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**Subject:** Re: YES Committee mtg  
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Not much progress on our issues.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 4, 2016, at 12:38 AM, Dan Wenk <[dan\\_wenk@nps.gov](mailto:dan_wenk@nps.gov)> wrote:

Sarah and Micheal,

Some quick notes on the meeting.

The YES Committee met in Bozeman, MT on Tuesday August 2. The committee was well represented at the meeting with three states, USFWS, USFS, BLM, NPS, county commissioners, members of the press and public. I have attached a link to an article that appeared this morning in the Bozeman Chronicle that captures the essence of the meeting.

[http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/environment/yellowstone-states-spar-over-grizzly-management/article\\_ed479294-5ff1-5426-b121-5449dbb48adc.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=user-share](http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/environment/yellowstone-states-spar-over-grizzly-management/article_ed479294-5ff1-5426-b121-5449dbb48adc.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share)

During the course of the meeting the committee adopted number of changes to the Conservation Strategy (CS). The primary areas of discussion and disagreement centered around the issues that the NPS brought forward in our comments on the Proposed Rule and Conservation Strategy. Obviously the focus was on the CS, as it was the charge to the YES Committee by the USFWS. One issue that received a lot of attention and will require further discussion is using the 1998 baseline for future development on public lands in the DMA and PCA. With the significant increase in visitation the NPS and USFS are asking for clarity in how that baseline will be applied. For Yellowstone the ability to construct employee housing, add to a youth campus, or construct additional parking could be outside of the current definition. I think this can be solved relatively easily.

On a positive note

Language was incorporated into the CS that the federal agencies will be included in the annual meeting with the states to "confer" on discretionary mortality (hunting). I pushed them on "consult" versus "confer" and the states were not willing to go beyond confer.

Not positive notes, the other four issues we identified at the previous YES Committee meeting.

Concentrate hunts away from park boundaries in areas of conflict. The states were not willing to consider any language that would require bear harvest to be concentrated in areas of conflict and away from park boundaries within the DMA. When the states objected to the

language of "away from park boundaries" I offered that the NPS would be pleased to have it read only in the areas of conflict. That was not acceptable language either. Privately the states did say that as a public process the states would very likely have limited hunts near the park boundary as it would not be acceptable to the public to focus hunts on the boundary.

No hunting with John D Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway. The state of Wyoming stated privately they would not propose hunting in JDR. However, they would not include language in the CS for that commitment.

Recalibration. This conversation was the biggest surprise and disappointment of the day. That states position is that when delisted they will manage bears to the recovery number of 674 with no hunting if the number decreases to 600. Therefore it does not matter what population estimator is used because they will be managing to a specific recovery number. Some current estimates place as many as 1,100 bears in the DMA. This would trigger the much higher mortality rates and drive the population down over a relatively short period of time. The population recovery number of 674 is the average number of bears in the DMA from 2002 through 2014. The current population level is 717. They will not be managing for a stable population at the time of delisting. This was the first time I heard the states assert this position. That was a surprise to at least the NPS and USFS committee members in the room. When pressed the states made it very clear that since they were managing to a recovered population number of 674 no purpose would be served by agreeing to a recalibration. I believe this will be a surprise to Director Jarvis and RD Masica as it was to us. Of note in previous conversations in September of 2015, we challenged the states and the USFWS when they changed the 2007 language from "stable to increasing" population to "stable population" and now they are removing the concept of stable population. I believe this will be a surprise to the public and stakeholder organizations.

On another note, during an opportunity for public comment in the meeting, the public was informed that no further public comment period would be offered. This was a change from the previous YES Committee meeting. Also we were promised a synthesis of public comment and the peer review comments in the very near future. We were told previously we would have those documents in June. We were also told that the final rule would be out in mid November.

We did discuss The concept of Hunttable bears and basing the hunts on the bears available to be hunted. I questioned the advisability of removing 100% of the bears from 80% of the DMA. As expected the states were not interested in the argument and I did not push as I know that this is not the position of the NPS or the department. Only discussed it to see if it might be part of larger discussions.

Brian Nesvik and I have scheduled a one on one meeting to see if we can look at all of the issues of concern collectively instead of individually on Tuesday of next week in Cody.

If you have any questions, thoughts or advice I am available to discuss at any time.