

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 13, 2016

Agenda Item: Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Tri-State Memorandum of Agreement

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) grizzly bear population is recovered and has been proposed for delisting. The proposed delisting rule includes demographic criteria, including mortality thresholds that will need to be met to maintain recovery. The states of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming along with state and federal habitat managers are in the process of updating a Conservation Strategy that has guided management since 2007, including demographic criteria required in the recovery plan and proposed delisting rule. The Conservation Strategy will serve as the post-delisting management plan for GYE grizzly bears. A proposed appendix to the updated Conservation Strategy is a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Montana, Idaho and Wyoming that defines the process by which the three states will coordinate the management and allocation of discretionary mortality of grizzly bears in the GYE. By agreeing to the stipulations of the MOA, the states will ensure annual total mortality rates are not exceeded within the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA) for independent males, independent females and dependent young, as set forth in the following table. These adjustable mortality rates were calculated as those necessary to manage the population around the 2002-2014 Chao 2 modeled average (\bar{X} = 674; 95% CI = 600-747) which occurred during the time period when the population reached a biological carrying capacity.

	Total Grizzly Bear Population Estimate		
	≤674	675-747	>747
Total mortality rate for independent <u>FEMALES</u>.	<7.6%	9%	10%
Total mortality rate for independent <u>MALES</u>.	15%	20%	22%
Total mortality rate for dependent young.	<7.6%	9%	10%

Public Involvement Process & Results: The draft MOA was put out for 30 day comment period. FWP received 80 comments specific to the MOA. The overwhelming majority of comments were focused on whether or not bears should be delisted and whether or not hunting should occur. Very few pertained to the MOA itself or its content. FWP did make some minor edits to the MOA to make it consistent with the proposed delisting rule or recovery plan amendment. The basic components of the MOA (e.g., the above table) are also in the proposed federal delisting rule, recovery plan amendment, and draft conservation strategy, which were all recently available for public comment through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Idaho and Wyoming Fish and Wildlife Commissions have reviewed and approved the MOA pending final approval by MT.

Alternatives and Analysis: An alternative is to not enter into the MOA, and rely on the three states to meet the intent of the MOA through coordinated management. However, this provides less regulatory certainty to critics of delisting, and will make delisting more subject to litigation challenge.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the Commission approve the MOA with incorporated edits.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve Tri-State Memorandum of Agreement Regarding the Management and Allocation of Discretionary Mortality of Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, including the stipulation that all discretionary mortality will cease inside the DMA, except if required for human safety, if the model averaged Chao2 population estimate falls below 600.