

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS REGION 1 ANNUAL BEAR REPORT



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This annual report is not peer reviewed, therefore data interpretations are subject to change

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our many coworkers, colleagues, and volunteers, all of whom are essential to making bear management successful in Region One.

Liz Templin’s hard work, determination, and dedication was a considerable asset to the people and bears of the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (CYE). We are profoundly thankful for Liz, and to all our FWP coworkers and USFWS colleagues, for their assistance in 2022. We sincerely thank the entire US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Research Team, and for the many dedicated people that work for the USFS Kootenai, Idaho Panhandle, and Lolo National Forests. Many thanks to Defenders of Wildlife and the Yaak Valley Forest Council for supplying electrified fencing materials and bear-resistant containers to the residents of the CYE. Thank you to the Hecla Mining Company (formally Revett Minerals) for providing the initial funding for the CYE grizzly bear management specialist. While the position is now funded by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, we are thankful that the company continues to provide funding for program operations and for the assistance of a seasonal technician. We would also like to thank the public. Without their support and efforts to reduce attractants to bears, recovering the grizzly bear population in the CYE would not be possible.

Courtney Lockerby and Mackenzie Taylor demonstrated dedication to the people and bears in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), often working long hours in what was one of the busiest



seasons on record and we thank them for their hard work. Thank you to the Montana Outdoor Legacy Foundation (MTOLF) and private individuals for providing funding and donations for the purchase of additional field equipment in the NCDE. Defenders of Wildlife supported residents and MFWP staff with their cost share and electrified fencing programs. Our thanks to Rory Trimbo and Ben Jimenez with US Fish and Wildlife Service. Luke Lamar and Swan Valley Bear Resources helped residents in the Swan Valley install and maintain electric fencing, provide bear resistant containers, and information and outreach. Bigfork Bear Aware helped with domestic fruit collection and donation.

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of human-bear conflict management in Region 1 is to minimize and mitigate conflicts between bears and people. Our objectives are to:

- Provide quick and effective resolutions to human-bear conflicts as they occur
- Provide proactive, effective, and permanent human-bear conflict solutions and tools
- Promote the secure storage of human-related food attractants on public and private lands
- Develop positive working relationships with private landowners, local governments, public and private land administrators, not-for-profit organizations, and MFWP's federal partners
- Provide informational and educational outreach to the public, local government, and media.

Working one-on-one with people is one of the most effective solutions for mitigating conflicts between people and bears. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) bear management specialists directly assist Montana residents and visitors to find effective and permanent human-bear conflict solutions. Because both grizzly bears and black bears may be found throughout northwest Montana, we prevent, reduce, and resolve human-bear conflicts wherever they occur.

Education and outreach programs are designed to increase public awareness and understanding of grizzly bear biology, habitat, management, research, and population status. These programs are also designed to help the public live, work, and recreate safely in bear country, and to prevent human-bear conflicts on both private and public lands. We attend public festivals, fairs, and events, providing bear-themed outreach and informational materials. We attend classrooms, schools, and school events with presentations and interactive programs for students of all ages. We provide presentations, training, workshops and interactive programs for the public, state and federal agency employees, private business employees, clubs, organizations, and non-profit groups. We also offer free public electrified fencing and bear spray safety training workshops. While difficult to statistically measure, the education, outreach and prevention parts of this program have had a positive effect in preventing human-bear conflicts and increasing public understanding of both black and grizzly bears.

Preventing bears from accessing human-related food resources (attractants) is key towards eliminating most conflicts between bears and people. Human-bear conflict prevention can include helping people understand bears and their normal behaviors, and providing information and resources for effective prevention tools, such as electrified fencing. Successful resolutions to an existing human-bear conflict should be timely, effective, and reasonable. Contacting and working towards a conflict resolution with a reporting party is important to maintain public trust in MFWP bear management. If conflict resolution is not effective, then conflicts may continue to occur, as there will always be bears present in northwest Montana. If the solution to a conflict isn't economically or physically achievable for the reporting party,



then it will neither be implemented nor effective. Solutions to a conflict may include, but are not limited to:

