



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: February 4, 2022

Agenda Item: Grizzly Bear Relocation Sites

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 20 minutes

Background: SB337, passed by the 2021 legislature, requires the Fish and Wildlife Commission to approve all sites where grizzly bears will be relocated by FWP. FWP staff, working with land management agencies, have assembled a list of potential release sites in each of the Cabinet-Yaak, Northern Continental Divide, and Greater Yellowstone ecosystems. All proposed relocation sites are located within established occupied grizzly bear habitat and are located both inside and outside of designated recovery zones. Per SB337, FWP will not relocate a grizzly bear that is in conflict that is captured outside of a designated recovery zone, although the US Fish and Wildlife Service or their agents may. The primary reason for relocating a bear is to move it out of conflict or potential conflict. Bears may also be relocated for population augmentation purposes such as from the NCDE to the Cabinet-Yaak, or for the purpose of genetic exchange. While there are many more sites identified than will be used, it is important to have many alternatives as specific sites may not be available at the time a bear needs to be relocated, so alternatives are important. The list of potential sites includes a mix of sites that have been used historically and new sites.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP staff in each region met with their land management agency counterparts to identify sites and sideboards associated with those sites (e.g., time of year). Many of the sites have been used historically and may be familiar to some of the public. The list of sites adopted by the commission at their October 2021 meeting was available for public comment for at least 30 days. In response to concerns about the number of sites in the NCDE South, staff reduced the number of proposed sites by 50 percent. Many of the comments received indicated support for locations identified by bear management specialists. Some did not support moving any grizzly bears, while others indicated support for additional areas such as in the Bitterroot. Some site-specific comments were addressed by providing more accurate map locations, particularly in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem. Others, such as comments on the Gravellys site, expressed concern about overlap with livestock. However, there would be limits on moving those bears to only non-target captures.

Alternatives and Analysis: Alternatives include modifying the list of approved sites by increasing or decreasing the number of relocation sites, and conditioning when specific sites could be used or specific circumstances when they could be used. Failure to approve sites would preclude FWP from relocating any bears.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission approve the list of grizzly bear relocation sites listed in the attached maps and spreadsheets for at least a five-year period.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission approve the proposed grizzly bear relocation sites as depicted in accompanying maps and spreadsheets for a five-year period.