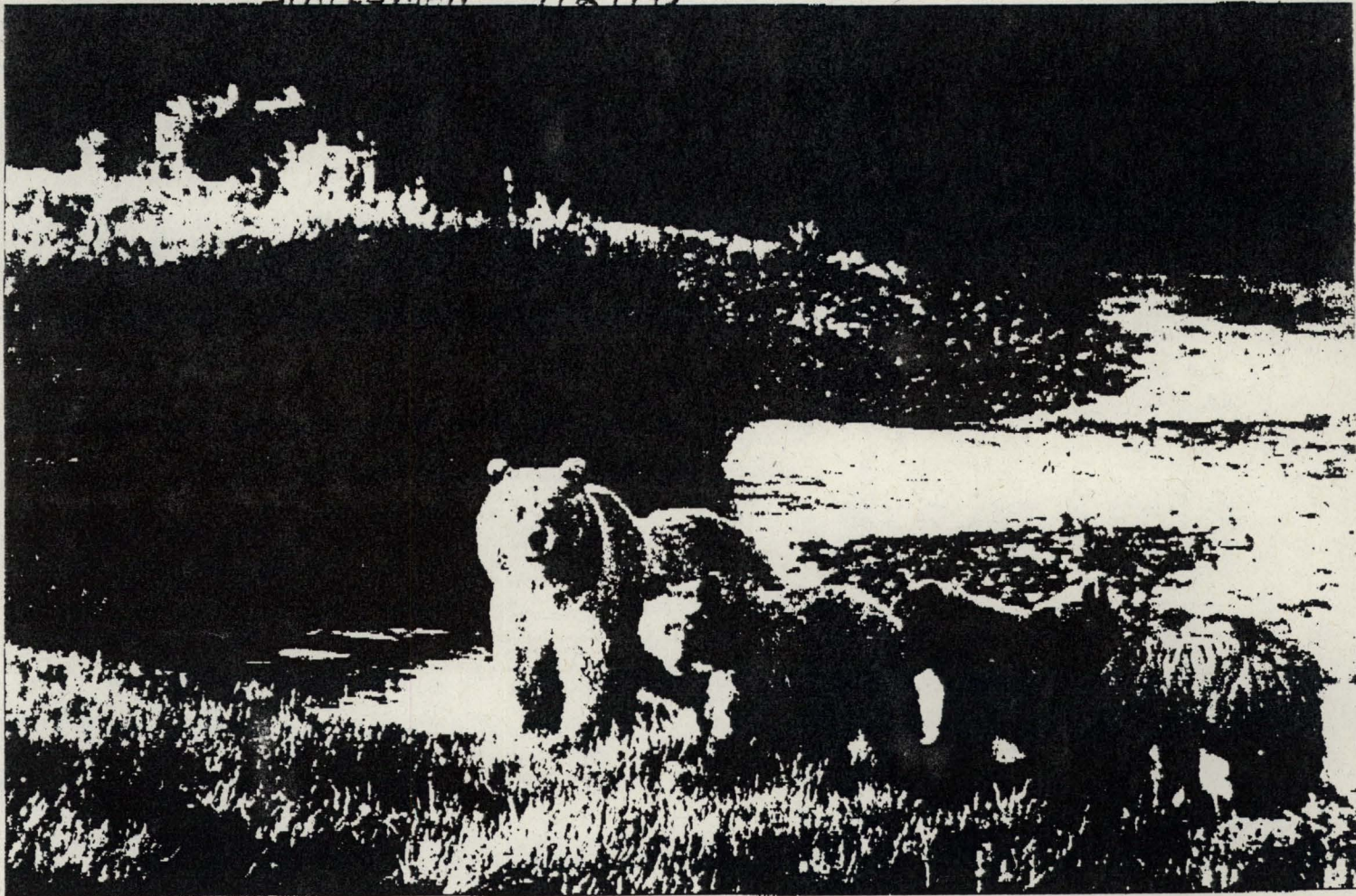


Return of the grizzly

This time, ordinary folk will be involved in restoring an animal to the Northwest

STATESMAN 7/24/95



Gannett News Service photo

Some in the timber industry are concerned that the return of the grizzly bear will mean less access to the trees they need to harvest

By Ken Miller
Gannett News Service

OROFINO — Talk to most people in this timber town about federal plans to return the grizzly to the neighboring wilderness, and sooner or later the conversation turns to such things as gunpowder and shovels.