1. Advising the reporting party to secure the attractant:
 - inside a structure or building that has 4 walls, solid roof, and latching, solid door
 - inside an Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) certified container
 - behind an electrified fence
2. Loaning the reporting party:
 - an IGBC certified container
 - a temporary electrified fence
 - a temporary scare device
3. Assisting the reporting party with building a permanent electrified fence
4. Removing the bear from the location, either through hazing or capture/relocation or humane euthanasia

Education, bear-resistant containers, and electrified fencing are the primary tools used to resolve a conflict between bears and people, particularly on private lands. Relocation or permanent removal of a bear may also be used as a tool; however often this is a temporary solution that doesn't directly address the source for the most common cause of a conflict, which is unsecured attractants.

The human-bear conflicts in this report include livestock depredation, building damage, home entry, and generally accessing, or attempting to access, attractants on both public and private lands. The numbers reported here cannot account for all human-bear conflicts in Region 1 in 2022, as many people may not have reported their conflicts with bears. Human-bear conflicts handled exclusively by MFWP Law Enforcement may not be reported here. Human-bear conflicts are reported by location only. Although it might take several visits and/or phone conversations to resolve a conflict at an individual location, only 1 report of a conflict is reported until that conflict with that bear is resolved. Conflicts that occur at multiple locations by a single bear are recorded separately.

CABINET-YAAK ECOSYSTEM

Management Area

The Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (CYE) is a recognized recovery area for the federally threatened grizzly bear. Located in the Cabinet-Purcell Mountain region in northwest Montana and northeastern Idaho, the population is estimated at approximately 60 bears (Kasworm et al, 2022). The CYE is largely comprised of public lands managed by the Kootenai, Lolo, and Panhandle National Forests. The Cabinet Mountain Wilderness encompasses 381km² of higher elevations within the recovery area. The primary area of responsibility for the CYE grizzly bear management program includes the CYE recovery zone and the communities adjacent to the recovery area in Sanders and Lincoln Counties (Figure 1.).



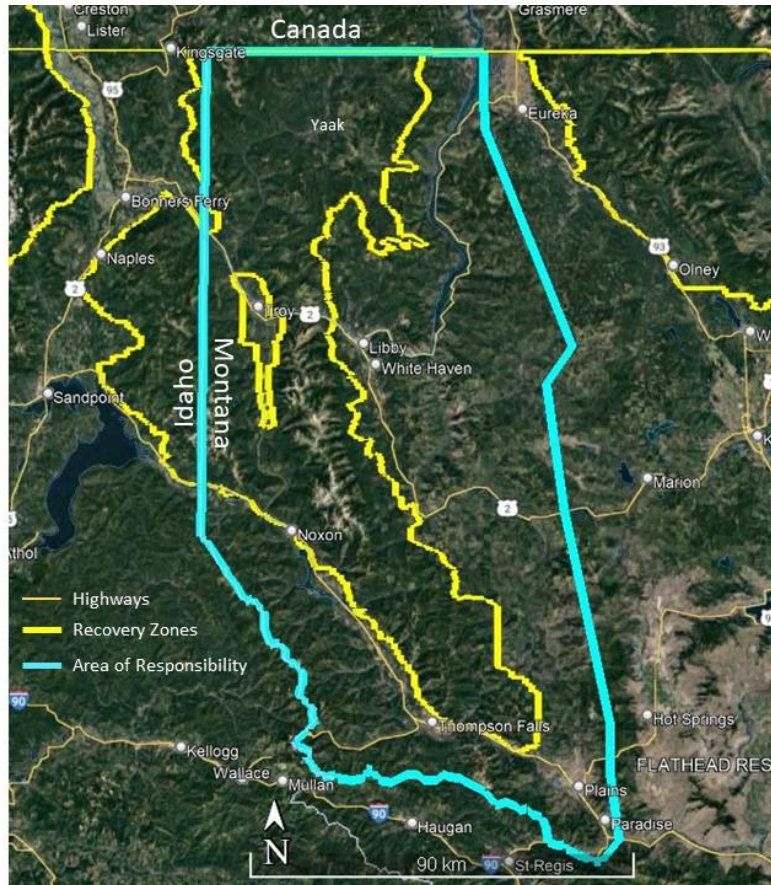


Figure 1. Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem and surrounding area of the CYE conflict specialist’s responsibility

