



FULL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY



SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Plan title:** Reopening of the Public Comment Period for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Population of Grizzly Bear Proposed Delisting Rule
2. **DTS number:** 45T
3. **What is the action triggering this communications plan?** *(Please explain in no more than three sentences. Additional background information may be included in a separate appendix)*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has received the peer reviews and protective measures finalized by the States of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) population of grizzly bears. In light of this new information, we are reopening the comment period for 30 days to seek public input on the proposed delisting rule to classify the GYE as a Distinct Population Segment (DPS) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and remove (delist) it from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

4. **What is the proposed date to announce this action? Why has that date been selected?** *(Please note whether this date is flexible)*

August 25, 2016. This date is not court driven and is flexible; however, we are trying to keep to a tight timeline in order to complete a final rule by the end of calendar year 2016.

SECTION II: GOALS

5. **How do we want our communications to position the Service?**

- Communications will position the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a leader in wildlife conservation, whose collaborative work with federal, state and tribal partners has led to the recovery of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population.
- The Service is a conservation agency whose mission and authority do not extend to animal welfare issues. This is reflected in our decision-making, which is reasonable, defensible, based on the best available science, and aimed at preserving our nation's natural heritage for future generations.

6. **What are the immediate communications objectives?**

- The immediate communication objective is to inform all interested stakeholders that the Service is fulfilling a commitment to transparency by reopening the comment period on the proposal to delist the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears. The reason the

comment period is being reopened is because the peer reviews have been published and the final state regulations have been approved. We now are encouraging the public to provide input in light of these two new developments.

SECTION III: ASSESSING STAKEHOLDER INTEREST

7. **Target Audiences** *(Please name up to five target audiences in order of importance. These audiences should inform the messages and stakeholder contact lists below. Think about how narrow/broad you want your key audiences to be, remembering that in trying to communicate to everyone, you inevitably end up reaching no one)*

- 1) Native American Tribes
- 2) News Media
- 3) Congressional/elected officials
- 4) Partners in conservation, including federal agencies; state wildlife agencies; Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee; and non-government organizations
- 5) Landowners/residents in and near the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem
- 6) Outdoor enthusiasts and conservation-minded individuals who will appreciate the significance of this conservation success but may have doubts about the decision.

8. **Which groups or individuals (if any) may publicly oppose this action? What are their primary concerns?** *(This may include any or all of those described in Target Audiences and/or additional ones)*

- Tribes throughout the regions have increasingly spoken out against delisting the grizzly bear and trophy hunting that will occur if the population is delisted. Tribal members are very sensitive to the species and cite deep spiritual, historical, and cultural connections to grizzly bears, as well as strong opposition to the proposal of state-managed trophy hunts.
- Some environmental groups (*e.g.*, WildEarth Guardians, Earthjustice, Western Watersheds Project, Wyoming Wildlife Advocates, Natural Resources Defense Council, Center for Biological Diversity, and Sierra Club, among others) will likely oppose the delisting proposal because they believe the Yellowstone grizzly bear population should remain Threatened under the ESA until connectivity corridors have been re-established and the bear is recovered throughout the lower 48 states, and they generally do not trust state wildlife managers.
- Some Congressional members who are sympathetic to the NGO's community's concerns.

SECTION IV: KEY MESSAGES

9. What are our topline, big picture messages? *(List no more than three!)*

- 1) The Service is committed to transparency and public engagement in its rulemaking process. The Service welcomes additional public input on the proposal to delist the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears in light of the peer reviews and recently finalized state protective measures.
- 2) The majority of peer reviewers agree with the Service's conclusion that the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is biologically recovered and that the 2016 Draft Conservation Strategy, which is the post-delisting management plan, is sufficient to maintain a self-sustaining, recovered population. The peer reviewers are largely supportive of the Service's proposal to delist the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears.
- 3) The States of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming have approved a joint Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and have finalized protective measures to manage human-caused mortality of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. The Service has maintained these regulations needed to be in place before we would propose a final delisting rule.
- 4) The Service has reviewed the states' protective measures and its preliminary assessment is that these documents are consistent with the letter or intent of the regulatory requirements regarding human-caused mortality outlined in the proposed rule. The Service believes the regulatory framework, along with the Tri-State MOA, will maintain a recovered population of Yellowstone grizzly bears.
- 5) The purpose of the ESA is to prevent the extinction of imperiled species, to recover them, and return their management to state and tribal wildlife agencies. It is not the purpose of the ESA to list species in perpetuity, nor is the Act designed to protect individual delisted animals from hunting or other active management techniques. Once the science indicates a species or population has recovered, it is the obligation of the Service to delist it and return management authority to the states, so that it can focus its limited resources on those species that still require conservation attention.

