

Grizzly Bear Conservation Meeting 2/24/14

Goals: To seek common ground and opportunities to avoid conflict and litigation if the Service again proposes to delist. First, we will identify issues of concern to stakeholders regarding grizzly conservation in a post-listing environment, as well as recovery of management dependent species more generally. Then we will discuss how we can build a more positive relationship with recovery of grizzly bears and other management dependent species. We will also discuss next steps in terms of grizzly conservation.

Andrew Wetzler, NRDC: regarding concerns about a post-listing environment, there are five general areas that we believe are important to consider:

- 1. Monitoring and triggers.**
- 2. Increasing habitat protections.**
- 3. Commitment to natural, not artificial, connectivity.** We don't like the precedent of animals being moved around to maintain diversity.
- 4. Funding:** Is money available within the federal government to sustain populations on public lands over the long term?
- 5. What will be the status of all the population segments?** We have to think holistically.

Athan Manuel, Sierra Club: We have similar concerns, especially about funding- **will this be a long term monitoring process?**

- We are also concerned about the impact of climate change on these conservation efforts, and whether the Service has fully considered the potential long-term effects on grizzly habitat.

Bart Melton, NPCA: **It's essential to collaborate with private landowners.**

- Hunts have to be closely monitored.
- The Park Service has to have a hand in grizzly conservation, especially in regards to the hunting management issue.

Scott Christensen, GYC: **Human-bear conflict is a major issue and a barrier to connectivity.**

- In Montana specifically, we would like to see strategies and funding address the human contact issue.
- **What would it look like if the Greater Yellowstone population and other populations connected?**
 - A goal to have a metapopulation within 10 years?
- We shouldn't have a set line that bears will surpass- this will just increase contact with humans and increase mortality. **We want to expand their range, and need flexible borders.**

Kieran Suckling, CBD: The analysis of climate change as a threat is important (especially regarding its effects on whitebark pine).

- We are concerned about bears coming into increased contact with humans while looking for alternate food sources.

- Another major issue is demographics. Non-Service studies have suggested that the increase in population may not be as large as FWS thought. There is also the indication that the population has struggled with decline since 2006. Essentially, there is a potential scientific conflict with the existing Service model.
 - **The Service should make its data available to 3rd party demographers.**
 - If a review by independent scientists reaches the same conclusion as the Service, CBD will support the delisting.
 - **The Service should consider issuing a new model- it would eliminate a potentially huge flash point, and CBD would support delisting if it is upheld by the new model.**
 - This could be initiated as part of your own process- it doesn't have to be perceived as you not trusting your own data.
- Also, if the Greater Yellowstone is delisted, the recovery of other populations will be an issue. If the Service delists a DPS, all bears not designated as part of that or any other DPS or subspecies will be vulnerable to destruction by essentially existing in limbo, from a management and legal perspective.
 - **FWS should commit to a clear, binding, short-term listing of other DPS to protect bears not included in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.**

Jamie Clark, Defenders of Wildlife: Predator management is an escalating issue in the West.

- The federal relationship with states has been disappointing for the environmental community, especially on wolves. **Everyone is questioning what's next. This delisting is just one piece of the larger picture.**

Tim Preso, EJ: It shouldn't be a given that human-assisted translocation is an accepted method for populations. It should only be the last resort.

Scott: **Coordination between states regarding their conservation plans is important.**

- Dealing with triggers around mortality is critical and has to be addressed in coordination.
- This has to be made clear to the public. Make the plan as binding and enforceable as possible so one state can't hijack the whole population.
- Are there examples of post-delisting collaboration that is clearly defined? This includes federal agencies, states, non-profits and nongovernmental partners, etc.
- One advantage to us is that it's politically necessary for governors to sign on.

Leda Huta, ESC: **It's one thing to agree on a biological recovery; it's another thing to maintain collaboration over time.**

Tom Tidwell, USFS: I'm hopeful that we might be able to allow bears into currently unoccupied habitat rather than their conflict areas.

Neil Kornze, Acting Director, BLM: **BLM will play a role as a connector, especially as climate change affects ecosystems.**

Rachel Jacobson, Acting ASFWP: One of the most difficult aspects of this plan will be the relationship between states and private landowners.

- Stephen Guertin, FWS Deputy Director: In light of what Rachel said, it's important to increase partnerships at all levels.

Jamie: We need to know where FWS is on this—is a decision on grizzlies imminent?

