

Thank you for your letter dated August X regarding our on-going discussions on the potential delisting of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) grizzly bear population.

As you know, since the date of your letter, we have had two additional meetings on this topic. The first occurred between our respective staff as well as staff from the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on September 9 and 10. The second was the meeting that the four of us had, along with our staff and both NPS and USFS at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) annual meeting on September 14. Based on those two meetings, I believe we have a mutually understood process that will allow the Service to proceed with a proposed delisting proposal as follows:

- We have agreed to manage within the confidence intervals associated with the long term average grizzly bear population within the GYE. The long term average population is calculated from 2002 to the present¹.
- We have agreed that Chao2 represents the best available science for determining allowable mortality in order to manage for the long term average population.
- We have agreed to the following mortality limits for females and males based on the annual population estimate using Chao2:
 - Below 600: no discretionary mortality would be allowed unless necessary to address human safety issues.
 - Between 600-674: mortality limits will not exceed 7.6% for adult females and 15% for adult males.
 - Between 675-747: mortality limits will not exceed 9% for adult females and 20% for adult males.
 - Greater than 747: mortality limits will not exceed 10% for adult females and 22% for adult males.
- We have established a timeline and associated action items (to include review and agreement by all parties) to both the Recovery Criteria and the Conservation Strategy) that we believe will allow us to publish a proposed delisting rule prior to the end of 2015.
- States have agreed to discuss additional regulatory mechanisms that will be part of individual state management plans/regulations that will implement the Conservation Strategy.
- States have agreed to meet annually with the National Park Service to discuss managed mortality around National Parks.
- The State of Montana has agreed to restrict hunting in certain areas in order to allow future connectivity between the GYE and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE).

Like you, we believe that the recovery of the GYE grizzly bear population represents a tremendous conservation success story based on more than 30 years of collaboration between state and federal partners. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this great achievement.

¹ The model averaged Chao2 estimate from 2002 to the present is 674 bears with a 95% confidence interval of 600 to 747.