

From: [Huggler, Matthew](#)
To: [Matt Hogan](#); [Scott Aikin](#)
Subject: Fwd: FYI: From Greenwire -- ENDANGERED SPECIES: Tribal alliance fights to maintain Yellowstone grizzly protections
Date: Friday, May 15, 2015 12:41:38 PM

FYI - See article below. Scott, note tribal issues around consultation. Matt, note you've been replaced.

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From: **Laury Parramore** <laury_parramore@fws.gov>
Date: Fri, May 15, 2015 at 2:25 PM
Subject: FYI: From Greenwire -- ENDANGERED SPECIES: Tribal alliance fights to maintain Yellowstone grizzly protections
To: Betsy Hildebrandt <betsy_hildebrandt@fws.gov>, Matthew Huggler <matthew_huggler@fws.gov>, Chris Tollefson <chris_tollefson@fws.gov>, Ryan Moehring <ryan_moehring@fws.gov>, Megan Kelhart <megan_kelhart@fws.gov>
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FYI:



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ENDANGERED SPECIES:
Tribal alliance fights to maintain Yellowstone grizzly protections
Corbin Hiar, E&E reporter
Published: Friday, May 15, 2015

One of the largest tribal coalitions in North America is staging a pre-emptive attack on a potential Fish and Wildlife Service proposal to remove federal protections from grizzly bears living in and around Yellowstone National Park.

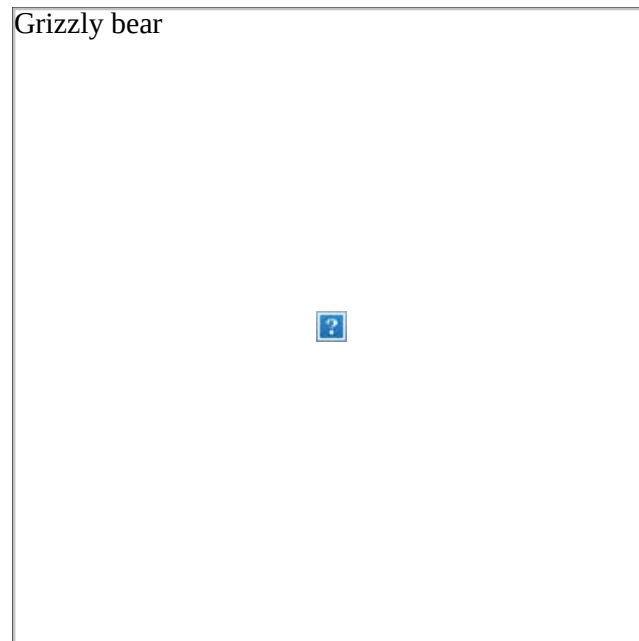
So far, 35 tribes in seven Western states -- including all of those in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska -- have united under the banner of Guardians of Our Ancestral Legacy. The country's two largest tribes, the Navajo and Cherokee nations, are also part of GOAL.

In the Lower 48 states, the grizzly bear gained federal protections in 1975 when FWS declared it a

threatened species. The Yellowstone grizzly population is now around 700 bears, above the minimum of 500 that a [recovery plan](#) said would be necessary to remove the grizzly from the list of animals protected under the Endangered Species Act.

But the coalition members all oppose delisting the grizzly from the list of animals protected under the Endangered Species Act because they fear that the bears, which are of spiritual and cultural importance to the tribes, would be targeted by state-sanctioned trophy hunts.

The tribes also feel that Chris Servheen, who is the service's grizzly bear recovery coordinator, and state wildlife officials have been dismissive of Native American views in their review of protections for grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone Area -- a region spanning northwest Wyoming, eastern Idaho and southwest Montana.



A grizzly bear in a field at Yellowstone National Park. Photo by Terry Tollefsbol, courtesy of FWS.

GOAL was particularly offended when Servheen told a Bozeman, Mont., [Daily Chronicle](#) reporter earlier this year, "We've done what we are required to do" in order to consult with Native Americans. Servheen was referring to letters that FWS had sent to four tribes asking for their input, which he claimed had not been responded to.

"This is patently false on two counts," Rain Bear Stands Last, GOAL's co-founder, said in a Jan. 16 [letter](#) to Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, who oversees FWS. He argued that the federal government should have contacted all 26 tribes that have ancestral ties to Yellowstone and claimed that three of the tribes that received letters had effectively responded to them by issuing resolutions

opposing delisting.

Servheen's comments suggest that he is "lacking in both cultural sensitivity and knowledge relative to the consultation process" required by Congress and the White House, Bear Stands Last said in the letter, which was obtained via a Freedom of Information Act request.

John Bryan, deputy director of the service's Mountain-Prairie Region, [responded](#) for Jewell and Servheen on Feb. 17. "No decision has been made on the status of Yellowstone grizzly bears," Bryan told GOAL. Before FWS decides whether it will try to delist the bears again, "we will be sure Tribes are offered the opportunity to participate in consultations with the Service," he said.

The tribes also claim that the leaders of the state and federal Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee disrespected James Walks Along, an official in the Northern Cheyenne Nation, when it cut off his microphone at a [recent meeting](#) earlier this month.

The IGBC did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

FWS formally delisted the Yellowstone grizzly in 2007, with almost no tribal opposition. But the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana ordered the agency to reinstate protections for the bears in 2009, siding with environmentalists, who successfully argued that FWS had failed to take into account climate change's effects on the bears' food supply and did not ensure that the plans developed to manage the bears after delisting would maintain their population.

Two years later, the ruling was upheld by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ([E&ENews PM](#), Nov. 22, 2011).

When the IGBC began calling for FWS to again delist the Yellowstone grizzlies in November 2013, Bear Stands Last and his uncle, Don Shoulderblade, founded GOAL to coordinate the tribal response. They have hereditary links to Cheyenne, Kiowa and Pawnee tribes.

Since then, FWS Director Dan Ashe has repeatedly suggested that the agency intends to delist the Yellowstone grizzlies ([Greenwire](#), Dec. 12, 2013).

"We agree that grizzly bears are recovered," Ashe told Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), a delisting advocate, at an Environment and Public Works Committee hearing last week. "We are working with the states of Wyoming and Idaho and Montana literally as we speak to try to put together the frame for a potential delisting proposal."

FWS also recently suggested to GOAL that it is expanding the scope of its interaction with tribes. Instead of just asking for input from four tribes in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana, FWS Deputy Director James Kurth indicated in an April 13 [letter](#) to Bear Stands Last that the agency will undertake "government-to-government consultation to each sovereign Tribe with ancestral connections to the greater Yellowstone area."

In a statement to *Greenwire*, Ashe stressed that any plan to remove protections from the Yellowstone grizzlies will be made with the input of all the affected stakeholders.

"If and when we put forward a delisting proposal, it will be with the full cooperation and involvement of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, and in consultation with affected tribes, as part of a public process including extensive opportunities for public review and comment," he said.

But GOAL remains deeply skeptical of the agency. "At this stage, the tribes really have no reason to trust the USFW, and you have only to look at the treaty-making process to see it provides a historical precedent for distrust," spokeswoman Sara Atiqtalik said.

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