

Chapter 6 Implementation and Evaluation

Comment [HM1]: We are ok with all proposed changes in this document. We will be updating this document further but will not impact suggested changes by states.

Implementation

A new committee will replace the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee. The new committee, the Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee (YGCC), is the body that will coordinate management and promote the exchange of information about the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. The YGCC will inform the IGBC about the Yellowstone grizzly bear population for the benefit of grizzly bear conservation and management.

The Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee

Within 30 days of a final rule delisting the Greater Yellowstone Area grizzly bear population, the signatories of this Conservation Strategy will name their agency representatives to the YGCC. The person who was chairperson of the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee when the final rule changing status is published will call the first meeting of the YGCC. At this first meeting, the YGCC will elect a chairperson. Chairpersons will be elected at intervals determined by the members of the YGCC. The YGCC will meet at least two times each year; public notification of these meetings will be made by the chairperson or her/his representatives. The YGCC will strive for consensus, but when consensus cannot be achieved, decisions of the YGCC will be determined by majority vote. The details on locations and times of meetings and other business issues associated with the functioning of the YGCC will be determined at the first meeting.

YGCC members' expenses will be paid by their respective agencies.

YGCC authorities include:

- Revise or amend the Conservation Strategy based on the best biological data and the best available science. Any such amendments will be subject to public review and comment. Amendments will be made by the YGCC with a majority vote.
- Establish meeting rules and procedures, and chairperson election rules for the committee.
- Seek funding to further the conservation of the Yellowstone grizzly bear by implementing this Conservation Strategy. Each agency is responsible for seeking the necessary funding to carry out the tasks assigned in this Conservation Strategy.

Some primary activities of the YGCC are:

- Coordinate implementation of this Conservation Strategy
- Ensure that population and habitat data are collected annually by the IGBST, as specified in this Conservation Strategy, and evaluated to assess current status of the grizzly bear population
- Share information and implement management actions in a coordinated fashion
- Identify management, research, and financial needs to successfully implement the coordinated Conservation Strategy
- Implement a Biology and Monitoring Review as necessary and submit a petition for relisting as appropriate to ensure agency responsiveness to changing circumstances of the grizzly or its habitat in the Greater Yellowstone Area
- Appoint a chairperson and members of the Information and Education Team, and coordinate information and education efforts

This committee does not supersede the authority of the management agencies beyond the specific actions agreed to as signatories of this Conservation Strategy.

YGCC membership will consist of representatives of the following, each having one vote:

Federal	National parks: Yellowstone and Grand Teton National forests: Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Custer, Gallatin, and Shoshone One Bureau of Land Management representative The Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey
State wildlife agencies	Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming
Local government	One representative
Tribal	One representative from each Native American tribe with sovereign powers over reservation lands within the ecosystem

Three teams, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST), the Habitat Modeling Team (CEM), and the Information and Education Team (I & E) will perform necessary tasks and report to the YGCC.

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team

In order to understand the dynamics of grizzly bears throughout the GYA, a need for centralized responsibility to collect, manage, analyze, and distribute science-based information was identified. To meet this need, in 1973 agencies formed the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, a cooperative effort between the U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the state wildlife agencies of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.

Since 1974, the IGBST has published 238164 scientific papers on the grizzly bear. A complete list of these papers can be found at: <http://www.nrmssc.usgs.gov/research/igbstpub.pdf>. Quantitative data on grizzly bear abundance, distribution, survival, mortality, nuisance activity, and bear foods are critical to formulating management strategies and decisions. The IGBST coordinates data collection and analysis on an ecosystem scale, prevents overlap of efforts, and pools limited economic and human resources.

The IGBST will continue to function under this Conservation Strategy after delisting.

The responsibilities of the IGBST are to:

- Conduct both short- and long-term research projects addressing information needs for bear management
- Monitor the bear population, including status and trend, numbers, reproduction, and mortality
- Monitor grizzly bear habitats, foods, and the impacts of humans
- Provide technical support to agencies and other groups responsible for the immediate and long-term management of grizzly bears in the GYA
- Take the lead in preparing a Biology and Monitoring Review with staff support from the YGCC in response to deviations from required population or habitat standards

The USGS employee who is the lead biologist for USGS on the Yellowstone ecosystem grizzly bear population chairs the IGBST and will call meetings at least twice each year. The majority of funding for the IGBST comes from USGS but additional funding and in-kind efforts are made by all agencies (see Appendix H). The IGBST will report its findings to the YGCC.

