

Subcommittee Proposal (9/2/16)

Proposed revisit of Habitat Standards and the 1998 Baseline

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Since 1998, visitor use in ~~Yellowstone National Parks,~~ Grand Teton National Park, and surrounding ~~public National Forest~~ lands has increased significantly, ~~neecessitating the need for additional infrastructure to responsibly~~ 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 has 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. ~~Major developed sites, such as Old Faithful, Mammoth, and Canyon Village, do not represent habitat selected for by bears, and therefore a slight increase to the footprint or capacity may have minimal to no impact on the GYE grizzly bear population. As such, it is acceptable to consider in the future a slight increase to the footprint or capacity of major developed sites to accommodate increased infrastructure needs while minimizing impacts to higher priority habitats. Additionally, the current method of tracking and monitoring developed sites has been identified as in need of improvement. For example, developed sites are currently tracked as point features with no measurable footprint. 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. Potential changes to the 1998 baseline that will accommodate needed additional infrastructure and modifications to developed site standards will be complete by the end of calendar year 2018. Any resulting~~ 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 ~~by 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 be approved by the YGCC. The final revision document must be agreeable to each of the affected federal land management agencies represented on the YES, ~~(FS, BLM, NPS)~~ including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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~~Completion Timeline~~ of ~~1998 baseline~~ Habitat Standard revisions to be completed on or before ~~by end of~~ the end of calendar year 2018

Comment [LLA-1]: To be consistent w/ Kerry's comment below, we should refer to Habitat Standards (not 98 baseline) in the heading as well.

Is this timeline to be included?

Comment [GKA2]: We are not really changing the baseline (other than correcting omissions, what was on the landscape in 1998 was on the landscape) we are changing the Habitat Standard to offer managers some flexibility to address increases in visitation, while still having significant sideboards to reduce potential for grizzly bear mortality and conserve grizzly bear habitat.

January 2017 Establish the planning group to review and propose revisions to the ~~1998 baseline~~ 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.

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.)

~~Fall 2017~~ ~~Agencies gather necessary data for footprint of developed sites~~

Winter 2017 ~~All Agencies compile and deliver necessary data documenting footprint and human-use capacity of developed sites~~ to Lisa Landenburger for ~~development construction~~ of new baseline database

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Spring 2018 Production of draft 1998 revisions for public comment
July 2018 30 day public comment period

August-October 2018 Summarize and respond to public comments