

From: Allison Gross
To: chris_servheen@fws.gov
Subject: Grizzly Bear Delisting Concern
Date: Monday, April 25, 2016 4:11:26 PM

Dear Mr. Servheen,

My name is Allison Gross and I am currently a Junior at Franklin & Marshall College studying wildlife conservation practices. I recently had the privilege of visiting Yellowstone National Park and learned a great deal. I wanted to write to you about the current news topic of delisting the grizzly bear and my concerns, which I hope are portrayed in my letter below. Thank you in advanced for taking the time and reading this and thank you for all the hard work you do.

Before federal management, the Yellowstone National Park population of grizzly bears was reduced to a staggering low two percent of their former range within the lower 48 states. This is due to a combination of excessive hunting, conversion of habitat to human uses and fragmentation of habitat caused by such thing as extensive work of logging roads. Because of these human activities, grizzly bears were then brought under federal management under the Endangered Species Act in 1975. During that time, fewer than 250 grizzlies occupied the Yellowstone area. Since then, the conservation efforts of both state and federal agencies have increased the grizzly bear population to 600-1,200, which is a serious improvement from the 200 in 1975. Just by looking at the grizzly bear population numbers along, it looks like they are doing well and the management efforts are not needed anymore. However, grizzly bears are not ready to be delisted, despite the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service desire.

To start, grizzly bears are omnivores and they will eat about anything. However, grizzlies two main food sources, white bark pin and cutthroat trout, have significantly decline. This issue leads Yellowstone grizzlies to roam farther in order to find food or adapt to eating different foods. This can cause in increase in human-bear conflicts, especially if the grizzlies are to be delisted. The threats faced by grizzly bears include roadways and private lands that acquire garbage and livestock, which are serious temptations for the grizzly bear population. Grizzly bears will remember how easy or difficult it was to obtain these food sources. This is find when grizzlies are in a remote area, but troubling when their search brings them into sources connected to people. Grizzly bears that associate food with people will most likely find themselves on the other side of a rifle.

This leads into the next point that hunting may resume outside of Yellowstone National Park. If the bears are delisted, the surrounding states such as, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming may manage these bear hunts as they do with the other wildlife species like pronghorns, wolves, deer and elk. This can be extremely problematic because the public and landowners will become less tolerable and potentially will kill grizzlies at a fast rate that can severely deplete the population again. Grizzly bears are also one of the slowest reproducing land mammals and do not reproduce until they are four or five years old. Also, if female grizzlies do not gain enough fat over the summer to survive and raise cubs, females might not even implant their eggs. With slow reproduction and food sources threatened, federal

management is still necessary for grizzly bears survival.

Lastly, it is important to note that grizzly bears are disconnected from other grizzly bear populations. If delisting occurs, there would need to be management of the connective habitats. Long term success of the Yellowstone population will require reconnecting it with other populations to increase genetic diversity. Currently, the grizzly bear population live now in areas that will not be protected as strictly if delisting were to occur since these areas are in central recovery zones of national parks and wilderness areas. Since grizzly bears are an umbrella species, multiple species may be at risk if we decide to delist this species and not protect these areas. We could potentially lose other species that have just as much intrinsic value as grizzly bears, plus every other animal.

Grizzly bear numbers do not tell the full story. Basic food sources for grizzlies are continuing to be threatened, which causes unwanted interactions with humans in search of food. Habitat continues to be lost due to land development and grizzly bears continue to die. These current protected areas are the only hope for the long-term success of the Yellowstone grizzly bears. If we take that away, grizzlies will become extremely vulnerable, and numbers may reduce at a rapid rate. People who are surrounded with grizzly bears already lack tolerance towards this predator. But, with the act of delisting this species, people will take management into their own hands and might kill off numerous grizzlies. It is in societies best interest to keep the grizzly bear listed or we might face a mass extinction.

Sincerely,

Allison Gross