Comment [A2]: Cumulative Effects Model is obsolete, I would defer to USFS for final say on language but we can still maintain language on a habitat team and remove language pertaining to CEM.

Comment [A3]: This should suffice for total number since 1974, some are in review or about to be published but this is representative in my opinion and pulled from IGBST website

The Habitat Modeling Team

The habitat standards and many of the habitat monitoring items identified in the Strategy require the use of cartographic modeling and the intensive maintenance of geographic information system databases. Computer technology is constantly changing and assessment protocols must be updated as software and hardware are replaced. Models used to evaluate these parameters require continual reevaluation and testing. A coordinated approach to database maintenance and monitoring is necessary for success. [The cumulative effect model was deemed inappropriate for use relative to future grizzly bear recovery and therefore land management agencies will adopt 1998 Habitat Standards for the PCA and DMA in order to provide for secure habitat for the GYA grizzly bear population in perpetuity \(see Chapter 3\).](#)

The primary responsibilities of the Habitat Modeling Team are:

- Coordinate annual updates of the motorized access database
- Coordinate annual evaluation of motorized access route density and secure habitat
- ~~Coordinate updates of the CEM (Cumulative Effects Model) vegetation layer for changes due to timber harvest, fire, and insects and disease~~
- ~~Coordinate periodic update of the CEM human activities database~~
- Coordinate periodic evaluation of habitat effectiveness
- Document annually any changes in developed sites, livestock allotments, or permitted sheep numbers and maintain associated databases
- Ensure all units have the tools and the training to evaluate motorized access route density and secure habitat for projects
- Evaluate the need for changes in ways to evaluate motorized access route density, secure habitat, and habitat effectiveness, and make recommendations to the YGCC on such changes, as necessary
- Set and maintain standards, definitions, values, formats and processes for collecting and updating data and assessment models, and maintaining data consistency between units.
- Coordinate with the IGBST for reporting annual monitoring items

Members of the Habitat Modeling Team will include biologists and GIS specialists from each of the six national forests and two national parks in the GYA, and a database coordinator. The Habitat Modeling Team will report to the YGCC.

The Information and Education Team

Successful maintenance of a recovered grizzly population in the Yellowstone area requires joint understanding of issues, sharing of knowledge (including new science and results of monitoring), and open communication among agencies, tribes, elected officials, non-governmental groups and organizations, and the public. The goals of the Information and Education (I & E) Team are:

- Increase public support for and compliance with agency management actions to maintain a secure Yellowstone area grizzly bear population
- Utilize all possible modern technology and media resources to help decrease grizzly bear/human conflicts while still maintaining maximum access to natural resources for both humans and grizzly bears
- Increase an understanding of grizzly bears and their habitat

- Foster information sharing to ensure maximum resource, policy, and scientific informational exchange among agencies, tribes, elected officials, interest groups, local residents, and the public.
- Provide for meaningful public involvement through use of open houses, direct mailings, and media campaigns to inform the public about agency decisions relating to grizzly bear habitat and population management activities and other management actions that may affect local residents, landowners, tribes, and users

Members of the Information and Education Team will include I & E specialists from the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the state wildlife agencies of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The I & E Team will report to the YGCC.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the effectiveness of grizzly bear conservation measures detailed in this Conservation Strategy will be an ongoing process shared by all the members of the Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee.

As detailed in the monitoring portion of this strategy, the IGBST will take the lead in preparing an annual monitoring report with staff support from the YGCC. Agencies responsible for monitoring major population and habitat parameters are listed in Appendix I. Monitoring results and analyses will be presented to the YGCC by the IGBST. If there are deviations from any of the population and/or habitat standards stipulated in this Conservation Strategy, a Biological and Monitoring Review would be initiated. The IGBST is given this task as they are the preparers of the annual monitoring reports and are therefore most able to assess deviations from the population or habitat standards and the efforts of each agency to complete their monitoring tasks necessary to produce the monitoring data for the annual report.