Information and Outreach

We provided Bear Safety and Spray Training for the Libby Outdoor Recreation Association, to all Kootenai National Forest (KNF) employees on the Three Rangers District, to new and seasonal KNF employees on the Cabinet Ranger District, and to Friends of Scotsman Peaks volunteers. We also provided bear safety and spray training for employees and students with Elk Creek Outfitters, patrons of the Cabinet Mountain Brewery, and kids enrolled in the summer camping program with Project Ascent. We provided electric fencing training to employees with the Yaak Valley Forest Council, and to employees with Idaho Fish and Game, US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. We gave bear awareness presentations at the Thompson Falls Library and for residents with the Thompson Chain of Lakes Homeowners Association. We also had a bear awareness education booth set up for 2 days of the Huckleberry Festival in Trout Creek.

Human-Bear Conflicts; Prevention and Resolution

We received a total of 324 bear-related calls in 2022. Of these, 279 were confirmed human-bear conflicts. There were 267 reported conflicts with black bears and 7 reported conflicts with grizzly bears. There were also 5 reported conflicts where the bear species was unknown. Unsecured garbage, fruiting trees, and poultry were the top 3 causes of reported human-bear conflicts in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem. However, there were 24 different types of attractants documented as the primary cause of a human-bear conflict.

Of the 324 bear-related calls we received, 25 were *not* active human-bear conflicts. These calls were regarding bears observed in either front-country or back-country settings, reports of bear tracks, vehicle or train mortalities, sightings of injured bears, bears seeking refuge up non-fruit bearing trees, and questions or concerns. Even though these calls were not conflict related, conflict prevention and typical bear behavior were discussed with each caller, as applicable. The number and type of non-conflict calls will vary widely from year to year.

We received 20 calls that specifically requested help on preventing a conflict with a bear. Assistance ranged from a discussion of their situation and conflict prevention needs, a site visit, or helping the resident design and/or construct a permanent electrified fence. Calls requesting conflict prevention assistance vary widely from year to year and may reflect whether the resident had previously experienced a conflict with bears.

Temporary, portable electrified materials are loaned to residents to prevent a conflict from occurring and to resolve a conflict after it has occurred. Electrified fences, mats, and screening are a safe way to secure outdoor items from bears that cannot be secured in another way, such as fruiting trees and poultry. In 2022, we used temporary electrified fences at 38 locations (Table 1.), and assisted residents with building 2 permanent electrified fences. To the best of our knowledge, the electrified materials used in 2022 were entirely effective at preventing or eliminating human-bear conflicts. Temporary scare devices (i.e. Amtek’s Critter Gitter, Margo Supplies Gadfly) were used at 50 locations to resolve a conflict or were used cooperatively with another management tool.

Table 1. Number of electrified fences and materials used in the CYE since the inception of the loan program

YEAR	# of E-fences	YEAR	# of E-fences
2009	8	2016	23
2010	6	2017	25
2011	17	2018	20
2012	12	2019	32
2013	12	2020	41
2014	17	2021*	-
2015	40	2022	38
*No data available for 2021		Total: 291	

As of 2022, after many years coordinating with Lincoln County, all waste transfer sites in the CYE area of Lincoln County are now secured and unable to be accessed by bears. Most residents in the CYE area haul their garbage to either a transfer site or to 1 of 2 landfills. Waste hauling services by private companies are limited, and only 1 company offers customers IGBC certified containers. Several varieties of IGBC certified containers are now available for purchase by individuals from box stores, however they are often unaffordable. We have an IGBC certified container loan program in the CYE, and often those containers are used as the primary tool to prevent or resolve a conflict. Additionally, the Yaak Valley Forest Council also offers a IGBC certified container loan program to residents throughout the Yaak Valley. There are at least 40 IGBC certified containers on permanent or long-term loan in the CYE area and an additional 7 were used to resolve conflicts in 2022.

