

Meeting minutes-Conference call-July 6th, 1:30 p.m.

In attendance: Loren Grosskopf (joined at 2:15 p.m.), Patricia O'Connor, Brian Nesvik, Dan Wenk, Jodi Bush, Dalissa Minnick

The committee started with addressing un-resolved themes from the previous meeting.

Theme #5 (con't from last meeting)---Tricia outlined her research and thoughts regarding the sensitive species theme. She offered to draft language supporting her recommendations. She also acknowledged the need for the USFWS to agree with her edits. All committee members agreed with Tricia's recommendation.

O'Connor will make edits for the group's consideration

CONSENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #9 (continued from last meeting)---Brian reviewed discussions from the last meeting related to connectivity language in the Conservation Strategy. Dan asserted the current language is legally sufficient, but not publically acceptable. Tricia indicated that the USFS Supervisors talked and they are all comfortable with the current language. Dalissa also relayed her support for leaving the current language as is. Jodi indicated she had no recommendations for change.

Dan indicated additional language regarding connectivity would be more related to discretionary mortality between the two ecosystems than it would be about habitat standards. He also indicated that he believes this is a big issue for the public.

Brian outlined public concerns from those segments supportive of Grizzly Bear conservation, but not supportive of long term prescriptive and directive language regarding the allocation of discretionary mortality. Brian also outlined the fact that Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks worked closely with the USFWS to modify this language in the current draft and the current language represents a compromise that addresses all interests.

Tricia asserted that while we all desire connectivity, we don't require it and the science supports that position. She also stated there are no standards regarding roads but that the USFS is required to monitor it.

Dan stated that making additional changes regarding connectivity may help to get a rule in place. Brian stated he supports leaving the current language alone. Jodi stated she was neutral on the issue, but that Tricia brought up valid points.

All agreed to leave language regarding connectivity as is.

CONSENSUS ACHIEVED

Theme #12---Dan outlined the issue and in summary stated his perspective that the population and mortality standards need to be recalibrated if the population estimate changes. Dan stated that at the core of the issue is a public demand to know what will happen if the population

estimate becomes much higher based on a new model. Dan stated that the previous standard in the last delisting was stable to increasing and in this rule, it is changed to stable and asked what this standard means in relation to the population estimator.

Tricia articulated her understanding of the current recovery criteria and the fact that they already do what Dan is advocating for because the mortality limits are based in proportions of the population and that they proportions available for discretionary mortality apply regardless of how high the population may be estimated.

Dan stated that he didn't want to see 200-300 bears available for harvest.

Brian outlined the state's perspective and articulated the basis for the recovery criteria. He asserted that when minimum viable population was scientifically developed, it was buffered to bring the number to 500 grizzly bears required for genetic and biological viability. Brian stated that the recovery criteria were not tied to one particular population estimation technique. He stated that in order to change standards in the event that a new estimator is adopted would require changing recovery criteria. Brian also reminded the group that because of recovery criteria #3 and the establishment of mortality limits, there would be no conceivable way for 200-300 bears to be available for discretionary mortality in any particular year.

Jodi stated that grizzly bears continue to move into new areas and are approaching carrying capacity, but that there is still unoccupied habitats.

Tricia offered a recommendation that we strengthen the language around how a new population estimation technique would be approved and implemented. She advocated clearly stating that the YGCC would evaluate the issue and determine how to implement the new estimator and would modify the table on p. 46.

Dan asked how YGCC was going to make decisions. Members reminded Dan that the conduct of YGCC is an issue that was dealt with by the committee in earlier discussions. Dan expressed concerns with public confidence in how the YGCC is conducted. He also stated he was looking at the tables and felt that something has to be indexed to the chart.

Tricia stated that she felt like our committee's charge was to deal with these problems and not pass them to YES. She stated we should go to YES with options. Tricia's recommended options were to go to YES with an option to leave existing language alone and one option to strengthen the language on YGCC dealing with future changes to the population estimator.

All members present agreed with that approach. Dan stated that he will consider whether he will offer other options to YES.

OPTIONS FOR YES IDENTIFIED

The group set the next meeting for July 12th at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m