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Yellowstone Grizzlies Are Recovered Says Grizzly Recovery Coordinator

By Edward O'Brien • 18 hours ago



A radio-collared Grizzly bear sow and cub.

The federal government's point man on grizzly bears says the Yellowstone ecosystem's grizzly population should be removed from the endangered species list.

Chris Servheen says the most accurate population estimate shows between 1,000 and 1,200 grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem.

"The point is that the Yellowstone population has recovered at this time. It is very healthy and robust. We just haven't made the delisting decision yet," Servheen says.

Servheen is the Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

He met last week with other federal, state, tribal and local grizzly bear managers.

Servheen says there are now over three times the number of grizzlies in the Yellowstone area than there were in 1981.

As bear numbers grow, so do the chances of conflict with humans.

"Managing bears requires that balancing of the needs of bears with the needs of people and that's what we've done. That's what's gotten us to the recovered population we have today."

Servheen notes there's a big difference between a recovered bear population and an official delisting. That decision rests with the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"He will make that decision when and if he's satisfied that all the conditions are right. He has many things on his plate and I frankly don't know when he'll make that decision."

Servheen says there were 23 known and probable grizzly deaths last year in the Yellowstone ecosystem. Servheen, characterizes that rate as stable and in line with data from the past 15 years.

What's more, he says a reduction in the amount of one of the bears' food sources is having little to no impact.

"There's been no real effect that we can measure on the reduction in White Bark Pine (nuts) due to Blister Rust and Mountain Pine Beetle, so the bears seem to be doing well. They're expanding their range. There's now about 19,000 square miles of occupied habitat now. The bears are pushing out on all sides, moving out into private lands and various places in the system."

A decision to delist the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear population has not been made. If such a proposal were to be issued it would come from the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.