On-going coordination continues with Lincoln and Sanders Counties to secure public waste transfer sites. Our primary role has been to help the counties identify funding for materials, and to help design effective and affordable bear-resistant fences. As of 2022, all the public waste transfer sites in Lincoln



County portion of the CYE are secure from bears. The remaining 2 public waste transfer sites in Trout Creek and Heron should be updated and similarly secured over the next several years as planned by Sanders County.

Culvert-style traps were used at 44 locations, spanning over 176 trap nights, to help resolve a human-bear conflict. Traps were used cooperatively with other management tools at 22 of these locations. Of the 26 black bears that were captured, 17 were relocated, and 9 were humanely euthanized (Table 2). While this was the this was large number of black bears euthanized in one year in the CYE for management actions, very few grizzly bears have been euthanized for management reasons in the CYE (Table 3). In 2022, one female subadult grizzly bear was captured and humanely euthanized for extreme food-conditioning combined with habituation to people.

Table 2. Reported human-bear conflicts and subsequent captures for conflict resolution

Year	Black Bear: Conflicts	Black Bear: Captures	Grizzly Bear: Conflicts	Grizzly Bear: Captures
2007	60	4	2	3
2008	31	4	1	0
2009	36	9	2	0
2010	99	11	4	1
2011	81	5	18	2
2012	93	16	10	0
2013	45	4	4	0
2014	63	4	1	0
2015	293	39	4	1
2016	103	3	8	2
2017	75	4	19	2
2018	39	0	11	0
2019	32	1	7	1
2020	52	2	3	0
2021*	-	-	-	-
2022	267	26	7	1

*No data available for 2021

Table 3. Grizzly bears euthanized in MFWP management actions from 2007-2022

Date	ID	Sex	Age	Reason
11/10/2019	770	M	25	Breaking into buildings
06/24/2022	893	F	3	Food conditioned and habituated

Grizzly Bear Mortalities

The CYE contains the smallest established population of grizzly bears in the state of Montana. In the 1980's the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) conducted research in the Cabinet Mountains and concluded that there were likely fewer than a dozen grizzly bears remaining in the Cabinet Mountains. In 2012, the US Geological Survey concluded that there were approximately 25 bears in the Cabinet



Mountains and roughly 50 in the entire Ecosystem. Continued research by the USFWS shows that as of 2021 there are still only about 60 grizzly bears throughout the CYE. Small bear populations, such as the CYE, can be highly affected by human-caused grizzly bear mortalities, therefore preventing deaths to the extent feasible is important to recovery of the population. There were 4 known grizzly bear mortalities in the Montana portion of the CYE in 2022 (Table 4). One of these mortalities, a female in her 20's, appeared to be of natural causes. The remaining 3 were human-caused; an adult female was killed by a vehicle south of Libby, an adult male was killed by a resident north of Libby, and a sub-adult female was humanely euthanized in a management action by MFWP south of Libby, as previously described.

Table 3. Known human-caused grizzly bear mortalities in the Montana portion of the CYE 2007-2022

Year	ID	Sex	Age	Reason
2007	357	F	11	Self defense
2008	None	Unknown	3	Unknown
2008	635	F	4	Train
2008	790	F	3	Illegal
2009	286	F	18	Self defense
2010	None	M	Adult	Unknown
2011	None	M	Adult	Mistaken ID
2011	799	M	4	Mistaken ID
2011	732	M	3	Self defense
2012	342	M	19	Unknown
2014	79575279	M	6	Self defense
2015	None	M	Unknown	Illegal
2018	821	M	4	Unknown
2018	McGregor	M	3	Unknown
2019	Unknown	F	Adult	Self defense
2019	770	M	25	Management removal
2020	Unknown	F	Adult	Unknown
2022	893	F	3	Management removal
2022	726	M	14	Property damage
2022	Unknown	F	Adult	Vehicle

Cabinet Mountains Grizzly Bear Augmentation Program

To prevent extirpation and genetic inbreeding, the USFWS selectively captured 4 young female grizzly bears in Canada, from 1990-1994, and relocated them to the Cabinet Mountains of Montana. After following these bears movements and breeding, this augmentation program was determined to be successful. In 2005, MFWP partnered with USFWS to assist with the capture and relocation of grizzly bears for the program. Since then, 18 grizzly bears have been selectively captured in the western portion of the NCDE and relocated to the Cabinet Mountains (Table 5). In 2022, because of poorer than average berry production, no grizzly bears were augmented into the Cabinet Mountains.