10. What secondary messages are there? *(Divide these by audience if appropriate)*

Peer Reviews:

- 1) The Service has received five independent peer reviews on the Yellowstone grizzly bear population proposed delisting rule. It is the policy of the Service to conduct peer review on all proposed listing, delisting, and other similar actions. The Service typically selects these reviewers based on scientific expertise. In this case, given the high profile nature of the issue and the utmost interest in objectivity, we used a third party neutral contractor to select the peer reviewers.
- 2) No Service personnel in the Regional Office, either in management or staff, were involved in the vendor selection. The regional staff was involved with establishing the terms of reference that the third party vendor would use to evaluate potential peer

reviewers.

- 3) In the case of the peer review for the delisting of the Greater Yellowstone Distinct Population Segment of the grizzly bear, the Service used an Indefinite Quantities Contract. This is a nationally-bid contract in which a number of contractors will be selected for services that any program entity in the Service may use, including peer review. AMEC is one such company that successfully competed to be on this contract. On this contract vendors are rotated through in order, to make access for all vendors equal. For the purposes of the grizzly bear peer review, AMEC was next in line and was selected to manage the peer review.
- 4) The review itself was conducted by a panel of exceptionally-qualified academic experts with extensive experience with grizzly bears and other carnivores, predator-prey relationships, ecology, and similar fields.
- 5) The peer reviews were submitted anonymously and cannot be accredited to any one reviewer.
- 6) The Service is in the process of evaluating a few specific issues raised by the peer reviewers in greater depth. These issues include: evaluations of habitat; population monitoring and response rates; food monitoring; population objectives; and connectivity. We are just beginning our evaluation of these issues.

State Protective Measures:

- 7) Upon delisting, the primary management authority of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population outside national parks reverts to tribes and the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.
- 8) In the proposed rule, the Service stated that state regulations governing human-caused grizzly bear mortality must contain the following five elements:
 - a. Suspend all discretionary mortality inside the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA), except required for human safety, if the population falls below 600 grizzlies;
 - b. Suspend grizzly bear hunting inside the DMA if total mortality limits for any sex or age class of grizzly bears is met at any time during the year;
 - c. Female grizzly bears with young will not be available for recreational harvest;
 - d. Discretionary mortality will only be allowed if non-discretionary mortality does not meet or exceed total mortality limits for that year;
 - e. Any mortality that exceeds total mortality in any year will be subtracted from that age/sex class mortality limit for the following year to assure that long-term mortality levels remain within prescribed limits inside the DMA.
- 9) The Service has and will continue to work with federal and state agencies, tribes, elected officials, and other partners to ensure a healthy, thriving, and sustainable population of Yellowstone grizzly bears.

Tribal Consultation

10) The Service has and will continue to engage in government-to-government consultation with tribes on this issue. Any objections to delisting will be considered. Tribes have a tremendous amount of traditional ecological knowledge and scientific information to contribute to this matter, and their input is very important to us.

Issues in Public Comments

11) The Service is in the process of reviewing the issues raised in the first round of public comments. The Service will respond to these issues in its final rule.

SECTION V: IMPLEMENTATION

11. How will we reach our target audiences with our key messages? *(Explain the overarching strategy (e.g., major national media push vs. select media only), not individual tactics such as holding a media call, issuing a news release, etc.)*

- While this announcement will be of great interest in the GYE territory, national prominence of grizzly bears will make this a national-level issue with broad interest from multiple stakeholders. Hence congressional outreach will go beyond the Idaho, Montana, Wyoming delegations to include members of key Senate and House committees. Media outreach will target regional outlets, but also include major national publications.
- Phone calls and email notification prior to publication will be made to governors, state wildlife agencies, and the Chair of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. Individual briefings with subject matter experts will be held, if requested.
- The regional office will contact Tribal leaders to alert them to the comment period reopening.

12. Who is leading this communications effort? *(Check one)*

☒ **Region** ☐ **HQ** ☐ **Department** ☐ **Other (explain)**

The GYE territory is largely within Region 6, with portions in Region 1. However, other populations of grizzly bears span across the West. The broad public appeal of the grizzly bear and widespread media interest will expand attention on this announcement world-wide.

13. Which programs and/or regions does this issue involve? Are other federal agencies involved?

Regions 1, 6, and HQ External Affairs and Ecological Services. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Geological Survey.