Biology and Monitoring Review

Under this Conservation Strategy, a Biology and Monitoring Review is a process carried out by the IGBST. A Biology and Monitoring Review examines management of habitat, populations, or efforts of participating agencies to complete their required monitoring. Biology and Monitoring Reviews will be undertaken after the annual summary of monitoring information presented to the YGCC and in response to deviations from required population or habitat standards. Any YGCC member agency also can request that a Biology and Monitoring Review be considered. Such consideration would be a topic for discussion by the YGCC and the review would be initiated based on the decision of the YGCC. The Biology and Monitoring Review process will be completed within six months and the resulting written report presented to the YGCC and made available to the public. The IGBST is not responsible for completing impact analyses for projects proposed by any agency; such analyses are the responsibility of the agency making the proposal.

The purposes of a Biology and Monitoring Review are:

- To identify the reasons why particular demographic or habitat objectives have not been achieved and to recommend modifications to the YGCC for changes as necessary
- To consider potential impacts of a proposed action of concern to one or more members of the YGCC, or
- To consider departures by one or more agencies from the monitoring effort required

under this Conservation Strategy and to recommend plans to the YGCC to ensure that monitoring efforts be maintained as per the standards in this document, or

- To consider and establish a scientific basis for possible changes in management due to changed conditions in the ecosystem and make those recommendations to the YGCC
- Make recommendations as to whether a petition for relisting should be submitted

Biology and Monitoring Reviews will be based on the best available science. Biology and

Monitoring Reviews will be submitted as written reports by the IGBST to the YGCC and made available to the public. The YGCC will respond to the Biology and Monitoring Review in a written form either through the minutes of the YGCC meeting or in specific Biology and Monitoring Review response documents, as necessary. The purpose of the YGCC response is to address the issues(s) raised in the Biology and Monitoring Review with an explanation or management changes as necessary. In the case of a deviation from monitoring efforts required under this Conservation Strategy, the response will identify the means to be implemented by the YGCC to ensure continued population and/or habitat monitoring efforts as required in this document.

A Biology and Monitoring Review is generally triggered by negative deviations from the desired conditions established in this Conservation Strategy for population, mortality reduction, and habitat parameters; however, the IGBST can recommend a Biology and Monitoring Review to the YGCC if they deem it necessary.

A Biology and Monitoring Review will make recommendations as to whether a petition for relisting should be made. This recommendation shall be based upon the magnitude of the threat that the deviation from the desired condition poses to the maintenance of a recovered population. The YGCC has to formally agree with a recommendation from the IGBST to petition for relisting.

If the situation, after completion of the Biology and Monitoring Review, is such that some or all of the desired population and habitat conditions specified in this Conservation Strategy are not being met, and cannot be met in the opinion of the YGCC, then the YGCC will submit to the Fish and Wildlife Service a petition for relisting. In the case of a vote on this issue, a simple majority is necessary.

Petition for Relisting

There are two processes by which relisting the Yellowstone grizzly population can be initiated:

1. Receipt of a petition from any entity such as the YGCC, an organization, or a citizen
2. A status review initiated by the Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if a species should be a candidate species listed by the normal process, or should be emergency-listed by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Under Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act, a petition from an individual or organization to relist this population will initiate a status review, if the Fish and Wildlife Service determines that the petition is warranted. To be warranted, such a petition must present credible scientific information to support the petition. The YGCC can petition the Fish and Wildlife Service to relist the Yellowstone grizzly bears. The Fish and Wildlife Service is to perform a status review upon receipt of such a petition that contains sufficient information to demonstrate that the request to relist is warranted. A relisting petition from the YGCC should be accompanied by the available specific biological data on the population and its habitat sufficient to judge its status as a recovered population as per the requirements of this Conservation Strategy. A

status review will evaluate the factors affecting the population and result in a finding that summarizes the status of the population and recommends listing or not. For purposes of a status review, the status of the entire Greater Yellowstone Area grizzly bear population would be considered.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can unilaterally initiate a status review to determine ~~whether the~~ Yellowstone grizzly bears should be a candidate species and be added to the species to be listed. This could be accomplished independently of the YGCC based on Fish and Wildlife Service concerns about the population and/or its habitat. Based on a review of a petition or a status review initiated by the Fish and Wildlife Service, if the Fish and Wildlife Service finds serious and imminent threats to the population as per the criteria of the Endangered Species Act in Section 4(a)(1), the species could be immediately considered for relisting or could be relisted under emergency regulations, per Section 4(b)(7).