

# **Proposed Revisions Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy, Chapter 3**

## **Habitat Standards and Monitoring Protocol**

In preparation for USFWS  
proposal to remove the  
Yellowstone grizzly bear from  
federal protection as a  
Threatened Species under the  
Endangered Species Act



**December, 2015  
Dan Tyers, GYE Grizzly Bear Habitat Coordinator**

## Chapter 3, 2007 Conservation Strategy

### Habitat Standards, Application Rules, and Monitoring

In 2007 the Conservation Strategy became the operative document for managing a delisted Yellowstone grizzly bear.

Chapter 3 directs management of grizzly bear Habitat via:

- **Habitat Standards** requiring habitat conditions be maintained at 1998 levels
- **Application rules** to guide implementation of Standards
- **Monitoring protocol** to track and report on habitat status



Standards limit human activity and reduce grizzly bear conflict, displacement, & mortality.



# **Revisions Proposed for Chapter 3, Conservation Strategy Habitat Standards and Monitoring Protocol**

## **License for Revisions**

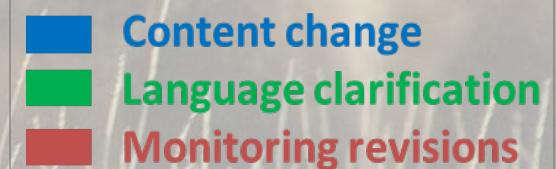
- ☐ Conservation Strategy is not a static document
- ☐ Monitors population & habitat with Adaptive Management
- ☐ Subject to revision based on best science available

## **Proposed Revisions include:**

- ✓ Body of text revamped (wordsmithing)
- ✓ Modifications and Clarifications after a 2007-2015 test drive
- ✓ Updated with recent literature findings
- ✓ No substantive change in Habitat Standards

# Conservation Strategy: Proposed Revisions to Habitat Monitoring

1. Cumulative Effects Model (CEM)
  2. Exceptions to 1998 Secure Habitat Baseline
  3. Seasonal Open Motorized Access Route Density (OMARD)
  4. Definition of Developed Sites
  5. Dispersed Campsites as Mitigation
  6. Roads acquired via Land Exchange
  7. Power Line and/or Utility Corridors
  8. Monitoring Major Food Groups
  9. Monitoring Hunter Numbers
  10. Monitoring Private Land Development
- ❑ Status of Grizzly Bear Forest Plan Amendment





# Cumulative Effects Model (CEM)

## Current Strategy:

- CEM, designed in 1980s, was the requisite tool for estimating habitat quality and effectiveness when evaluating project impacts.

## Proposed revision:

- Abandon CEM in the new Conservation Strategy

## Rationale:

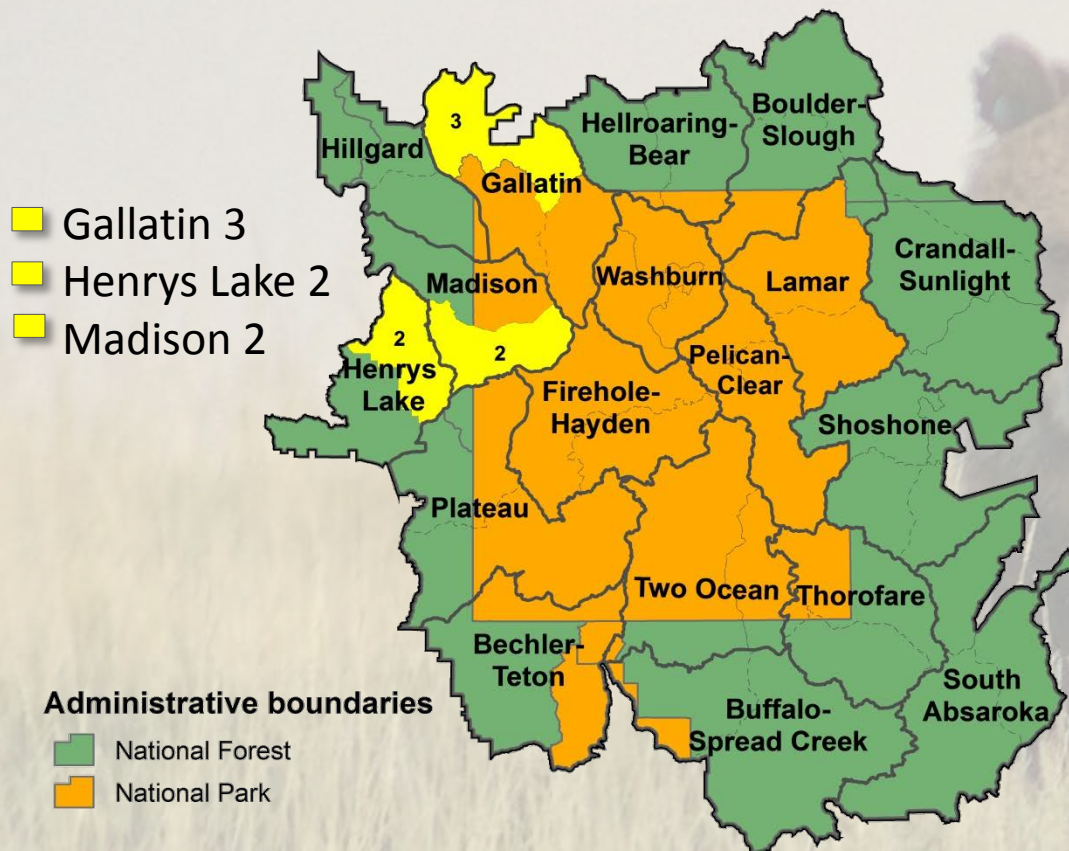
★ CEM has been replaced with Motorized Access Model, a user-friendly tool quantifying impacts on secure habitat and road density.

