

**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MAMMALOGISTS  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BEAR RESEARCH & MANAGEMENT  
IUCN BEAR SPECIALISTS GROUP  
IDAHO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY  
MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY  
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**Scientists Call on Interior Secretary Norton  
To Reinstate Grizzly Bear Recovery Program**

WASHINGTON DC

Eight of the nation's leading scientific organizations dealing with wildlife science and ecology have called on Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton to go forward with plans to reintroduce grizzly bears to large areas of federally designated wilderness on the border between Idaho and Montana.

"There is unprecedented consensus of scientific opinion calling on the Interior Secretary to reverse course and reinstate the grizzly bear recovery plan, developed over years of public and expert review and comment," said Tom Franklin, The Wildlife Society's Wildlife Policy Director.

On June 20<sup>th</sup> Secretary Norton announced that she was abandoning a November 2000 grizzly bear recovery plan adopted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in favor of a "no action" alternative. This is a huge blow to current grizzly bear recovery efforts and is certain to delay the day when grizzlies can be removed from federal protections under the Endangered Species Act.

Reed Noss Ph.D., writing as President of the Society for Conservation Biology, said his Society "urges the Secretary of Interior to implement the Record of Decision adopted in November 2000

to restore grizzly bears, as scientific studies overwhelmingly suggest this action is essential to recovery of this native carnivore in the lower 48 states.”

The organizations calling on Secretary Norton to reinstate the grizzly recovery plan include the American Society of Mammalogists, the International Association for Bear Research and Management, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Bear Specialists Group, the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society, the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, the Society for Conservation Biology, the Wildlife Management Institute, and The Wildlife Society.

This is the first time in the history of the Fish and Wildlife Service or the Endangered Species Act that a proposal has been made to withdraw an existing Record of Decision.

“We believe that there is no sound basis for the no-action proposal, especially in light of the fact that it was made without federal, state or private scientific input,” said Len Carpenter Ph.D., President of The Wildlife Society. “No scientist knowledgeable about grizzly bears, about the grizzly bear recovery plan, or about what is necessary to recover endangered species, was consulted. Not even the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) was solicited before the decision was reached.” The IGBC is composed of federal and state agencies that have overseen grizzly recovery efforts for the last 20 years.

Scientific organizations point out that not only would the viability of existing grizzly bear populations actually be enhanced by the Bitterroot reintroduction, but the project was to be accomplished without drawing funds from recovery efforts elsewhere. Also, the combined cost of implementing the plan for the agencies involved -- the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, and the Nez Perce Tribe -- would be only about \$400,000/year over the next 5 years. This is a small amount for a conservation effort with such valuable and long-term consequences.

“The restoration plan rejected by Secretary Norton includes unprecedented efforts to reach a compromise between federal responsibility to recover grizzly bears and local concerns over the impacts of grizzly restoration,” stated Steve Sheffield Ph.D., Chair of the Conservation of Land Mammals Committee of the American Society of Mammalogists. “The plan was developed through negotiations between national conservation groups, timber industry and labor organizations active in the reintroduction area, and the public. Accommodations for public concerns included appointing a Citizens’ Management Committee, which would be composed of nominees by the Governors of Idaho and Montana, as well as federal and tribal representatives who would oversee and direct the recovery effort. Not only is this approach unique, but it could serve as a valuable model for future large carnivore recovery efforts,” said Sheffield.

The proposed grizzly bear reintroduction area, the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem, includes more than 5,700 square miles of designated wilderness that would provide appropriate habitat for grizzly bears, and is surrounded by more than 20,000 square miles of national forest, much of which is also suitable grizzly habitat.

Currently, there are only two moderately secure grizzly populations south of Canada. Combined, these populations occupy less than 2 percent of historic grizzly bear range, and they are too small

and isolated from each other to ensure their persistence over the long term. Viability studies have shown that restoration of a population in the Bitterroots would contribute significantly to the likelihood that grizzly bears will persist in the United States. In addition, there is sound scientific basis for believing that the Bitterroot reintroduction will provide a stepping stone between the existing populations and increase the likelihood of successful movements between them. This is integral to the survival of grizzly bears, as isolated populations are far more vulnerable to extinction than connected populations.

The Wildlife Society's Tom Franklin said, "The nation's leading scientific organizations are united in their belief that grizzly bears should be reintroduced to the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness area as proposed in last year's Record of Decision." He said, "It is disturbing that a decision of this magnitude would be made without consultation with knowledgeable scientists inside and outside of the Department of the Interior."

The government's press release and other materials on this topic may be viewed at:

<http://www.r6.fws.gov/endspp/grizzly/>

**Comments for the record from the scientific organizations on Secretary Norton's proposal are available on The Wildlife Society's web site at [www.wildlife.org/policy/grizzly.htm](http://www.wildlife.org/policy/grizzly.htm).**