



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region



IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/R6/ES
ESO-00064678

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134 Union Boulevard
Lakewood, Colorado 80228-1807

SEP 18 2015

Chief Stan Grier
Piikani Nation Chief and Council
P.O. Box 70
Brocket, Alberta T0K 0H0

Dear Chief Grier:

Thank you for your letter of July 29, 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 ESA. At this time, there has been no decision to propose to delist any grizzly bear population in the United States.

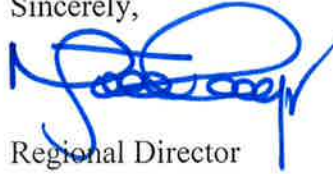
In recently months, we have reached out to both tribes in close proximity to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), (including your Blackfoot Confederacy relatives, the Blackfeet Nation of Montana) as well as those tribes outside that geographic area who have a historical, cultural, and spiritual connection with the grizzly bear and the GYE. We take our government to government responsibilities very seriously.

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.

Thank you for your interest in the grizzly bear in the Yellowstone ecosystem. If you would like to discuss Tribal relationships further, please contact Ivy Allen, Tribal Liaison by email at ivy_allen@fws.gov or by phone at 303-236-4575. If you have questions about the grizzly or its status, please contact Chris Servheen, Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator at 406-243-4903.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "N. Servheen", written over the printed name "Regional Director".

Regional Director

Deputy