- Dan: **This process is happening through the normal course of business**- after the IGBC recommendation, we are moving it forward. States will expect a decision and we will go back to the states (at the North American conference) with a plan.

Gary Frazer, FWS Assistant Director for Ecological Services: **It's important to consider where the line is between FWS' ESA work and the work done by non-governmental conservation organizations and states.**

- The difference is not clear and we have to look at priorities of the ESA in terms of federal funding and appropriations, and look at management by states or other agencies.
- This is a huge issue for the federal-state relationship.

Jamie: We have concerns about the level of responsibility of the ESA for covering so much of the management.

- There is also the associated issue of holding other groups accountable for the long-term security of species that the FWS has declared recovered.
- **One major concern is that if Greater Yellowstone and Continental Divide are delisted, Cabinet-Yak will never recover. This is especially a concern of states.**

Dan: If we can frame a discussion that's respectful and doesn't create controversy in itself, we can come up with a new model for species management.

Scott: The food storage order (for example, Beaverhead Deerlodge): as bear population expands, there will be waves of increased human contact and possibly mortality.

Tom: For us, food storage is not really an issue, but this delisting is an opportunity to get out ahead of potential issues and make predictions so we can prevent mortality and human-bear interactions.

- **We also have to ask what we can do now so that 10 years from now we'll be in a different place with this species.**
 - We shouldn't think that because of this delisting, Cabinet-Yak would never recover.

Scott: We have to look at the difference between a demographic monitoring area vs. a primary conservation area (some bears will be outside the primary conservation area).

- **With Yellowstone, if we are stuck with a fixed bubble rather than an adaptable boundary, it could increase mortality faster because it is not able to expand over time.** The core would be safe for bears, but the edges would not.
- On public land, bears will increase livestock mortality. On private land, bears usually affect orchards, gardens, and trash. Private land is in some ways a larger issue because most human-bear contact will occur there.
- **FWS should take this grizzly issue as an opportunity to plan long-term for their relationships with partners.**
 - Could management be under LCCs?

- o Or could it be based on public-private partnerships with NGOs?
- It's about keeping both people and bears safe.

Andrew: We have to get beyond 5 years of monitoring- have to discuss how long and how often.

- **We need hard triggers to initiate status review.**
- If there's a modification in state law or policy, the Service should be able to initiate status review (to avoid a wolf-type situation).

Dan: How are we going to drive monitoring program?

- We don't have a problem with hard triggers or initiating status review in light of state law, but have to consider how changes in state law will affect populations.
- **Our maximum leverage is prior to listing and prior to delisting.**

Jamie: Is there uniform agreement among parties as to what recovery looks like?

- On wolves, there were disparate opinions so we couldn't be specific about triggers. **We have to have a definition of recovery.**

Bart: Modifying the demographic monitoring area can help with connectivity:

- The solution has to address connectivity as well as private landowner concerns.
- This is also an opportunity to define connectivity on a federal level.

Tim: There's going to be an incentive on the part of states to control mortality so they can have hunting.

Next Steps

Dan: Historically, we have been good at building trust and camaraderie, we just have to build on that.

- **We need to tell states that in order to move forward with the delisting, we need a strong regional framework.**
 - o Also, we have to find a legally defensible way to come up with these requests and hold states accountable for their plans.
- What are potential pitfalls in talking to states?
 - o Jamie Clark: What are their expectations for managing predators? Important to ask that question. We also have to compare and contrast wolves and bears so they're not lumped together.
 - o Tom Tidwell: We have to remember that it's harder for some states to rely on the science, for multiple reasons.
- If we have a regional framework, grizzlies could be a trophy and benefit the states.
 - o If we can get around the hunting issue, it can be cast as a traditional trophy issue.

Bart: Have to engage governments on the front end and line everything up in a thoughtful way (consider what it will mean to the person/group hearing it).

Andrew: **Some of our groups are prepared to litigate- we have to set up working groups to engage everyone on this together.**

Kieran: Demographic studies affect timing- they should be thought through right away.

- Important to think about what the Service will do with other grizzly populations
- Make sure people have clear expectations about this delisting and other decisions.

Gary: Concerned about the idea that FWS isn't a scientific source without 3rd party corroboration- we usually don't need independent consultation. Will this 3rd party consultation always be seen as necessary in the future?

- Kieran: Regarding Gary's concern, we definitely don't want to create a situation where whenever someone disagrees, we have to go to a 3rd party. But we are concerned that those outside FWS don't have full access to do a model.

Dan: Think about ways for us to frame a discussion outside of FACA.