



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region



IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/R6/ES

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John Tomke, Chairman
Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

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Dear Chairman Tomke:

Thank you for your letter of September 8,, 2015, concerning the possibility of delisting the grizzly bear from the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). The grizzly bear is currently listed as a threatened species under the ESA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is in the early stages of considering the listing status of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At this time, there has been no decision to propose to delist any grizzly bear population in the United States.

As you know, the grizzly bear came under the protection of the ESA in the lower 48 States in 1975 when it was listed as a threatened species. Recovery efforts began in 1981, and since that time, the Yellowstone grizzly bear population has nearly tripled in number and currently occupies approximately twice the geographic area that it did at the time of listing. The scientific data, population surveys, and on-the-ground monitoring show us that Yellowstone grizzly bears are now a healthy, self-sustaining population that has almost completely occupied the suitable habitat available for them in the GYE.

However, no decision has been made to move forward with a delisting proposal. Should such a proposal eventually move forward, all other grizzly bear populations would remain listed under the ESA. Before any such decision is made there will be careful consideration of all aspects of this issue including Tribal concerns, assurance that careful management will be in place to assure the future health of grizzly populations, and assurance that careful management will be in place for the habitat necessary to maintain healthy populations. If delisting is proposed, our overall goal at the Service would be to work to ensure that the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is sustainably managed so that it never again becomes necessary to be managed under the ESA.

We believe that close coordination with our fellow Federal agencies, State wildlife management agencies, conservation organizations, and the public is important to the success of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. We welcome the opportunity to meet with a workgroup of the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council to discuss the recovery of the Yellowstone grizzly bear.

Thank you for your interest in the grizzly bear in the Yellowstone ecosystem. If you have questions about the grizzly or its status, please contact Chris Servheen, Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator at 406-243-4903.

Sincerely,

Regional Director