But scratch a little deeper and pour another cup of coffee, and something remarkable happens.

Yes, the grizzly's return could mean that vast stands of trees badly needed by the marginal mills may remain off limits as bear habitat. But the bear is coming, and maybe there's a way to live with it and still hold onto a way of life that spans generations.

Unfolding this summer in frightened Idaho timber towns



Bill Mulligan, of Weyerhaeuser's Kamiah operations, likes that the plan calls for citizen involvement.

and across the spectacular Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in Hamilton, Mont., is an experiment that could change forever the way America deals with en-

dangered species.

If it works — if a fragile coalition of environmentalists and timber operators can prove the Bitterroots are big enough for bears and people — it would be the first time in the history of the Endangered Species Act that regular citizens have been trusted to manage a protected species to benefit the species, as well as humans.

If it doesn't, the plan's supporters say, grizzly bears may never be returned to the Bitterroot. And if they are, they may not survive.

Under the plan, seven bear-committee members would be nominated by the governor of Idaho, four by the governor of Montana, and one each by the secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. The Fish and Wildlife Service could retrieve control if the citizen panel was not

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■ Of six grizzly recovery areas, Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot is among the most suitable for the bears. Page 5A.

helping recover the bear.

"Grizzly bears are incredibly adaptive," said Seth Diamond, wildlife program manager for the Intermountain Forest Industry Association. "There's no reason why you cannot have them in rural communities without bringing the resource to a halt."

Coming from the group that represents the region's forest products industry, that would have been heresy just two years ago. Timber operations and bears don't mix: Biologists say bears, especially grizzlies,

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Selway-Bitterroot area best for bears

By Ken Miller
Gannett News Service

IN THE SELWAY-BITTERROOT WILDERNESS — If Weyerhaeuser resource manager Bill Mulligan has his way, grizzly prints soon will join those of the black bear in the largest chunk of virgin wilderness in the Lower 48.

Of six grizzly recovery areas, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness is among the most suitable by virtue of its size and amount of undisturbed habitat.

"The lack of a grizzly bear on this habitat, it's not because of the way it's managed," Mulligan said. "It's not a habitat issue. People killed the bear. What we're trying to do is allow the bear to return and still have business."

There is no logging here, and that's why the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided in 1993 that the Selway-Bitterroot was worthy of consideration among a handful of sites for grizzly bear recovery.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is sifting through public comments and by June 1996 will recommend the terms for the grizzly's return. The options range from no recovery to an aggressive transplant program involving Canadian bears to restore a Bitterroot population.

Other sites are in various stages of recovery: Yellowstone National Park is fabled for its bears; the Northern Continental Divide has robust bear populations in Montana's Glacier National Park and Bob Marshall Wilderness, known around here simply as "The Bob."

Grizzly/From 1A STATESMAN 7/24/95

need big tracts of undisturbed wilderness. The Intermountain West, from the Rockies to the Cascades, is criss-crossed with logging roads that have sharply limited grizzly habitat.

And then there is the fear not only of the bear's mythical ferocity — its scientific name is *ursus arctos horribilis* — but of the regulations, restrictions and bureaucracy that will follow it to these mountains.