- CEM is based on obsolete data formats no longer supported
- Computer code requires complete overhaul
- High maintenance, complex, and difficult to implement & interpret
- Model limited to inside the GBRZ
- Numerous coefficients lack ground validation
- Spatial data layers are out-of-date

# Exceptions to 1998 Secure Habitat Baseline

## Current Strategy:

- Secure habitat will be maintained at or improved upon 1998 levels
- 3 subunits identified in 2007 as needing improvement ABOVE 1998 levels.





# Exceptions to 1998 Secure Habitat Baseline

## Current Strategy:

- Secure habitat will be maintained at or improved upon 1998 levels
- 3 subunits identified in 2007 as needing improvement ABOVE 1998 levels.

## Proposed revision:

- Establish new baseline at current Travel Plan levels

Subunit	% Secure		Gain (Acres)
	1998	2014	
Gallatin 3	55.3	72.0	16.7 %
Henrys Lake 2	45.7	51.5	5.8 %
Madison 2	66.5	67.5	1.0 %

## Rationale:

- This provision for improvement was in the 2007 Conservation Strategy
- Areas with potential for improvement fell inside Gallatin N.F.
- Timing of improvement was set to match GNF Travel Plan
- Revision satisfies intent of 2007 Strategy and comply with Secure Standards

# Seasonal Open Motorized Access Route Density (OMARD)

## Current Strategy:

- OMARD measures the density of motorized routes open to the public 1 or more days during a season
- OMARD is measured for 2 distinct seasons
- S1 = March 1 – July 15                      S2 = July 16 – November 30

## Proposed revision:

- Measure OMARD for entire non-denning season (March 1 – November 30)

## Rationale:

- Timing of route closures don't correspond to grizzly bear seasons
- Seasonal dates may vary due to weather conditions
- Very little difference in OMARD for seasons 1 and 2



# Definition of Developed Sites

## Current Strategy:

- **Developed Sites are not defined.**

## Proposed revision:

- **Craft definition of Developed Sites**

## Rationale:

- **Eliminate confusion**
- **Easier to track developed sites**
- **Compatible with NCDE definition**

**Developed sites** refer to those sites or facilities on public land with features intended to accommodate administrative and public recreational use.

Such sites typically are identified or advertised via visitor maps or information displays as discernable destination sites promoted by the agency.

Developed sites are often associated with human activities that may disrupt grizzly bear use of habitat, or have attractants that potentially lead to increased human-bear conflicts.

Examples of developed sites include, but are not limited to: campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, boat launches, rental cabins, summer homes, lodges, service stations, restaurants, visitor centers and administrative sites.

# Definition of Developed (Administrative) Sites

## Current Strategy:

- **Administrative sites are a subset of Developed sites**

## Proposed revision:

- **Craft definition of Administrative sites**

## Rationale:

- **Eliminate confusion**
- **Easier to track developed sites**
- **Compatible with NCDE definition**

**Administrative sites** are those sites or facilities constructed for use primarily by government employees to facilitate the administration and management of public lands.

Administrative sites are a subset of developed sites.

Examples include administrative headquarters, ranger stations, patrol cabins, park entrances, federal employee housing, and other facilities supporting government operations.



# Definition of Dispersed sites versus Developed Sites

## Current Strategy:

- **Dispersed Sites are not defined.**

## Proposed revision:

- **Distinguish Dispersed sites from Developed sites**

## Rationale:

- **Eliminate confusion in tracking sites**
- **Dispersed sites are not tracked with developed sites, but can be used as mitigation.**
- **Compatible with NCDE definition**

**Dispersed sites**, in contrast to developed or administrative sites, are those not associated with a developed site such as a front-country campground.

These sites are typically characterized as having no permanent agency-constructed features, have minimal to no site modifications, and may include primitive road access.

Dispersed sites are not counted toward developed sites.

# Dispersed Campsites

## Current Strategy Language:

- *“Consolidation and/or elimination of dispersed campsites is considered adequate mitigation for increases in human capacity at developed campgrounds if the new site capacity is equivalent to the dispersed camping eliminated”.*

## Proposed revision:

- Add language:

*“. . . and if future overnight use of the dispersed site(s) is definitively curtailed.”*

## Rationale:

- Requires that effort is made to monitor and ensure termination of overnight use at eliminated dispersed sites.



# Roads acquired via Land Exchange

## Current Strategy:

- Roads acquired via Land Exchange are not addressed.

## Proposed revision:

- Add following language to application rules:

*“Motorized routes on private land that post-date 1998 are not counted against this standard. However, for motorized roads or trails acquired through land exchanges or acquisitions that are desirable to maintain for public use, mitigation is strongly encouraged”.*

## Rationale:

- Strongly encouraging (as opposed to requiring) mitigation does not discourage land acquisition
- Lands under public ownership are better managed and limit future increases in access and human development

# Power Line and/or Utility Corridors

## Current Strategy:

- Power Line and/or Utility Corridors are not addressed.

## Proposed revision:

- Add language to application rules:

*“Access to power lines and or utility corridors for occasional and necessary maintenance service that does not require new route construction and is used only for administrative purposes related to power line/utility maintenance is allowed in secure habitat.”*

## Rationale:

- Assumes negligible risk for grizzly bear displacement or mortality.
- Distinguishes such maintenance from temporary projects with sustained traffic. (i.e., harvest, fuels reduction).



# Monitoring Major Food Groups

## Current Strategy:

- Require annual monitoring of 4 “Major” food groups:
  - Army Cutworm moths
  - Cutthroat Trout
  - Winter-killed ungulates
  - Whitebark Pine seeds

## Proposed revision:

- Change “Major” to **“HIGH-CALORIC”**
- Change “required annually” to **“WILL BE MONITORED AND REPORTED ANNUALLY AS LONG AS BUDGET ALLOWS”**.

## Rationale:

- “Major” falsely implies critical to grizzly bear survival
- Grizzlies are opportunistic omnivores with versatile foraging strategies
- These foods are available only to bears in certain parts of the GYE
- Budget may not always allow these food groups to be monitored

# Monitoring Hunter Numbers

## Current Strategy:

- Monitor the **number** of hunters recreating in the GBRZ

## Proposed revision:

- Change emphasis from number of hunters to **number of hunting-related grizzly bear conflicts and mortalities.**

## Rationale:

- Hunting-related conflicts & mortalities are more meaningful metrics for grizzly bear survival
- Conflicts and mortalities have been and continues to be closely monitored and reported by IGBST



# Monitoring Private Land Development

## Current Strategy:

- *“Provide qualitative & quantitative system for classifying potential of private land parcels as productive and secure grizzly bear habitat”*
- *“... direct management efforts, conservation actions by private organizations . . . in areas where private lands are being developed”*

## Proposed revision:

- Delete this section

## Rational:

- Not feasible
- Exceeds authority
- Alternatives exist to direct NGO efforts for habitat conservation on private lands

# Forest Plan Amendment & Superintendent's Compendia

## Regulatory mechanisms: How? When? Who?

### Current Strategy:

1. Habitat standards in the CS are incorporated into legal plans of National Forests and Parks via Amendment and Compendia
2. Requires Regional Foresters' and Park Director's signatures
3. Upon ESA delisting, GB managed as Sensitive Species

### Proposed action:

- ✓ Determine mechanism to update Amendment and Compendia with CS revisions and reactivate the status of these documents
- ✓ Inform Regional staff of CS revisions and proposed actions
- ✓ Incorporate a provision in Proposed Rule that ensures these mechanisms will be finalized concurrent with Final Delisting Rule

### Questions:

- Who leads this for the Forest Service? . . . for Park Service?