

From: Ryan Moehring
To: [Anna Munoz](#); [Chris Servheen](#); seth_willey@fws.gov; serena_baker@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Back to bears
Date: Monday, November 09, 2015 4:46:02 PM

FYI. Thanks for your help today. -Ryan

From: Gib Mathers [<mailto:gib@powelltribune.com>]
Sent: Monday, November 09, 2015 4:20 PM
To: Ryan Moehring
Subject: Re: Back to bears

Ryan,<P>

Thanks. I wish grizzly bears were as non-controversial as ferrets. Have a great evening.<P>

Gib

On Nov 9, 2015, at 3:49 PM, Ryan Moehring wrote:

Hi Gib,

Thanks for the opportunity to respond. Below are answers to your questions in red. I've also attached two documents to help substantiate my responses/provide you with additional context for your story.

1. Does politics have anything to do with the proposal to delist?

“No. All of our decisions are based on the best-available science. Politics have no place in wildlife management.

The Fish and Wildlife Service believes that the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is biologically recovered. Therefore, as directed by the Endangered Species Act, we are considering whether to move forward with a delisting proposal. Discussions with states and tribes, and partner agencies are ongoing, allowing us to consider partner input and to ensure that the population would remain viable and recovered in the absence of ESA protections. A final decision on whether to publish a delisting proposal will be made over the next several months.

Such a proposed delisting would only impact the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. Additionally, any delisting process requires extensive opportunities for public review and comment and scientific peer review prior to any final decision on such a proposal. Delisting would only occur if there is a very high level of confidence that the population will remain recovered and never again need ESA protections.”

2. Sierra Club said the GYE population has not grown in 10 years. Is this true? What was the population 10 years ago?

“The Yellowstone population of grizzly bears is growing. Since 2001, the population has increased by approximately 180 bears.”

Background: This fall, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) reported a new population estimate for the Demographic Monitoring Area of 714, which was lower than last year's estimate of 757.

Frank van Manen, the IGBST leader, carefully explained at the recent Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee (YES) meeting that we see substantial annual variation in these estimates and therefore it is important to focus on trend over time, not on any individual year or even several years.

The trend of the population is determined by model-averaging, a credible scientific approach that has been documented in published literature (Harris et al. 2007). Based on these model-averaged estimates, the long-term trend remains indicative of a population that is stable to slightly growing.

3. Does the loss of whitebark cause grizzlies to get into more trouble looking for food, increasing human-bear conflicts?

“No. Whitebark pine is an important food source for grizzly bears, but the grizzly is not dependent on whitebark pine for survival. The best-available science demonstrates that whitebark pine declines will not be a limiting factor in the continued sustainability of grizzly bear populations.”

Background: For detailed information on the relationship between grizzly bears and whitebark pine see: ‘Response of Yellowstone Grizzly Bears to Changes in Food Resources: A Synthesis’ (http://www.nrmssc.usgs.gov/files/norock/IGBST/IGBST_FoodSynReport120213.pdf).

4. Are grizzlies outgrowing the grizzly bear recovery area and thus causing more conflicts?

“No. There is evidence that the bear population outside the recovery area continues to grow, but this is not evidence that the population is outgrowing the recovery area.”

Background: Such a statement implies that bears seek more productive areas on the periphery of the ecosystem and are vacating the core of the recovery area.

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team has explicitly addressed that issue and there is zero evidence of this. In fact, the change in distribution of females with cubs over the 40-year time period shows occupancy of an increasingly larger area simultaneous with increasingly greater densities inside the core of the ecosystem.

Several independent data sources support the notion that the GYE grizzly bear population may in fact be reaching carrying capacity in many areas, and this higher density seems to be connected to the slowing of population growth. The recent study by van Manen et al. (2015) specifically addresses this question in relation to density-dependent population regulation (see attached).

The top grizzly bear experts from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and from the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee, the multiagency organization charged with implementing the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan in the Yellowstone Ecosystem, believe that the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is biologically recovered. We believe that the ecosystem is reaching its carrying capacity for grizzly bears inside the demographic monitoring area.

5. How can conflicts be reduced?

“Unfortunately, human-bear conflicts are inevitable, especially as bears disperse into new areas. We continue to work with our partners and the public to minimize these conflicts through extensive outreach and education efforts, assisting residents in bear country with electric fencing and other security devices, and ongoing management of nuisance bears when they do occur.”

6. Do we need to expand corridors to allow grizzlies to connect genetically with grizzlies in western Montana and Idaho?

“Yes. Facilitating connectivity between grizzly bear populations, particularly between the Northern Continental Divide and Yellowstone ecosystems, will reduce the probability of loss of genetic diversity and help populations remain healthy and viable long into the future. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to facilitating this occasional movement between ecosystems. This has been and will continue to be a Service priority.”

Thanks,
-Ryan

Ryan Moehring
Public Affairs Specialist (ND, SD, WY, MT)
Mountain-Prairie Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
303-236-0345
Ryan_Moehring@fws.gov

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-----Original Message-----

From: Gib Mathers [mailto:gib@powelltribune.com]
Sent: Monday, November 09, 2015 10:17 AM
To: Ryan Moehring
Subject: Back to bears

Ryan,<P>

I've received some comments from the Sierra Club. Do you want to address them? <P> Q Does politics have anything to do with the proposal to delist? <P> Q Sierra said the GYE population has not grown in 10 years. Is the true? What was the population 10 years ago?<P> Q Does the loss of whitebark cause grizzlies to get into more trouble looking for food, increasing human-bear conflicts? <P> Q Are grizzlies outgrowing the grizzly bear recovery area and thus causing more conflicts?<P> Q How can conflicts be reduced?<P> Q Do we need to expand expand corridors to allow grizzlies to connect genetically with grizzlies in western Montana and Idaho? (That's my question).<P> Think that's it. If you have something to add, please do. Call if you'd prefer, 307-754-2221. Thanks. Hope your morning is going well.<P> Gib

<IGBST_FoodSynReport120213.pdf><van Manen_et_al-2015-The_Journal_of_Wildlife_Management.pdf>