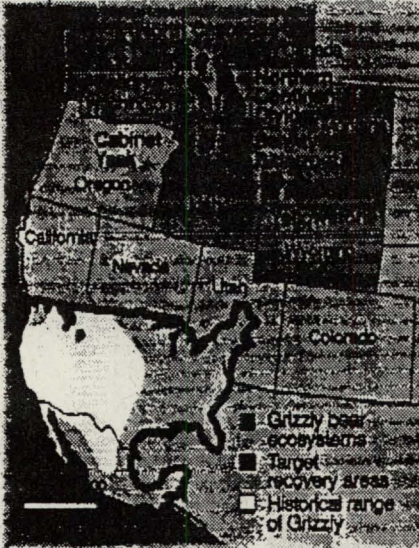
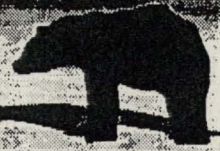
"Everybody in this area, except for a few groups, are opposed to grizzly bears in the area because they are an endangered animal," said Alex Irby, resource manager for Konkolville Lumber Co., which since 1947 has carved itself a notch alongside Cow Creek.

Fears still remain

Around the corner inside the Konkolville Steakhouse, a resident attending a public meeting

Plight of the grizzly

Grizzly bears in the lower 48 states were listed as a threatened species in 1975. Loss and degradation of habitat along with human-caused bear deaths have been the greatest obstacles to the animal's recovery. A new reintroduction plan hopes to revive the species.



Yellowstone	N. Continental Divide
Grizzly population 235	Grizzly population 400
Logging has spurred more road-building in the area. Oil and gas development has also threatened prime habitat.	Oil and gas development threatens bears living on the Rocky Mountain Front.

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Site focus

There are 6 target areas designated for the grizzly recovery plan. Each has seen its once-flourishing bear population dwindle. Here are the current minimum population estimates for each area:

- Northern Cascades**
Grizzly population 5
Area is capable of supporting a viable population.
- Selkirk & Cabinet Yaak**
Grizzly population 55
Logging and road building have caused the grizzly population to decline to near extinction.
- Selway-Bitterroot**
Grizzly population NA
This area will support grizzlies and could prove to be a critical link allowing bears to move between the Greater Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide ecosystems.

Gannett News Service

Additional sites include the Northern Cascades in Washington, the Selkirk in North Idaho and Canada, and the Cabinet-Yaak system in northern Idaho, western Montana, and Alberta. The overwhelming obstacle to

full grizzly recovery in the Lower 48, however, is that those recovery zones are islands in themselves. Cut off from each other by interstate highways, clear-cut forests and towns and cities, they might as well be sep-

arated by oceans. With the Bob Marshall bears 45 miles away, the Cabinet-Yaak bears at least 37 miles away and Yellowstone's 240 miles away, it is unlikely many bears will migrate from one recovery area to another. They will have to be shipped around to avoid inbreeding and other genetic problems.

But, leaning against a cedar high above the Selway River, Mulligan said there may be few better places for the grizzly than the Selway-Bitterroot. "Logging doesn't have a damn thing to do with it," he said of the bear's future here. "I don't think there's an Idahoan that I'm aware of that says the Selway-Bitterroot set-aside is not a good idea. This is a jewel."

"It's a huge area, especially when you run the Selway-Bitterroot into the Frank Church," he said of an adjoining wilderness to the south, the famed Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, where a collection of Canadian wolves was set free in January in another high-risk endangered-species rescue plan. The Selway-Bitterroot is so wild that only a single whitewater raft trip is allowed every day in an effort to keep the untamed nature of the wilderness intact. But it has changed over the years. Idaho's salmon populations are disappearing, and with them a staple in the bear's diet.

Who's in charge?

Bill Mulligan, a leading timber advocate of the citizen-control plan, remains concerned

that Fish and Wildlife will demand control.

"If the agency insists on limiting (timber) to an advisory role, we're out of here," he said of the delicate agreement that brought timber into the fold.

The FWS hasn't commented on the newest proposal, but many national environmental groups are adamantly opposed to letting citizens, particularly those involved in logging, determine the bear's fate.

Hamilton is separated from the bear recovery area by the Bitterroot Range, but it is expected that a healthy bear population will venture out and into the foothills around a town that has become a destination for transplanted Californians.

"You are, like it or not, reintroducing the bear on the border of the fastest-growing county in Montana," warned Ravalli County Commissioner Allen Horsfall Jr. "The bear needs isolation and a large habitat."

