards will be released for public comment and approved by the YGCC. The final revision document must be agreeable to each of the affected federal land management agencies represented on the YES, including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Timeline of Habitat Standard revisions to be completed on or before the end of calendar year 2018

January 2017	Establish the planning group to review and propose revisions to the Habitat Standards. Participants should include representatives from the National Park Service (Kerry Gunther), Forest Service (Dan Tyers and Lisa Landenburger), Fish and Wildlife Service (Jennifer Fortin-Noreus), Bureau of Land Management, and the states of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana.
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Assign a contact from each administrative unit to assist in a timely manner with GIS tasks associated with creating a new developed sites database.

Spring/Summer 2017	Workshops to discuss the issues: Definition of major versus minor developed site? How will the footprint of developed sites be measured? What level of change is acceptable? (i.e., buffer around developed site) How will mitigation be defined? (i.e., increased law enforcement, habitat quality of area impacted, etc.)
Winter 2017	Agencies compile and deliver necessary data documenting footprint and human-use capacity of developed sites to Lisa Landenburger for construction of new baseline database
Spring 2018 July 2018	Production of draft 1998 revisions for public comment 30 day public comment period
August-October 2018	Summarize and respond to public comments