

Abstract

Federal land management agencies are legally required to consult Native American tribes when administering policies that may have tribal implications. Since 2013, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has considered removing the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bear from Endangered Species Act protections. Tribal groups residing within or maintaining cultural ties to the region have hotly contested the movement. At the root of the debate is the consultation requirement. The media quotes tribal leaders stating they have not been sufficiently consulted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Many laws and directives regarding consultation exist, yet its implications and perceptions continue to remain ambiguous. The purpose of this research project is to evaluate the perceptions and applications of federal-tribal consultation requirements in the grizzly bear Endangered Species Act delisting issue. Federal laws and documents will be thematically analyzed to determine which theoretical form of public participation is required of agencies. Interviews with US Fish and Wildlife Service and Tribal officials associated with the grizzly bear delisting process will be conducted and thematically analyzed to determine consultation requirement perceptions. The results from this study will be used to gain a clearer understanding of what federal laws on consultation require, and provide best-practices recommendations for future consultation circumstances.