

IDAHO CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

321 ADA STREET
BOISE, ID 83702

3 January 2002

James L. Caswell
Office of Species Conservation
300 North 6th Street
Boise, ID 83702

Dear Mr. Caswell:

The Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society commends the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Delisting Advisory Team for development of the draft *Recommendations for Grizzly Bear Management in Eastern Idaho* that attempts to find balance in a very contentious natural resource management issue. Overall, the draft plan, in conjunction with the *Conservation Strategy*, provides a framework that should allow the grizzly bear population to persist and expand into suitable habitats in eastern Idaho while addressing concerns of local citizens and resource users. In addition, we offer the following comments.

The recommendation that no grizzly bears from the Yellowstone population be translocated to areas outside their occupied range seems short sighted in light of the long-term conservation goals and needs of the species and the requirement of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the wildlife resources of the State. This recommendation precludes the logical use of this expanding population as a source of translocation stock should that ever become a reality for the Selway-Bitterroot recovery area, or to supplement the small populations of grizzly bears in the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak recovery areas of Idaho. The Department routinely uses transplant and translocation of rare or declining Idaho species (e.g., fisher, Idaho ground squirrel, California bighorn sheep, peregrine falcon, Columbia sharp-tailed grouse) as a wildlife management and species conservation tool. Why preclude this option for grizzly bears?

Various road-associated factors negatively affect habitats and populations of many wildlife species, including grizzly bear. The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project Scientific Assessment identified 13 factors that were consistently associated with roads in a

Caswell, 3 January 2002

Page 2

manner deleterious to terrestrial vertebrates. The Chapter encourages the Department and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest to work closely together to protect the existing roadless habitats within the PCA and the buffer area to minimize the negative effects of roads on grizzly bears, other wildlife species, and their habitats.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment the draft plan.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Harris
President

Office of Species Conservation

DIRK KEMPTHORNE
Governor



JAMES L. CASWELL
Administrator

300 North 6th Street
P.O. Box 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0195
(208) 334-2189
(208) 334-2172 FAX

December 10, 2001

Dear Interested Party:

Public comment is now being accepted on the draft Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Management Plan. The plan was drafted by a group of private citizens as required by Idaho law and will guide state management of the Yellowstone grizzly bears in Idaho once the bears are removed from the federal endangered species list.

The draft plan concerns only the grizzly bear population in the vicinity of Yellowstone National Park. No recommendations are presented for any other grizzly populations in Idaho.

Copies of the plan may be requested by contacting the Office of Species Conservation at 208-334-2189. Copies are also available for review at county commission offices in eastern Idaho. The plan is also available for review at any Idaho Fish and Game office and under "New Additions" in "Whats News" on the Fish and Game web site at:
<http://www2.state.id.us/fishgame/fishgame.html>.

Comments on the plan will be accepted through Friday, January 4, 2002 and should be sent to: Office of Species Conservation, 300 N. 6th Street, Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720. E-mail comments to: Gbcomment@osc.state.id.us

The public comments will be forwarded to the citizens committee, which was appointed by the Department of Fish and Game and the Governor's Office of Species Conservation.

Late last month, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission expressed concerns about the draft plan. Governor Kempthorne asked that the public have the opportunity to comment and encouraged the Office of Species Conservation to solicit public input. Fish and Game is assisting the Office of Species Conservation at the Governor's request. The public comments, as well as the concerns already expressed by the Fish and Game Commission, will be incorporated into the citizen committee's final draft.

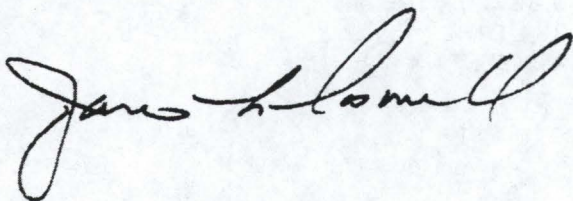
Grizzly Bear Management Plan Comment

December 10, 2001

Page 2 of 2

The final draft plan must be approved by the Fish and Game Commission, which must decide whether the plan ensures the protection of grizzly bears, as well as the health, safety, private property, and economic well-being of the citizens of the state of Idaho. If the Commission approves, the plan will be sent to the Idaho Legislature for final action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Caswell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Caswell".

JAMES L. CASWELL
Administrator

RF/tm

Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Management Plan

Public Comment DRAFT

What is the plan?

The Yellowstone population of grizzly bears has met the de-listing criteria established in the federal recovery plan. That means they may be removed from the endangered species list. If that happens, the state will again be in charge of this wildlife population. This plan is to guide state management of a de-listed population of grizzly bears in Eastern Idaho.

THIS PLAN DOES NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE PROPOSAL TO REINTRODUCE BEARS INTO THE SELWAY / BITTERROOT OR GRIZZLY MANAGEMENT IN OTHER AREAS, AND IT DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE LINKAGE OF YELLOWSTONE BEARS TO OTHER POPULATIONS. IT SIMPLY DESCRIBES HOW THE NATURAL EXPANSION OF THE YELLOWSTONE BEAR POPULATION SHOULD BE MANAGED IN IDAHO.

Who wrote the plan?

The Fish and Game Department did not write it. A De-listing Advisory Team - a group of private citizens, drafted it. These citizens were working under a new process that was created by the 2000 Idaho Legislature. That legislation created the Office of Species Conservation and spelled out the procedure for the creation of state management plans for listed species.

Who approves it?

After this public comment period, the draft will go to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission. They can approve it or ask the De-listing Advisory Team to make changes. Once the Fish and Game Commission approves a plan, it will be submitted to the Idaho Legislature. If the Legislature approves it, the plan will guide the future management of Yellowstone grizzlies in Idaho. Your comments will go to both the Commission and the Legislature.

Does the plan expand habitat protection and restrict additional access for bear protection?

No. Road access and habitat protection measures inside the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) are already in place. Grizzly bears will be allowed to expand naturally into biologically suitable and socially acceptable areas.

Does the plan list areas where bears will not be allowed?

No. The plan recognizes the fact that bears will occupy areas outside the PCA. Bears that can exist outside the PCA without causing problems will be allowed to live in those areas.

Bears that cause problems will be discouraged, trapped and relocated, or killed, depending on the individual situation.

Will private property rights and human safety be protected? Will damage to livestock be paid?

Yes. The management plan specifies that bears that threaten human safety will be killed. Bears causing chronic livestock depredation will be removed. Damage claims will be handled as they currently are handled for black bears and mountain lion.

How does the plan help the bears and prevent possible re-listing in the future?

Bears are opportunists and omnivores. They can adapt to a wide variety of food sources and living conditions. The biggest threats to grizzly bears are habituation to human food sources and direct conflicts with people. Both these problems can be addressed through active, aggressive, ongoing information and education programs called for in the management plan. Additionally, the plan identifies proactive management strategies and calls for active community involvement that will help create opportunities for co-existence between bears and people

Will bears be hunted?

Yes, eventually. Grizzly bear populations grow very slowly at best. It will be years before there is a harvestable surplus outside the PCA, but the plan lays out how the population should be monitored and how hunting should be used as a management tool. The plan recognizes the potential for a harvestable surplus. The plan also says hunting methods and opportunities for other species will not be further constrained by the expansion of grizzlies.

Who pays?

The plan suggests that since grizzly bears are a national priority, it makes sense that all U.S. citizens help pay for their management. It also recognizes that the state has an obligation to fund some part of the management costs.