

October 29, 2015

Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Population of Grizzly Bear

Status of Yellowstone Grizzly

- Grizzly bears were federally listed in the lower 48 states as a threatened species in 1975 due to unsustainable levels of human-caused mortality, habitat loss, and significant habitat alteration.
- Recovery efforts began in 1981, and since that time the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) grizzly bear population has nearly tripled in number, currently occupying approximately twice the geographic area that it did at the time of listing.
- All of the available scientific data, including population surveys and on-the-ground monitoring indicate that GYE grizzly bears are now a healthy, self-sustaining population that have almost completely occupied the suitable habitat available for them in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.
- Yellowstone grizzly bears now occupy habitats they have been absent from for decades.

Purpose of Endangered Species Act (ESA)

- The purpose of the ESA is preventing extinction and fostering recovery of endangered or threatened species are the primary goals of the Service's endangered species program.
- ESA was not intended to provide permanent management guidance for species that have exceeded their recovery goals.

Delisting process

- If adequate regulatory mechanisms are in place, the Service will develop a proposal to delist the GYE grizzly population based on the Service's determination that recovery goals have been met and regulatory mechanisms will ensure the long-term persistence of this important grizzly population and its habitat.
- The proposal would only evaluate delisting the GYE grizzly population.
 - All other grizzly bear populations in the states of Montana, Idaho, and Washington would remain listed.
- As in any delisting, the proposal would be subject to peer review as well as public review and comment.
- In the case that we move forward with a delisting package, the Service would hold public hearings, and receive public comment, and evaluate all input before deciding whether to publish a final rule.
- Upon completion of the public comment process, the Service will evaluate the comments and the peer review and make a decision to move forward with delisting or not.
- The Service will continue to evaluate the best available scientific data, including new information, as it considers delisting.

Comment [MW1]: Will we?

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Outreach

- If the Service decides to move forward with delisting, we will work very closely with the states in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to ensure that the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is sustainably managed so that it never again becomes necessary to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.
- We have proactively reached out to Tribes with historical, cultural, and spiritual connections to the Yellowstone grizzly bear, both inside the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and beyond. We remain committed to working with Tribes on this matter and invite their input in this process.

Comment [MW2]: Necessary?