Table 5. Cabinet Mountain Grizzly Bear Augmentation Program 1990-2022

Year	ID	Sex	Age	Known fate
1990	218	F	5	Dropped collar 1991; observed 1992
1992	258	F	6	Died 1993
1993	286	F	2	Killed 2009
1994	311	F	3	Unknown
2005	A1	F	8	Dropped collar 2007
2006	782	F	2	Dropped collar 2008; DNA detected 2012
2008	635	F	4	Killed 2008
2008	790	F	3	Killed 2008
2009	715	F	10	Dropped collar 2010
2010	713	M	3	Dropped collar 2011
2010	714	F	3	Dropped collar 2010
2011	723	M	2	Dropped collar 2012
2011	725	F	2	Dropped collar 2013
2012	918	M	2	Dropped collar 2014
2013	919	M	2	Dropped collar 2014
2014	920	F	2	Dropped collar 2016
2014	921	F	2	Died 2015
2015	924	M	2	Killed 2015
2016	926	M	3	Dropped collar 2017
2018	927	M	2	Dropped collar 2020
2019	923	F	2	Dropped collar 2022
2019	892	M	2	Killed 2020

NORTHERN CONTINENTAL DIVIDE ECOSYSTEM

Management Area

The Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) is a recognized grizzly bear recovery area that extends from the greater Glacier National Park area southwards towards Lincoln, Montana along the continental divide. The NCDE contains Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex and the adjacent public and private lands. Currently the NCDE grizzly bear population is estimated at approximately 1,200 (Costello, 2021).

The portion of the NCDE contained within FWP Region 1 (west of the continental divide) is split (Figure 2) and covered by 2 bear/lion specialists and referred to in this report as Flathead Valley North and Flathead Valley South. The primary area of responsibility for Flathead Valley North extends from the Eureka area southwards to Whitefish, Columbia Falls the North Fork, and the Middle Fork corridor to Marias Pass. The primary area of responsibility for Flathead Valley South extends South of Whitefish to the Seeley/Swan Divide, West to McGregor Lake, East of Hungry Horse Reservoir, and the South Fork and Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex to the continental divide.

