

1. Comment: There should be a criterion about connectivity. There should be identified protected connectivity areas like the draft Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy proposes.

Response: As stated in the Final Rule (72 FR 14866) and upheld by the Courts, connectivity is not mandatory to ensure genetic isolation will not threaten the GYE grizzly bear population. That being said, allowing the opportunity for animals to move into or out of the GYE is desirable because it increases the ability of the population to respond to changes in environmental conditions and/or other factors we have no authority or control over such as private land development or scientific uncertainty. [As documented in the Deere Lodge/ N Butte areas over the past ten years, by limited bear captures, mortalities and sightings](#), we would expect bears to gradually reoccupy habitat between the GYE and the NCDE in the Highland and Tobacco Root mountain ranges. [Current evidence indicates grizzly bears in these areas have been bears genetically linked to the NCDE. GYE grizzly bears would be expected to eventually move north into these areas.](#) To [provide allow](#) the opportunity for non-nuisance grizzly bears to reoccupy these mountain ranges at low densities, grizzly bears will not be captured and removed unless there are conflicts or demonstrated threats to human safety. As is the case inside the Monitoring Area, management emphasis will be on conflict prevention and response. Attractant storage rules are in place on National Forest lands. Additional habitat protections are not necessary for recovery.

2. Comment: The Centennials, Gravelly's, Snowcrest, Wyoming, and Wind River Mountain ranges should be included in the Monitoring Area.

Response: The Centennial, Gravelly, and Wind River Ranges are already in the monitoring area. The Wyoming Range is not included in the revised Monitoring Area due to the high risk of mortality resulting from grizzly bear/human conflicts in this peripheral area of current grizzly bear distribution. These unsuitable habitat areas do not permit grizzly bear reproduction or survival because bears that repeatedly come into conflict with humans or livestock are usually either relocated or removed from these areas. The Snowcrest range is not part of the Monitoring Area but discretionary mortalities will be minimized here. Grizzly bears will not be captured and removed from this area unless there are conflicts or demonstrated threats to human safety.

[Note: Is some aspect of the following needed in the response above? The DMA is finite due to the areas we currently survey for bears. This is linked to operation costs and time \(we cannot survey everywhere in the allotted calendar window and keep the distinct individual aspect for scientific analysis or financially afford it\). Additionally, bears beyond the DMA are not critical to the overall GYE distinct population.](#)