



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 20, 2024

Agenda Item: Tri-State Grizzly Bear MOA

Action Needed: Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 mins (15 for presentation, 45 for public comment)

Background: FWP is seeking commission approval of a Tri-State Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) among the Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana commissions and fish and wildlife agencies regarding management of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). Commission approval is important because the MOA requires the three states to agree to mortality limits for the GYE population, and to limits on the amount of discretionary mortality available to each state, including for hunting. The MOA will ensure mortality limits are not exceeded within the demographic monitoring area (DMA) for independent males and females, and dependent young (see Table 1). Hunting will not be considered in Montana for at least five years after delisting.

The GYE grizzly bear population is recovered and petitioned for delisting. A criteria for delisting is to have a post-delisting management plan in place that outlines how grizzly bears will be managed upon delisting, including demographic criteria and mortality limits that will need to be met to maintain recovery. The three states, along with state and federal habitat managers are finalizing an update of the 2017 Conservation Strategy with new demographic criteria based on an integrated population model (IPM) developed by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. The Conservation Strategy will serve as the post-delisting management plan for GYE grizzly bears, and its commitments will be incorporated into the statewide grizzly bear management plan. A proposed appendix to the updated Conservation Strategy is the MOA. By agreeing to the stipulations of the MOA, the states will ensure annual total mortality limits are not exceeded within the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA). Per the Conservation Strategy and MOA, the states will manage the GYE population of grizzly bears to maintain the population at or above 800-950 bears in the demographic monitoring area, according to the following framework (Table 1). Any available discretionary mortality after all other forms of mortality are taken into consideration will be divided up between the three states according to the following formula:

WY - 58%

MT - 34%

ID - 8%



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| TABLE 1: Management Framework based on DMA Population Size (IPM Population Size Estimate) | |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">800* – 950</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manage to maintain the population within or above this range. ➤ Use IPM to determine mortality limits for population stability, slight increase, or slight decrease, remaining within or above the population range: $0.98 \leq \lambda \leq 1.02$ ➤ Manage conflicts and authorize hunting at individual agency discretion, based on allocated mortality limits. | <p style="text-align: center;">> 950</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manage to maintain/reduce population. ➤ Use IPM to determine mortality limits for population stability or decrease. $0.95 \leq \lambda \leq 1.00$ <i>If mortality limits are determined for a population decrease, the decrease will not exceed 5% ($\lambda \geq 0.95$).</i> ➤ Manage conflicts and authorize hunting at individual agency discretion, based on allocated mortality limits. |

Note: Lambda (λ) denotes the change in population size from one year to the next: $\lambda = 1.0$ represents no change in population size between two years: $\lambda > 1.0$ indicates population increase and $\lambda < 1.0$ indicates population decrease.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The IPM has been discussed and presented at no fewer than two public meetings of the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee (YES). Demographic criteria of the Conservation Strategy update were put out for 30 days of public comment in December 2023. Those comments were considered and addressed by the YES and where applicable were incorporated into the updated Conservation Strategy. The demographic criteria are then being incorporated into the proposed Tri-State MOA, which is available for public comment. The proposed MOA was reviewed publicly by Idaho and Wyoming Wildlife commissions.

Alternatives & Analysis: To not enter into the MOA and rely on the three states to meet the intent of the MOA through coordinated management. This provides less regulatory certainty to critics of delisting and will likely make delisting more subject to litigation challenge.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission approve the MOA as presented. Doing so will demonstrate to the public and our partners that Montana is committed to maintaining a recovered grizzly bear population in the GYE, and to working cooperatively with Idaho and Wyoming to ensure agreed upon mortality limits will be honored. This helps demonstrate regulatory mechanisms are in place to ensure recovery is maintained. Adequate regulatory mechanisms is one of the five factors the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers when determining whether delisting is warranted.

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.