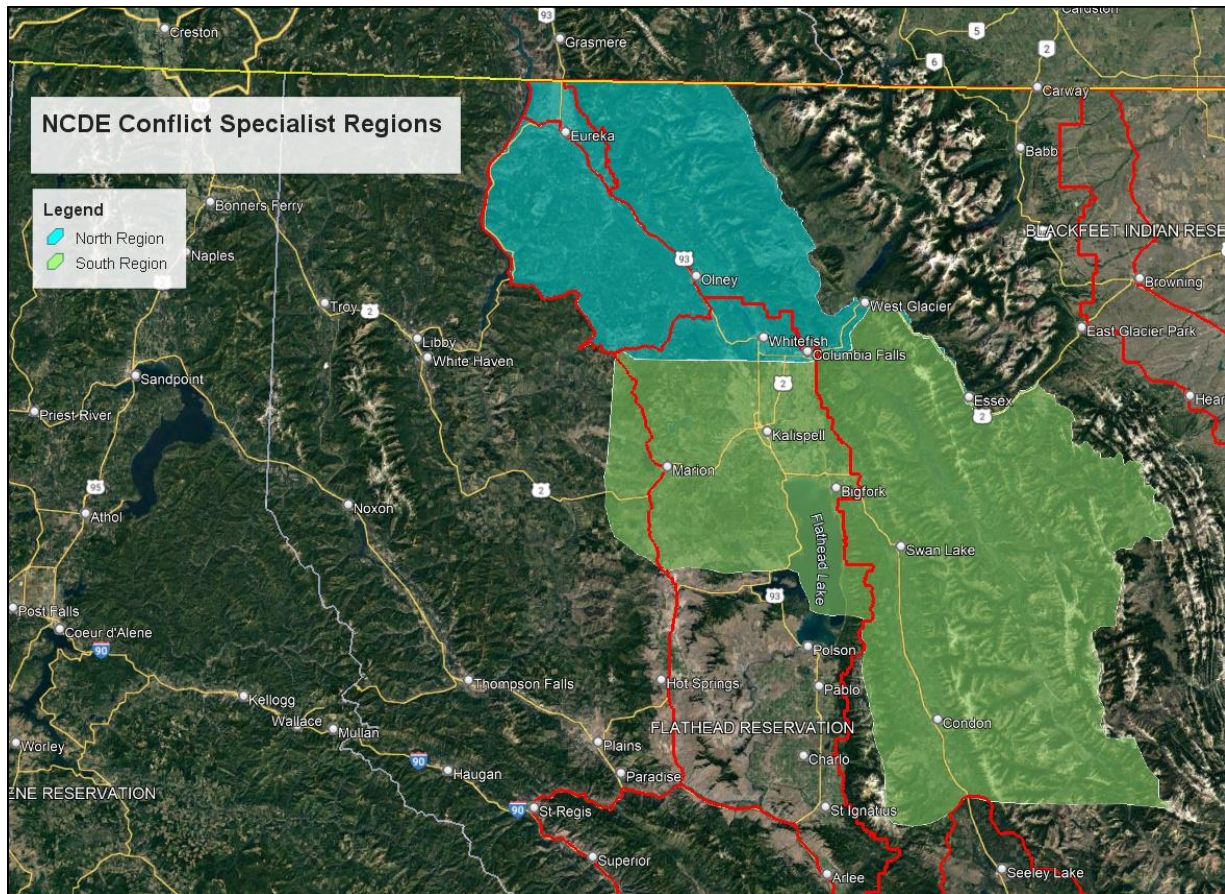


Figure 2. Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and the conflict specialist's areas of responsibilities

Information and Outreach

Flathead Valley – North

We gave presentations for the Many Lakes and Ironhorse Homeowners Associations, Girl Scouts, Youth Alliance Health Rocks camp hosted in Ferndale, Trego Bible Camp, and the West Glacier Recreational Aviation Foundation. We also gave 2 presentations to the Whitefish Legacy Partners, provided training for the employees at the Flathead Lake Lodge, and attended the Polebridge Bear Fair, Whitefish Bear Fair and the Family Forestry Expo.

Flathead Valley – South

We gave presentations for the Many Lakes Homeowners Association, and North Valley Search and Rescue, and provided training for the Northwest Montana Trappers Association. We also attended the Swan Valley Bear Fair, 3 meetings with Bear Aware Bigfork, the Condon Community Meeting, and the Family Forest Expo.

Human-Bear Conflicts; Prevention and Resolution

Flathead Valley – North

We received a total of 750 (594 black bear and 156 grizzly bear) bear-related calls in 2022. Of these, there were 281 black bear conflict calls and 107 grizzly bear conflict calls. Unsecured garbage (73%), unsecured human foods, and domestic fruit trees were the top 3 causes of reported black bear conflicts. However, there were 8 different types of attractants documented as the primary cause of a human-bear conflict. For grizzly bears unsecured garbage, poultry, and grain-based feeds were the top 3 causes of conflicts.

Flathead Valley – South

We received a total of 1,191 (897 black bear and 294 grizzly bear) bear-related calls in 2022. Of these, there were 637 black bear conflict calls and 202 grizzly bear conflict calls. Unsecured garbage, unsecured fruit, and poultry were the top 3 causes of reported black bear conflicts. However, there were 8 different types of attractants documented as the primary cause of a human-bear conflict. For grizzly bears unsecured garbage, poultry, and livestock feed were the top 3 causes of conflicts.

