

Keisha Sedlacek, Senior Regulatory Specialist  
The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Ms. Sedlacek,

Thank you for your March 15, 2016, correspondence to Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator Dr. Servheen requesting an extension of the public comment period and additional public hearings on the proposed rule to remove the grizzly bear in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem from protection under the Endangered Species Act. Specifically, you requested 60 additional days for public comment and for hearings in Seattle, Washington; Denver, Colorado; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Sacramento, California; and Washington, D.C.

As you may know, Section 4(b)(5)(E) of the Endangered Species Act requires that we hold one public hearing on the proposal, if requested. In anticipation of such a request, we scheduled two informational meetings and public hearings on April 11 & 12, 2016, in Cody, Wyoming and Bozeman, Montana, respectively. Cody and Bozeman were selected because of their central location and proximity to portions of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Given the substantial expense related to conducting public hearings in these tight budget times and the fact that we satisfied Section 4(b)(5)(E)'s statutory requirement for public hearings on this rule, we are declining your request for additional public hearings.

The Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service has decided not to extend the public comment period. The public comment period will be open through May 10, 2016. Interested parties may submit comments either electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> (see the proposed rule for detailed instructions), or by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to Public comments Processing, Attention: Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2016-0042, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803. The Service may reopen the public comment period once the States of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming have finalized their state plans and regulations.

If you need any additional information or wish to discuss this matter further, please feel free to contact me at the above address.

Sincerely,

Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator