



## WYOMING STOCK GROWERS ASSOCIATION

*Guardian of Wyoming's Cow Country since 1872*

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May 5, 2016

Public Comments Processing

Attn: Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2016-0042,

U.S. Fish and Wildlife, MS: BPHC,

5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

RE: Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Delisting

Dear FWS:

The Wyoming Stock Growers Association (WSGA) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the proposed delisting of the grizzly bear. WSGA represents ranchers and livestock producers across Wyoming. Many of our members graze within the GYE grizzly bear DPS and are annually impacted by the bears with loss and injury of livestock, reduces weight gains and conception rates of cattle and sheep, interruptions of grazing patterns with negative resource impacts, and significantly higher livestock management costs.

The GYE grizzly bear population has long been recovered. It should never have been re-listed and it is appropriate and imperative to proceed expeditiously with delisting at this time. WSGA concurs with your analysis in support of delisting.

Because the delisting proposal and the Draft Conservation Strategy are totally interrelated, our comments will be generally applicable to both documents.

It is WSGA's understanding and expectation that, once the grizzly bear has been delisted, management authority will revert to the states, subject to a five-year review and the authority of the FWS to relist if recovery goals are not maintained. Both the tone and many specific comments in the document indicate a level of continued FWS engagement that WSGA believes exceeds your authority under the ESA.

The designation of the grizzly bear as a "conservation reliant species" appears to be one such tool for the FWS to interfere with state management. WSGA requests that the FWS provide specific statutory and regulatory definitions for this terminology and the authority that accompanies such a designation.

Implementation of management direction provided for in the Conservation Strategy is dependent on the Memorandum of Understanding to which numerous federal and state agencies are anticipated to be signatories upon finalization of the delisting decision. It is

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dependent upon the good-faith commitment of these agencies, each bound by its own legal authority. For the delisting decision to state that the Conservation Strategy will remain in “perpetuity” or “indefinitely” is both beyond the legal authority of the FWS and a direct interference with the management authority of the state wildlife agencies and federal land agencies.

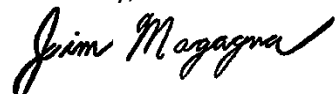
The Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA) as defined in the delisting proposal is “the area within which the population is annually surveyed and estimated and within which the total mortality limits apply, and is based on the suitable habitat area”. In the Conservation Strategy and in the delisting proposal this area has been expanded to include significant areas outside of the 2014 grizzly bear distribution boundary.

These areas, including the Big Sandy and Popo Agie Management Units on the southern end of the Wind River Mountains and a portion of the Greys River Management Unit on the Wyoming/Salt River Ranges are clearly identified in the Conservation Strategy [Figure7, Page 72] as “Socially unacceptable for GB recovery”. WSGA strongly objects to these areas being included in the DMA. In particular, protection of bears in the geographically narrow southern end of the Winds will necessarily lead to bear/human and bear/livestock conflicts on adjacent private and state lands.

In discussion of bear/livestock conflicts, the delisting proposal and Conservation Strategy repeatedly refer to “voluntary relinquishment” of grazing allotments. WSGA is familiar and has been engaged in several of these “voluntary relinquishments” in Wyoming, include those related to grizzly bear conflicts. Let us be clear that in nearly every instance, the relinquishment was driven by the inability to withstand the pressure of predation by bears and/or wolves or regulatory constraints imposed by the federal land agencies. The fact that some compensation may have been paid by NGOs does not negate the severe impacts of relinquishments on these ranchers and on our industry. The delisting proposal should reflect the reality that surrounds these occurrences.

In summary, the recovery of the grizzly bear population is due in large part to the management actions of state wildlife agencies and the strong commitment of state resources even while the species was under FWS jurisdiction. The time has arrived to turn the associated management authority back to the states and their citizens unencumbered by the continued driving hand of the FWS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Magagna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and last name "Magagna" clearly legible.

Jim Magagna  
Executive Vice President

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