

Important habitat conclusions in the rule that allow us to state that the threats from these habitat conditions no longer threaten the species.

The ESA requires that:

For each threat/stressor identified we need to discuss how it impacts the species, what has been done to address the threat, and whether we consider the threat to have been ameliorated now and into the foreseeable future. The analysis needs to make the argument that we have analyzed the threats and we find they have been eliminated/reduced/ameliorated now and into the foreseeable future such that the species no longer meets the definition of E or T under the Act.

Here are the key conclusion statements (not the entire section) for each of the specific habitat threats. Keep these in mind when you are editing the habitat section of the CS. If these conclusions will be changed by your edits, then we need to discuss the edits.

Motorized Access Management

In the 1998 baseline, secure habitat comprised 45.4 to 100 percent of the total area within a given subunit with an average of 85.6 percent throughout the entire PCA (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp 133–144, Appendix F). These levels of secure habitat have been successfully maintained and will continue to be maintained or improved, as directed by the Strategy (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, p. 135, Table 2 in Appendix F). Because of the positive effect that secure habitat has on grizzly bear survival and reproduction, the Conservation Strategy does not allow any net decrease in these levels of secure habitat inside the PCA so it can continue to function as a source area for grizzly bears in the GYA. Therefore, we determine that decreases in secure habitat inside the PCA do not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future.

Developed Sites

The National Parks and National Forests within the PCA will manage developed sites at 1998 levels within each bear management subunit, with some

exceptions for administrative and maintenance needs (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp. 38–56). “Developed sites” refer to those sites or facilities on public land with features intended to accommodate public use or recreation. Such sites are typically identified or advertised via visitor maps or information displays as identifiable destination sites promoted by the agency. 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, administrative sites, and permitted resource exploration or extraction sites such as oil and gas exploratory wells, production wells, plans of operation for mining activities, and work camps. “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 counted toward developed sites and examples include headquarters, ranger stations, patrol cabins, park entrances, federal employee housing, and other facilities supporting government operations. In contrast to developed or administrative sites, “Dispersed 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, are temporary in nature, have minimal to no site modifications, have informal spacing, and possibly include primitive road access. Dispersed sites are not counted toward developed sites. Developed sites on public lands are currently inventoried and tracked in GIS databases. As of 1998, there were 592 developed sites on public land within the PCA. As of 2014, the

number of developed sites on public lands had decreased to 579 (Landenburger 2014, in litt.).

Comment [JF1]: Update citation

The primary concern related to developed sites is direct mortality from bear/human encounters and unsecured attractants. Secondary concerns include temporary or permanent habitat loss and displacement due to increased length of time of human use and increased human disturbance to surrounding areas. In areas of Suitable Habitat inside the PCA, the National Park Service and the Forest Service enforce food storage rules aimed at decreasing grizzly bear access to human foods (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp. 23–24). These regulations will continue to be enforced and are in effect for nearly all currently occupied grizzly bear habitat within the GYA grizzly bear DPS boundaries (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp. 23–24). In conclusion, because the National Parks and National Forests within the PCA will manage developed sites at 1998 levels within each bear management subunit and food storage rules will be enforced on these public lands, we determine that increases in developed sites inside the PCA do not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future.

Comment [RS2]: Placeholder: There are still a couple of pockets of suitable habitat that do not contain food storage orders. Specifically, there are small areas at the southern end of Wind Rivers (Shoshone & BT NF's), & northern end of B-T NF (Wyoming Range). We are working to get this changed.

Livestock Allotments

Because there will be no net increase in cattle or sheep allotments allowed on public lands inside the PCA, we determine that livestock allotments inside the PCA do not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future.

Mineral and Energy Development

Under the conditions of the Strategy, any new project will be approved only if it conforms to secure habitat and developed site standards (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp. 44–45). For instance, any project that reduces the amount of secure habitat permanently will have to provide replacement secure habitat of similar habitat quality (based on our scientific understanding of grizzly bear habitat) and any change in developed sites will require mitigation equivalent to the type and extent of the impact, and such mitigation must be in place before project initiation or be provided concurrently with project development as an integral part of the project plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp. 40–41). For projects that temporarily change the amount of secure habitat, only one project is allowed in any subunit at any time (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, pp. 40–41). Mitigation of any project will occur within the same subunit and will be proportional to the type and extent of the project (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007, p. 40–41). In conclusion, because any new mineral or energy development will be approved only if it conforms to the secure habitat and developed site standards, we determine that such development inside the PCA does not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future.

Recreation

Motorized recreation during the summer, spring, and fall inside the PCA will be limited to existing roads as per the standards in the Strategy that restrict increases in roads or motorized trails. Similarly, recreation at developed sites such as lodges, downhill ski areas, and campgrounds will be limited by the developed sites habitat standard described in the Strategy. The number and capacity of existing developed sites

on public lands will not increase once delisting occurs. For a more complete discussion of projected increases in recreation in the GYA National Forests, see the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan Amendment for Grizzly Bear Habitat Conservation for the GYA National Forests (USDA Forest Service 2006a, pp. 176–189).

This potential stressor on the GYA grizzly bear DPS would exist regardless of listed status and will be addressed in the same way whether this population is listed or delisted: through ongoing information and education (I & E) campaigns. These outreach efforts are an important contributing factor to successful grizzly bear conservation and would continue under the Strategy. In conclusion, because the National Parks and National Forests within the PCA will continue to educate visitors on its lands about how to recreate safely in bear country and avoid grizzly bear/human conflicts, we determine that increases in recreation do not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future.

Snowmobiling

Because there are no data or information suggesting snowmobile use in the GYA is affecting the survival or recovery of the grizzly bear population, or even individual bears, we determine that snowmobiling does not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future. Yet, because the potential for disturbance and impacts to reproductive success exists, monitoring will continue to support adaptive management decisions about snowmobile use in areas where disturbance is documented or likely to occur.

Vegetation Management

Changes in the distribution, quantity, and quality of cover are not necessarily detrimental to grizzly bears as long as they are coordinated on a BMU or subunit scale to ensure that grizzly bear needs are addressed throughout the various projects occurring on multiple jurisdictions at any given time. Although there are known, usually temporary, impacts to individual bears from timber management activities, these impacts have been adequately mitigated using the IGBC Guidelines in place since 1986 and will continue to be managed at levels acceptable to the grizzly bear population under the Conservation Strategy. Therefore, we determine that vegetation management inside the PCA does not constitute a substantial threat to the GYA grizzly bear DPS now, or in the foreseeable future.