



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center
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February 9, 1996

Dr. Ernie Ables, President
Idaho Chapter
The Wildlife Society
1691 Highway 99
Troy, ID 83871

Nancy Warren, President
Montana Chapter
The Wildlife Society
Flathead National Forest
1935 Third Avenue East
Kalispell, MT 59901

Dear Dr. Ables and Ms. Warren:

As I mentioned on our recent telephone conversations, the National Wildlife Federation, along with several partner organizations representing conservation, forest industry, and labor constituencies, has been developing a proposal for grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem. After more than two years of discussions, we have arrived at a draft proposal that advocates reintroduction, use of the experimental population provision of the Endangered Species Act, and designation of a citizen management committee (actually a public/private committee) to set recovery policy. This proposal, albeit in a slightly earlier version, was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last year during the scoping period of the National Environmental Policy Act process.

Our approach to recovery in the Bitterroot focuses on the sociopolitical challenges of large carnivore reintroduction. As such, it does not explicitly detail reintroduction techniques, population monitoring methods, or population linkage to other grizzly ecosystems. Nor does it examine the availability of donor bears in Canadian populations. We believe that the responsible state and federal agencies, having implemented the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan for decades and having successfully translocated wolves to the Bitterroot and Yellowstone, are well-equipped to design these components of a recovery strategy. Our proposal does advocate a new, and possibly controversial, approach to policy formulation and conflict resolution, one that we believe "fairly brokers" authority -- and thus responsibility -- between federal, state, and local players.

We understand that USFWS plans to include our proposal, as well as several others, as an alternative in the draft EIS that

is currently under preparation. The DEIS should be released within the next two months.

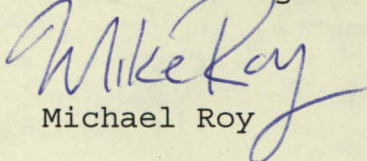
Even though we have already submitted scoping comments, we have continued to refine our proposal to incorporate newly identified scientific and social factors of importance. We have now reached a "final draft" stage where we could benefit greatly from review -- and if appropriate, endorsement -- by the greater community of wildlife scientists.

With this in mind, I request that the Idaho and Montana Chapters of The Wildlife Society designate a review committee to examine the enclosed proposal, which is presented in the form of a federal "special rule," and offer a scientific and social assessment of its potential for implementation and eventual success. Please identify any areas of improvement that the committee views as essential to recovery of a grizzly bear population in the Bitterroot.

While the proposal is the sole document that we would like to have reviewed, I have enclosed a packet of press and other supporting materials that place it in context. Within the next week, I will also forward a map to you that outlines our proposed experimental area.

I would greatly appreciate TWS review prior to release of the draft EIS. Please contact me at your convenience with any questions. Thanks in advance for your members' efforts.

With best regards,


Michael Roy

cc: Jon Haufler, Conservation Affairs, Idaho Chapter TWS
Dan Johnson, ROOTS
Seth Diamond, IFIA
Hank Fischer, DOW