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Subject: Groups to sue USFWS over grizzly-bear death approvals
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Groups to sue USFWS over grizzly-bear death approvals

[Laura Lundquist](#), Chronicle Staff Writer

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Environmental groups announced they intend to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over its decision that could allow the killing of 15 grizzly bears in the greater Yellowstone area.

On Wednesday, the Sierra Club and Western Watersheds Project filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue the USFWS for violating the Endangered Species Act by approving actions that could cause grizzly bears to be killed in Grand Teton National Park and the Upper Green River area of Wyoming.

In its decisions, the USFWS reasoned that the death of 15 bears wouldn't cause the population to drop below sustainable levels.

The 60-day notice, filed by the law firm Earthjustice, claims the agency, along with the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, didn't consider the additional bears that are likely to be killed in the region.

Bears can be struck by vehicles, some have to be removed for human safety and some are shot by hunters or landowners.

If many of the bears that are killed are female, the groups said fewer cubs would be born, the number of female bears would drop below a sustainable level and the population would go into decline.

Scientists estimate that each adult female could potentially add about three females to the population although they probably produce fewer than that.

"Killing 15 more bears in the Yellowstone region, including even in one of our nation's premier national parks, could be the straw that breaks the camel's—or, in this case,

the grizzly's—back,” said Earthjustice attorney Tim Preso. “The Endangered Species Act requires federal officials to look at that big picture, yet they failed to do so.”

Bonnie Rice of the Sierra Club said each year, the USFWS has increased the number of grizzly bears that can be killed.

“With a slow reproducing animal like the grizzly bear, those numbers have significant long-term consequences on grizzly recovery,” Rice said.

In September 2013, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Team proposed delisting the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears, but the USFWS has yet to issue a delisting proposal.

That same month, the USFWS authorized a Grand Teton National Park hunt to reduce the elk population that is anticipated to cause four grizzly bear deaths over a nine-year period.

A year later, the USFWS authorized livestock grazing operations in the Upper Green River area of the Bridger-Teton National Forest that could lead to the deaths of 11 grizzly bears by 2019.

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Thanks,
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