14. Implementation timeline:

Date	Time	Tactic	Responsible
August 1-8, 2016		R6/R1/HQ/SOL grizzly bear team reviews notice and outreach	
August 9, 2016		R6 RO surnaming	R6 ES Kasdin
August 9, 2016	COB	Review outreach package and return any edits to Serena Baker	Brent Lawrence, R1 EA
August 12, 2016		SOL surname after HQ ES final review; HQ EA and CLA completes review of outreach plan	
August 15, 2016	COB	HQ ES sends surnaming packet and outreach plan to Director	HQ ES Frazer
August 16-19, 2016		Surnaming packet and outreach plan clears Director; Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and DOI	
August 22, 2016		HQ ES submits comment period reopening packet to <i>Federal Register</i>	HQ ES
August 23, 2016		Contact Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming Governors, Wildlife Agency Directors and Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Chair	R6 DRD Hogan
August 23, 2016		Notification of Congressionals, Hill staff and state/district congressional staff with embargoed press release.	HQ CLA Hausman R6 EA Baker

August 23, 2016		Tribal calls to six tribes	Noreen Walsh
August 24, 2016 (Day available in the Reading Room)	8 am MDT	Distribute press release	R6 EA Baker
August 24, 2016		Post press release on R6 website and FWS homepage. Also, post link to press release on social media	R6 EA Mansheim HQ EA Tinker
		Email Dear Interested Party Letter	Project Leaders
		Email Dear Tribal Letter	R6 EA ARD Muñoz
August 25, 2016 (Day notice publishes in Federal Register)		Email Dear Interested Party Letter to counties in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming	R6 ES

Comment [MR1]: Why only six?

15. Which communications tools are needed to support these strategies and tactics? *(Be as specific as possible about the products identified and who will produce them)*

Tool	Responsible	Due Date
Communications plan	R6 EA Baker and ES Grizzly Bear Team	August 8, 2016
News release	R6 EA Baker and ES Grizzly Bear Team	August 8, 2016
Interested Party Email/Tribal Letter	R6 EA and ES Grizzly Bear Team	August 24, 2016
National Stakeholder/Partner and congressional email notifications	HQ CLA Hausman	August 23, 2016
R6 web and social media postings	R6 EA Mansheim	August 24, 2016

16. Which agencies, organizations and/or individuals need to be contacted by phone or in person by a senior FWS official? *(Include elected officials, state partners, NGOs, industry groups, and individuals)*

Stakeholder Name	Contact Info	Pro/Anti /Neutral	Contact By
Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter	(208) 334-2100	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan
Montana Governor Steve Bullock	(406) 444-3111	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan
Wyoming Governor Matt Mead	(307) 777-7434	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan
Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director Virgil Moore	(208) 334-3771 (250) 387-5657 virgil.moore@idfg.idaho.gov	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Director Jeff Hagener	(406) 444-3186 jhagener@mt.gov	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan
Wyoming Game and Fish Director Scott Talbott	(307) 777-4600	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan
Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Chair James Unsworth	(360) 902-2200 <i>*Unsworth is also the Director of the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife</i>	Pro	R6 DRD Hogan R6 ES ARD Thabault
National Park Service Pacific West Regional Director John Reynolds	(330) 289-1493 John_T_Reynolds@nps.gov	Pro	Email
National Park Service Intermountain Regional Director	(303) 969-2503 Sue_Masica@nps.gov	Pro	Email

Sue Masica			
US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Forester Dan Jirón or Vice	(303) 275-5350	Pro	Email
Bureau of Land Management Idaho State Director Tim Murphy	(208) 373-4001 tmurphy@blm.gov	Pro	Email
Bureau of Land Management Montana Acting State Director Aden Seidlitz	(406) 896-5000 aseidlitz@blm.gov	Pro	Email
Bureau of Land Management Wyoming State Director Mary Jo Rugwell	(307) 775-6001 mrugwell@blm.gov	Pro	Email
U.S. Geological Survey Northwest Regional Director Rich Ferrero	(206) 795-4527 rferrero@usgs.gov	Pro	Email

17. Which other agencies, organizations and/or individuals may have an interest in this issue and should be notified?

Stakeholder Name	Contact Info	Pro/Anti /Neutral	Contact By
Idaho Fish and Game Gregg Losinski	(208) 525-7290 gregg.losinski@idfg.idaho.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Idaho Fish and Game Communications Bureau Chief Michael Keckler	(208) 334-3746 mike.keckler@idfg.idaho.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Information	(406) 444-3051	Pro	R6 EA Baker

Bureau Chief Greg Lemon	glemon@mt.gov		
Wyoming Game and Fish Communications Director Renny Mackay	(307) 777-4594 renny.mackay1@wyo.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Idaho Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter Director of Communication Mark Warbis	(208) 334-2100 (check)	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Montana Governor Steve Bullock Director of Communications Tim Crowe	(406) 444-9844	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Wyoming Governor Matt Mead Communications Director David Bush	(307) 777-7437 David.bush@wyo.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Idaho Senator Mike Crapo State Director Layne Bangerter, Lindsay Nothorn, or Bryan Ricker	layne_bangerter@crapo.senate.gov ; lindsay_nothorn@crapo.senate.gov ; bryan_ricker@crapo.senate.gov (208) 334-1776 (check)	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Idaho Senator James Risch State Director Melinda Smyser or Mike Roach	melinda_smyser@risch.senate.gov ; mike_roach@risch.senate.gov (208) 342-7985	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Idaho Representative Mike Simpson (Dist. 2) State Communication Director Nikki Wallace	nikki.wallace@mail.house.gov (208) 334-1953	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Montana Senator Jon Tester’s State Director Dayna Swanson	(406) 728-3003 Dayna_swanson@tester.senate.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Montana Senator Steve Daines’ State Director Charles Robison or Eastern Regional Director Liz Dellwo	(406) 443-3189 Charles_robison@daines.senate.gov (406) 587-3446 Liz_dellwo@daines.senate.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker

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Montana Representative Ryan Zinke's State Director Randy Vogel	(406) 969- 1736 Randy.vogel@mail.house.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
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Wyoming Senator Michael Enzi's State Director Karen McCreery	(307) 527- 9444 Karen_mccreery@enzi.senate.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Wyoming Representative Cynthia Lummis' District Chief of Staff Tucker Fagan	(307) 772-2595 Tucker.fagan@mail.house.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
National Park Service Associate Pacific West Regional Director for Communications Stephanie Burkhardt (ID)	(415) 623- 2103 Stephanie_Burkhardt@nps.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
National Park Service Associate Intermountain Regional Director for Communications Rick Frost (MT, WY)	(303) 987- 6732 Rick_Frost@nps.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional External Affairs Director Valerie Baca	(303) 275-5118	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Bureau of Land Management Idaho Deputy State Director for Communications Erin Curtis	(208) 373-4001; ecurtis@blm.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Bureau of Land Management Montana Communications Chief Al	(406) 896- 5260 al_nash@blm.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker

Nash			
Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Public Affairs Chief Kristen Lenhardt	(307) 775-6015 klenhard@blm.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
U.S. Geological Survey Western Ecological Science Center Paul Laustsen	(650) 329-4046 plaustsen@usgs.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker
Yellowstone National Park Public Affairs Amy Bartlett	(307) 344-2013 Amy_bartlett@nps.gov	Pro	R6 EA Baker

18. Who are the primary points of contact for this action?

Media coordinators *(For national-level plans, list at least one person from HQ Public Affairs and others from region/program if appropriate. For regional-level plans, only regional coordinators are required. Enter name, email and phone)*

- Serena Baker, R6 EA, serena_baker@fws.gov, (303) 236-4588
- Brian Hires, HQ EA, brian_hires@fws.gov, (703) 358-2191

Congressional coordinators *(For national-level plans, list at least one person from HQ Public Affairs and others from region/program if appropriate. For regional-level plans, only regional coordinators are required. Enter name, email and phone)*

- Serena Baker, R6 EA, serena_baker@fws.gov, (303) 236-4588
- Miel Corbett, R1 DARD EA, miel_corbett@fws.gov, (503) 231-2111
- Alyssa Hausman, HQ CLA, Alyssa_hausman@fws.gov, (703) 358 -2275

Subject Matter Expert *(Must be approved by HQ Public Affairs for an HQ-led announcement or by Regional Public Affairs for region-led announcement. Enter name, email and phone)*

- Michael Thabault, R6 ES ARD, michael_thabault@fws.gov, (303) 236-4210
- Matt Hogan, R6 DRD, matt_hogan@fws.gov, (303) 236-7920

Additional technical experts for reference *(Enter name, email and phone)*

SECTION VI: DOCUMENT INFO

19. Date Created

Created By

7/25/2016	Serena Baker
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20. Date last edited Edited By

8/3/16	Ryan Moehring

SECTION VII: CONTACT LISTS**Delegation Contacts**

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Representative	Idaho	Mike Simpson	sarah.cannon@mail.house.gov
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Principal Committee Contacts

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House Natural Resources – Minority	Matt.Strickler@mail.house.gov brandon.bragato@mail.house.gov Sarah.Parker2@mail.house.gov Eva.Lipiec@mail.house.gov	(202) 225-6065

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER/PARTNER CONTACTS

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Mountain States Legal Foundation	W.P. Pendley	wppendley@mountainstateslegal.org
U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance	Nick Pinizzotto	nickp@ussportsmen.org
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Endangered Species Coalition	Leda Huta	lhuta@stopextinction.org
Greater Yellowstone Foundation	Mike Clark	mclark@greateryellowstone.org
Humane Society of the United States	Wayne Pacelle	humanesociety@humanesociety.org
Natural Resources Defense Council	David Goldston	dgoldston@nrdc.org
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Alliance for the Wild Rockies	Gary Macfarlane	awr@wildrockiesalliance.org
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National Governor's Assoc.	Alex Whitaker	AWhitaker@nga.org

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