Of the 750 total calls received in Flathead Valley- North, there were 313 black bear and 62 grizzly bear non-conflict calls, sightings, or other types of reports. Of the 1,191 total calls received Flathead Valley - South, there were 260 black bear and 92 grizzly bear non-conflict calls, sightings, or other types of reports. Non-conflict calls consisted of bears observed in either front-country or back-country settings, reports of bear tracks, vehicle or train mortalities, sightings of injured bears, and general questions or concerns. Even though these calls were not conflict related, conflict prevention and typical bear behavior were discussed with each caller, as applicable. The number and type of these non-conflict calls will vary widely from year to year.

Not all calls require an onsite visit as many can be addressed via phone. The need for onsite visits is evaluated on a case-by-case basis based on the type of conflict that is occurring. These may be reoccurring bear visits (despite attractants being secured), unusually aggressive-type bear behavior, and attractants may not be easily or quickly secured. In the northern portion, there were 82 onsite visits for black bear conflict calls and 69 onsite visits for grizzly bears. There were 155 black bear site visits in the southern portion and 78 grizzly bear onsite visits. In total, 237 black bear and 147 grizzly bear onsite visits were conducted in the NCDE in 2022.

Temporary, portable electrified materials are loaned to residents to prevent a conflict from occurring and to resolve a conflict after one has occurred. Electrified fences, mats, and screening are an effective and safe way to secure outdoor items from bears that cannot be secured in another way, such as fruiting trees and poultry. Motion sensor alarms (i.e. Amtek's Critter Gitter, Margo Supplies Gadfly) are an effective preventative, but temporary, tool used to deter bears. We also loan residents throughout the Flathead Valley IGBC certified bear resistant containers, and they are often used as the primary tool to resolve, or prevent, a conflict.

In 2022, the northern portion loaned out 48 temporary electrified fences and/or electrified fencing materials, 23 motion sensor alarms, 4 IGBC certified bear resistant containers, and built 11 permanent electrified fences. The southern portion loaned out 22 temporary electrified fences and/or electrified fencing materials, 4 motion sensor alarms, 5 IGBC certified bear resistant containers, and built 4 permanent electrified fences.



Culvert-style bear traps were used, when necessary, alongside other management tools, to resolve human-bear conflicts. Of the 28 total bears captured and released in the northern portion, 5 of those were grizzly bears and 23 of those were black bears. Of the 46 bears captured in the southern portion, 16 of those were grizzly bears and 30 were black bears.

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of calls received, by type and species, and actions taken by area.

Table 6. Comparison of calls, conflicts, and management actions taken by bear species and area

North								
Spp	Calls	Other	Conflicts	On Site Visits	Preventative Actions	Bears Released	Bears Removed	Carcasses Recovered
BB	594	313	281	82	45	23	6	7
GB	156	62	107	69	46	5	6	1
Total	750	375	388	151	91	28	10	10
South								
Spp	Calls	Other	Conflicts	On Site Visits	Preventative Actions	Bears Released	Bears Removed	Carcasses Recovered
BB	897	260	637	155	58	30	6	7
GB	294	92	202	78	29	16	2	4
Total	1191	352	839	233	87	46	8	11

Spp = Species BB = Black Bear GB = Grizzly Bear

While many types of attractants remain available to bears, the 4 primary attractants for black bears were garbage, domestic fruiting trees, poultry, and human-related foods (Table 7). However, there were significant differences in the percentages when broken down between attractants. Just over 73% of calls in the North were of black bears in garbage, whereas only 25% of calls in the south were of black bears in garbage. In fact, the number of conflicts attributed to the 4 primary attractants for black bears in the south differed by less than 10%. There are extensive commercial cherry and apple orchards in the southern portion of the NCDE, while the northern portion primarily has domestic fruiting trees on private residences. Poultry (17.8%), primarily chickens, and human-related foods (15.3%) were the 2nd and 3rd most reported conflicts in the southern area. In the northern area, conflict related to 6 attractants combined made up the 26% of all remaining conflicts caused by black bears demonstrating the difference in attractants present between the Flathead North and Flathead South areas.