"I think it's just plain stupid to introduce it into the Bitterroot," said Harold Maus, who has lived in Hamilton 63 years. "They're a big, vicious animal, and anyone who has a conflict with them comes in second," he said.

Questions the intent

Maus then questioned the government's motives in restoring the bear to an area where it was exterminated before 1940.

"You folks are using endangered species to lock the American people out of our public lands," he scolded bear recovery leader John Weaver of the Fish and Wildlife Service at a public meeting. "This is why people are turning against the U.S. government."

Replied Weaver: "The ultimate goal is to get them off the endangered species list so they can be managed like other populations."

Return of the grizzly

▲ Environmental/industry coalition works to bring bears back to the Bitterroot

By SHERRY DEVLIN of the Missoulian

By this time next year, grizzly bears could again after a half-century's absence — call the Bitterroot Mountains home.

A first-of-its-kind coalition of industry and environmental groups is working to restore the big bears to the Bitterroot ecosystem with minimal impacts on local economies.

"This is unlike anything I have been involved with in endangered species management. It's a big step into the unknown," said Hank Fischer, northern Rockies representative for Defenders of Wildlife and author of a new book on the reintroduction of wolves to the Yellowstone ecosystem.

The coalition, which includes Defenders, the Intermountain Forest Industries Association, Potlatch



K. HARESTAD / Missoulian

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Grizzlies

Continued

Corp., National Wildlife Federation and Resource Organization on Timber Supply, is writing a proposal to bring back the Bitterroot grizzlies under federal-state-citizen management.

"For successful reintroduction, we have to have local support," said Seth Diamond, wildlife biologist for Intermountain Forest Industries. "The single biggest threat to the bears are people who don't want the bears there. Our concept gives control back to the people who have to live with the bears."

Theirs will be one of the proposals considered this summer, as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service starts its study of management alternatives for grizzlies in a 5,500-square-mile area that extends from the Salmon River north to the North Fork of the Clearwater River in western Montana and central Idaho.

Public "scoping" meetings — designed to identify issues and develop management alternatives for a new Bitterroot grizzly population — begin this week, with sessions Thursday in Missoula and Hamilton.

A draft environmental impact statement will follow by year's end, then public hearings and a final EIS by April of 1996 and a decision by next June.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has three preliminary alternatives for restoring the population lost to the Bitterroots in the late 1930s. They are:

■ **No action.** Grizzly bears could naturally recolonize the Bitterroot Mountains, moving down from northwestern Montana and north Idaho — but no extraordinary measures would be taken to get the bears to the Bitterroots.

■ **Reintroduction of an experimental population.** The Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed action, this alternative would bring four to six grizzlies from British Columbia (and possibly from recovered populations in the U.S.) to the Bitterroots for each of five years.

The released bears would be designated an experimental, non-essential population under the Endangered Species Act.

■ **Accelerated reintroduction.** In this proposal, 10 grizzly bears would be transplanted to the Bitterroots for each of five years. A 9,000-square-mile area from Interstate 90 south to the south end of the

River of No Return Wilderness would be delineated as a recovery zone.

The bears would be reintroduced as a fully protected species under the Endangered Species Act.

The coalition of conservation and industry groups intends to add a fourth alternative to the list by the July 20 deadline for first-round comments. Its proposal would create a state-federal-citizen commission that would take responsibility for management of an experimental Bitterroot grizzly population.

"The commission would have to achieve recovery, but could use whatever means they saw fit to respond to local needs," said Fischer. "As long as they achieved recovery. That isn't negotiable."

"I can't underscore enough how precedent setting this notion is of being able to come up with a package that meets both sides," Fischer said. "I am not aware of it ever before happening with endangered species."

Diamond said industry sees the Bitterroot reintroduction effort as an opportunity to "create a new model for endangered species management — to demonstrate that we can have thriving resource economies and endangered species recovery."

"This is the place we can demonstrate that it is not bears vs. people," Diamond said.

Tom France, an attorney at the National Wildlife Federation, credited the timber industry for its leadership in helping launch the reintroduction analysis with minimal controversy.

"Everyone is very pleased with the amount of cooperation that has occurred thus far," France said.

