

Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee Conservation Strategy Meeting Minutes

Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016

9:00 – 12:00

Bozeman, MT, FWP, Cody, Jackson

Members present:

Mary Erickson, Custer Gallatin National Forest
Melany Glossa, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Cornie Hudson, BLM – Montana
Dan Wenk, Yellowstone National Park
Brian Nesvik, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Tricia O'Connor, Bridger-Teton National Forest
Tom Rice, Montana Association of Counties - Beaverhead County
Frank van Manen, USGS Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team
Sue Consolo-Murphy, Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway
Leander Watson, Shoshone Bannock tribes
Delissa Minnick, BLM – Wyoming
Jeff Gould, Acting, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Jodi Bush, USFWS, MT
Sandi Fisher, USFWS
Sam Sheppard, FWP, MT
Ken McDonald, FWP, MT
Lee Miller, Fremont County Commissioner, ID
Jennifer Fortin-Noreus, USFWS
Tyler Abbott, Acting, Field Supervisor, WY Field Office, Cheyenne
Joe Alexander, Shoshone National Forest Service
Gregg Losinski, ID Department of Fish and Game
Jim White, ID Department of Fish and Game
Garth Smelser, Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Welcome and Introductions: Mary Erickson

- Introductions and roll call
- Reminder-meeting info, agenda, notes are posted on the IGBC website

Steering Committee Updates: Brian Nesvik

States-Brian Nesvik-Steering Committee Lead
FS-Tricia O'Conner
Counties-Loren Grosskopf
Park Service-Dan Wenk
FWS-Jodi Bush (Jennifer Fortin-technical advisor)
BLM-Delissa Minnick
Tribes-Leander Watson

I would like to thank the steering committee for all the time and work they have put into updating the Conservation Strategy. Thanks also to the three people who worked on the three themes, Joe Alexander-Agency Coordination/Conflict Management, Jeff Gould-Population Management, and Ken McDonald-Habitat.

The charge of the committee: Identify recommended changes and present them to the YES committee and identify the process used to work through the changes. The goal for today is to work through to a final draft and have a final draft and a list of issues/edits we need to change by Sept. 20. We hope to have final approval from the committee at the Oct. 3 YES meeting, and final signature by FWS by Nov. 1. Thanks to Jennifer Fortin-Noreus for incorporating changes into the draft from YES, the steering committee, and the study team. She will capture any other changes today and send out to the group for final review with leaders of your agencies.

Issues to address today:

- 1. Edits/discussion on draft**
- 2. Appendix C versions**
- 3. Developed sites, 1998 baseline**
- 4. Changes to sensitive species language (FS) before Sept. 20th**
- 5. Technical aspects from the study team**

Jodi Bush, USFWS -With reopening of the comment period which closes Oct. 7, we also may need to address any new comments.

1. Edits/discussion on draft -

Forest Service - Tricia O'Connor

Good with draft except questions on population size and mortality limits and status post delisting and how it is to be articulated needs to be added to the CS.

BLM - Delissa Minnick

Have a few consistency edits to address, but good overall

NPS - Dan Wenk

Have some editorial issues to address; biggest issue with recalibration, where it stands; waiting to see how language is resolved in some issues; hunts-where it may occur, discretionary mortality, habitat standards

County Commissioners - Tom Rice

No major issues

Tribes - Leander Watson

We just want to say again the Shoshone Bannock is not in favor of delisting. We will not harvest but want to be included in mortality discussions.

States - Ken McDonald

We are good

Game and Fish - Jeff Gould

Have several technical edits that we will send to Jennifer—new language in Chapter 1 is repeated in the introduction; conservation management areas on page 43 and 50 may need some definition

FWS - Jodi Bush

Recalibration tied to App. C

Wordsmith perpetuity and stability language

Food storage issues

1998 baseline

Other edits-IGBST, new comments

DECISIONS

Perpetuity language —Jodi, Jennifer Fortin-Noreus and Frank van Manen will review language used in Louisiana black bear delisting and propose language to be considered for the group before Sept 20.

Food Storage—Reference existing Food Storage commitments, support for connectivity. Jennifer will work with Dan Tyers and Scott Jackson to craft language to clarify the connection between food storage/connectivity.

Stability – This was a follow-up from discussion at last meeting. Frank van Manen suggested changing “stable” to “relatively flat population trajectory” or “relatively constant population size” Jennifer will incorporate into the CS.

2. Appendix C versions - Alternatives for recalibration language

Much discussion on two aspects:

- What is the objective in the future post-delisting, to manage for a number or manage for population level that exists within DMA at time of delisting?
- Recalibration language and addressing best science in the future

No resolution

3. Developed sites, 1998 baseline

Sub-committee looked at three proposals to address growing visitor use and functionality: wording 1998 developed sites mechanism to make adjustments; recognized need for commitment to bear conservation and some flexibility. Need language that applies to all federal lands; continue looking at options-if we rush this we may miss something.