Table 7. Black bear attractants by area, reported as a percentage of all conflicts

Black Bear		
Attractant	North	South
	% of conflicts	% of conflicts
Garbage	73.2	25.0
Poultry	3.5	17.8
Bird Feeders	4.7	7.6
Human Foods	8.7	15.3
Pet Feed	2.0	8.8
Domestic Fruit Trees	7.5	20.3
Livestock Depredation	0.4	1.3
Livestock Feed	-	3.8

There was a disparity of the types of attractants that caused conflicts with grizzly bears. While, like black bears, garbage remained the primary cause of conflict with grizzly bears in the north, poultry was the primary cause of conflict with grizzly bears in the south, with garbage being a close second. Poultry and livestock feed (primarily chickens and chicken feed) were high in both the north and the south, however domestic fruit trees were a high cause of conflict in the south compared to the north, for the same reasons they are with black bears (Table 8).

Table 8. Grizzly bear attractants by area, reported as a percentage of all conflicts

Grizzly Bear		
Attractant	North	South
	% of conflicts	% of conflicts
Garbage	40.2	21.6
Poultry	24.4	23.0
Bird Feeders	2.4	2.7
Human Foods	3.7	2.7
Pet Feed	6.1	6.8
Domestic Fruit Trees	2.4	18.9
Livestock Depredation	4.9	4.0
Livestock Feed	15.9	20.3

Grizzly Bear Mortalities

Human-caused mortalities of female grizzly bears can have a big influence on the recovery of a grizzly bear population. By preventing and reducing human-bear conflicts, we hope to reduce the number of grizzly bears that are euthanized in a management action by MFWP. We only discuss here the grizzly bear known to have died in the Region 1 portion of the NCDE in 2022. For a more comprehensive discussion of grizzly bear mortalities in the NCDE, please refer to Cecily Costello’s 2023 annual report (Costello, 2023).

In 2022, 7 grizzly bears were known to have died or been removed from the Ecosystem in the northern portion of the Flathead Valley. Of these, 1 bear was killed by a vehicle and 6 were removed (humanely



euthanized or sent to a zoo) in an MFWP management action. Two of the removals were grizzly bear cubs of the year. These cubs were sent to an approved zoo facility as they were deemed too young to survive on their own in the wild. Thirteen black bears were known to have died in the northern part of the region due to non-hunting mortalities. Six black bears were removed for management, 5 were killed by vehicles, 1 was killed by a train, and 1 was killed by a landowner. One of the management removals was a black bear exhibiting unusual behaviors. An assessment of the bear showed it had a growth in its mouth, tongue, and throat, and the upper pallet of its mouth had degraded. A toxicology report completed through the MFWP Wildlife Health Lab showed it had a rare and extreme oral-fungal infection.

In 2022, 6 grizzly bears were known to have died in the southern portion of the Flathead Valley. Of these, 3 bears were killed by vehicles, and 2 were bears that were removed by MFWP in a management action. One bear was euthanized due to health complications, and tests completed through the MFWP Wildlife Health Lab confirmed it was infected with the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. One grizzly bear was illegally killed and was investigated by law enforcement. Thirteen black bears were known to have died in the south part of the region. Five of those bears were removed in an MFWP management action, and 1 euthanized for health concerns. Six black bears were killed by vehicles, and 1 was killed by a landowner.

CONCLUSION

Northwest Montana's human population continues to grow annually, and this expansion of residential and recreational areas predominately occurs where bears are most likely to come into conflict with humans. The area where the home ranges of humans and bears overlap, known as the wild-land urban interface, continues to expand. Therefore, the need has never been greater for wildlife managers to have the tools and resources to prevent human-wildlife conflicts from occurring, and to be able to effectively address those conflict when they do occur. We will continue to work towards our goal of serving the public through minimizing and mitigating conflicts between humans and bears, and to meet the goals of the Region 1 bear management program as effectively as is possible.

LITERATURE

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