The Bitterroots would provide grizzly bears with a third major population in the Lower 48 states, with as many as 200 bears possible in the long term. Only two other populations have several hundred animals: the Glacier/Bob Marshall and Greater Yellowstone.

Historical evidence suggests that grizzlies were once common in the Bitterroot Mountains. But aggressive hunting and trapping eliminated the population in the late 1930s.

One report estimated that trappers killed 25 to 40 grizzlies in the Bitterroots every year at the turn of the century. One hunter boasted killing 13 grizzlies on an autumn trip in the Bitterroots one year.

Estimated time to recover the population is between 40 and 60 years.

GRIZZLY TIMELINE

Significant events in the history of grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot ecosystem:

1938 — Last recorded kill of a grizzly bear in the Bitterroot Mountains.

1975 — Grizzly bear listed as a threatened species in the contiguous United States.

1982 — Grizzly bear recovery plan calls for evaluation of Selway-Bitterroot country as a potential recovery area.

1986 — Status report concludes that the Selway-Bitterroot's resident grizzlies were eliminated 50 years ago.

1991 — Based on a five-year study of the Bitterroot ecosystem, bear scientists estimate the area could eventually support 200-plus grizzly bears. Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee endorses the Bitterroot as a grizzly recovery area.

1993 — An interagency task force, working with a citizen's group, drafts a chapter on Bitterroot grizzly recovery and calls for an environmental impact statement to evaluate the full range of recovery alternatives.

Here's when you can suggest issues and management alternatives for the reintroduction of grizzly bears to the Bitterroot Mountains of western Montana and central Idaho:

■ **July 6**, 4-8 p.m., Holiday Inn Parkside, Missoula

■ **July 6**, 4-8 p.m., Senior Citizen's Center, Hamilton

■ **July 10**, 4-8 p.m., Park Plaza, Helena

Written comments will be taken at the public scoping sessions and also by mail until July 20.

Send comments to Bitterroot Grizzly Bear EIS, P.O. Box 5127, Missoula, Mont. 59806.

Questions? Call John Weaver, team leader, Bitterroot grizzly bear environmental impact statement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 329-3254.

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Horizon Elementary student
wins wildflower poster
contest. Page 3B

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Friday, July 21, 1995

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Disparate sides join to suggest bear plan

Grizzlies would be reintroduced under program run by local groups

By Jonathan Brinckman
The Idaho Statesman

An unlikely coalition of environmentalists and timber industry representatives released a controversial plan Thursday for reintroducing grizzly bears to Idaho without the supervision of the federal government.

While the Endangered Species Act calls for endangered species efforts to be directed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this plan calls for the grizzly program in Idaho to be managed by a committee made up mainly of citizens and state officials.

The plan was developed by the Intermountain Forest Industry Association and ROOTS, both timber groups, and two environmental groups: The National Wildlife Federation and Defenders of Wildlife.

"We're pretty pleased that such different interest groups have come so far together," said Ted Koch, a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has proposed returning the large carnivore to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. "It's a unique and unprecedented situation."

The plan, however, faces serious obstacles.

It is being sharply criticized by other environmental groups, who worry that allowing local groups to direct programs to protect the bears could lead to weakened efforts.

And, Koch said, implementing it could require congressional modifications to the Endangered Species Act.

"The question is, where do we go from here?" he said.

Seth Diamond, wildlife program manager for the Intermountain Forest Industry, said the proposed plan could be the only way to return grizzlies to Idaho.

"For successful recovery, there has to be community acceptance," Diamond said. "We believe for there to be community acceptance, there has to be community involvement. There's no other choice."

Tom France, an attorney for the National Wildlife Federation, called it an accomplishment for environment and industry groups to find common ground.

The plan would establish a "Citizen Management Committee," made up of 13 people; seven from Idaho, four from Montana; one from the Fish and Wildlife Service and one from the U.S. Forest Service.

"We can move grizzlies into some of the best habitat in North America," France said. "We can also be innovative and learn if this type of cooperation approach can work in other situations involving wildlife controversies."