



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 15, 2026

Agenda Item: Approval of Grizzly Bear Relocation Sites

Action Needed: Final Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 20 minutes

Background: Senate Bill 337, 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. The list of sites was originally approved in 2021 for a five-year period. There were a couple of modifications to that list over the past five years, and the list of sites presented is the current list. FWP is proposing to adopt the existing list of approved sites for another five-year period.

Only proposed relocation sites located within established occupied grizzly bear range will be used, as depicted on the supporting maps and described on the FWP website at: <https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/grizzly-bears>. There are some sites just outside of current occupied range that are expected to be within occupied habitat when the next iteration of occupied habitat is complete in early 2027. FWP is seeking contingent approval of those sites, noted on the spreadsheets, authorizing their use if they become within the occupied range over the next five years (Site numbers 12, 14, 15, 16, 58, 59 in the CYE; site numbers 28, 29, 30, 31 in the GYE, and site numbers 239, 280, 305, 322 in the NCDE South). Per SB337, FWP will not relocate a grizzly bear that is in conflict captured outside of a designated recovery zone, although the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) 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 in the Cabinet-Yaak, or for the purpose of genetic exchange. While there are 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. The list of potential sites includes a mix of sites that have been used historically and new sites. Over the past five years, FWP has relocated 52 grizzly bears to these sites (average of 10 per year, ranging from 4 to 17 per year). The USFWS has relocated an additional 45 bears, all of which were at or in very close proximity to a commission-approved site.

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 public was able to review and comment on the proposed sites. The final list of approved release sites will be available starting in 2027.

Alternatives & Analysis: Alternatives include modifying the list of approved sites by increasing or decreasing the number of relocation sites or limiting the time for which the sites are approved before needing to be reapproved.

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 and contingency sites as depicted in accompanying maps and spreadsheets for a five-year period.