DECISION

Include wording in CS that identifies hard timelines for “final recommendation” by end of 2018 at the latest. Language would speak to process, objective, timeline and public comment process. Give Subcommittee a little more time to work on wording – Ken and Subgroup will work with Jennifer on proposed language to incorporate in to September 20th draft CS.

4. Changes to sensitive species language (FS) before Sept. 20th

Chapter 7 Management Authorities...Forest Service has updated language for integration in next draft

DECISION

Send language to Jennifer and the Steering Committee and she will incorporate it in track changes.

5. Technical aspects from the study team

DECISION

Background mortality and stability language, and more detail on how mortality rates are covered—Frank van Manen will send language to Jennifer by Sept 20 for next draft.

6. Chapter 6-two parts talk about the reviewers making recommendations (page 119/120)

DECISION

Take out as reviewers cannot make recommendations. Jodi Bush will confirm with Jennifer

Next Steps

Oct. 3 meeting at Jackson Lake Lodge-conversation and address any final changes, then check in with FWS as they are going through new comments. It will be in person but will have a conference line available, start time 10:00 a.m.

Every agency should have reviewed the strategy. Forest Service will provide a whitepaper on how we integrate any changes in the new CS into our Forest Plans.

Brian Nesvik-Hanging issues (review for notes/follow-up):

Study team edits on background mortality and stability language

Sensitive species language from the Forest Service

Minor inconsistencies in grammar/formatting provide to Jennifer as soon as possible

Recommended perpetuity language-Jodi, Jennifer, Frank send by Sept 20

Food Storage language-Jodi, Dan, Lisa and Scott J. will work on this

Final language on developed sites/timeline-Ken, Subgroup and Jennifer

Appendix C-no resolution-will discuss in Steering Committee, needing ideas on how to move this forward

Chapter 6-deleted recommendation wording

Jeff Gould-the first two paragraphs in Chapter 1 should not be used again in the executive summary—use third paragraph so it isn't redundant—will pass on to FWS to do.

Public Comment

Chris Colligan, GYC-challenging to comment on CS none of us has seen. Critical for public to review and provide written comments. How are we moving forward when there's a fundamental issue unanswered-are you managing for a stable population or for numbers? The population should remain stable, manage for connectivity and in perpetuity. Mimic language in rule so documents are the same. Very confusing to the public with an open comment period, also the state of WY has a comment period.

Andrea Santarsiere, Center for Biological Diversity-It's clear there are a lot of substantive comments being made-how long in place, changing the 1998 baseline, etc. The public needs another opportunity to comment on a near final CS.

Erin Edge, Defenders of Wildlife-The public has no way of knowing how the CS is going to impact the grizzly bears. We think there needs to be time for the public to provide comment on the whole package including the final proposed CS. Some of the changes have been fairly significant. It makes it hard to understand what's going to happen after they are delisted.

Heather Cerbuaci, Don't Delist Grizzlies-the Federal land we are talking about belongs to the people. The public needs to be incorporated in the full decision making. In order to do that full information needs to be given. There's a difference between the Park Service and the Forest Service objectives and the State objectives...not on the same page. I think a 2018 baseline would give more opportunities.

Derek Goldman, Endangered Species Coalition-Desire public review of CS changes and tracked changes document. Want to see bears managed for stability and conservation message in place in perpetuity. One thing that's consistent that I've heard is grizzly bears will be a species in

need of constant conservation. With regard to recalibration discussion, we don't want to see fictional bears traded through mathematical methods that are then available for discretionary mortality. If there is a new method use, the numbers need to be recalibrated to reflect that. I'm concerned about what we've heard in the past two YES meetings, the sense that some YES members are attempting to backslide on commitments made to conserve bears into the future.

Joe Gutkowski, President of Yellowstone Buffalo Foundation-I've been interested in grizzly bears my whole life, worked for the Forest Service for 33 years. The GYE is very important for dispersal of bears. We're helping out with the expansion of grizzly into the Selway Bitterroot. We sued the ARS to get their domestic sheep out of the Centennial Mountains. That's still in contention. We have another suit against a domestic sheep empire on the Gravellys. Grizzly bears should be there but they are being killed by the sheepherders.

Bonnie Rice, Sierra Club-The public needs to have the opportunity to comment on the whole package at one time. This comment period should be extended. I'm concerned on the backing away on the language on perpetuity. We believe the public needs to know there's a firm long term commitment for grizzly bear management by all the various parties. Backing away from that language leaves a lot of doubt. The CS is the document that is supposed to demonstrate the adequacy of the regulatory mechanism. In regard to stability to the population, it's always been stable to increasing. We believe the population should be allowed to grow and expand.

Stephanie Adams, NPCA-We agree with many of the concerns raised. The public needs to be able to see the complete package. When we first made comments the package was missing key pieces like the updated state plans and now we are being asked to provide comments on the peer reviews as well as the state regulations. In order to show that public comment is taken into account, there needs to be that opportunity. We've had student groups out here this summer to learn how their voices can be heard. We need to engage future generations and if they feel their voice isn't heard, we will lose their willingness to engage.