

In Response Reply to:
FWS/R6/ES/059770

Mr. R. Bear Stands Last
Guardians of our Ancestral Legacy (GOAL)
Box 30,000, #360
Jackson, Wyoming 83002

Dear Mr. Bear Stands Last:

Thank you for your letter of March 2, 2015, to Secretary of the Interior Jewell regarding concerns that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is not meaningfully engaging the Tribes, including government-to-government consultation, regarding the potential for delisting grizzly bears in the Yellowstone area.

As noted in our letter dated February 17, 2015 (attached), the Service understands our obligation to consult with Federally Recognized Native American sovereign Tribes on a government-to-government basis. Consistent with Secretarial Order 3206, we have offered government-to-government consultation to each sovereign Tribe with ancestral connections to the greater Yellowstone area. Discussions with Tribes who have an interest engaging in such a government-to-government consultation are ongoing with regard to the timing and location of such consultations.

Importantly, no decision has been made on the status of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. At present, the Service is continuing our status review to determine whether a change in status is warranted. This status review will be based upon the best scientific and commercial information available concerning the status of the population. Contrary to the assertions in your letter, we have not determined that delisting will be proposed in June. Any final decision to remove this species from the Federal list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and return management to the States and Tribes (and continue Federal management within National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges) would require a rule-making process. This process includes publication of a proposed rule and final rule, as well as public review and comment and independent scientific peer review.

Although GOAL does not constitute a federally recognized Tribe warranting government-to-government consultation, the Service welcomes your organization's perspective during the required public comment periods should delisting eventually be proposed. All public comments will be considered during the rule-making process.

Sincerely,

DIRECTOR