

Region 6 Cooperative Recovery Initiative Pre-proposal

Species' Name: Grizzly Bear

National Wildlife Refuge: Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Listed status (T, E): Threatened

Regional Priority Species? (Y/N): Yes

Priority Landscape? (Y/N): Yes, Sage Steppe

Primary contact name and phone number: Jim Magee, MT PFW Program (406) 683-3893

Project Description:

Grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) are one of our nation's most iconic wildlife species. Grizzlies are fierce, independent, and resilient. Decades of recovery work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and additional federal and state agencies have helped grizzly bear populations substantially rebound in the United States. Yet the long term survival of grizzly bears largely depends on how well humans limit conflicts with bears and limit human-caused mortality to grizzlies.

In the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), there were 995 grizzly bear-human conflicts (damaging property, obtaining anthropogenic foods, and livestock depredation) between 1992 – 2000. Fifty-three percent of the conflicts occurred outside of the Great Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. Forty-one percent of the conflicts occurred on private lands. During this same timeline, there were 74 human-caused grizzly bear mortalities, primarily from killing bears in defense of life and property (43%) and management removal of bears involved in bear–human conflicts (28%). Kerry A. Gunther, NPS, Grizzly bear-human conflicts in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem, 1992-2000.

Because grizzly bear population dynamics are largely driven by female survivorship (Harris et al. 2006), researchers have called for improving female grizzly bear survival rates by minimizing conflicts on private lands (Servheen 1989, Mace and Waller 1998). Ultimately, the future challenge of recovering, delisting, and living with grizzly bears in the GYE requires an approach that balances grizzly bear conservation and other values where grizzly bear conflicts and mortality repeatedly occur.

This proposal focuses on using the US Fish and Wildlife Services' (FWS) Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) approach to: 1) prioritize private lands in the northwest portion of the GYE (area surrounding Red Rock Lakes NWR in the Centennial Valley) for conflict abatement projects using grizzly bear occurrence data, and grizzly bear-human conflict data, 2) deliver on-the-ground conflict abatement projects, 3) deliver on-the-ground riparian restoration projects that provide for travel corridors & 4) evaluate and monitor project performance by comparing conflicts and mortalities before, during, and after project implementation in the treatment areas. Addressing grizzly bear recovery on private lands and the associated threats posed by people living, working, and recreating therein are of critical importance for conservation efforts over the long term.

Benefits of the Project:

We anticipate that benefits to grizzly bears will include: reduced conflicts and mortalities within project area. Long term trend data on conflicts, mortalities and populations will be tracked by the FWS Grizzly Bear Coordinator and MTFWP to analyze the benefits of the project. Additional benefits will be protecting human safety and property and improving social acceptance of grizzly bears. Local opposition to grizzly bears can result in direct killing, refusal to adopt coexistence practices, and anti-bear activism in the political arena. Building support with people who actually live with grizzly bears is critical for establishing a strong, grassroots constituency that supports overarching national goals for threatened and endangered species recovery.

Has this action been recommended in recent Service documents (recovery plans, CCPs, HMPs)?:

Participating Programs: Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Montana Ecological Field Office, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife.

Literature Cited: To come

Preliminary Cost Estimate:

Item Description	Program	Sub-Item Description	Funding Requested 2016	Funding Requested 2017	Funding Requested 2018
Prioritization	MT ES	Grizzly Bear Program	\$30,000		
Conflict Abatement	MT PFW	On-the-ground practices	\$100,000		
Conflict Abatement	Red Rock Lakes NWR	Ranger Rider Program	\$15,000	\$15,000	
Habitat Restoration	MT PFW	On-the-ground Riparian Rest.	\$100,000		
Monitoring	MT ES	Grizzly Bear Program			\$45,000
TOTAL			\$245,000	\$15,000	\$45,000