



## **2021 - Grizzly Bear Management Efforts – Region 4 Conrad Office**

Period Covered: 01/01/2021 – 12/31/2021

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### **Synopsis**

The 2021 work season differed from past efforts because FWP administrative Region 4 was not divided into two separate grizzly bear management districts. This year, both bear managers shared the entire region, with whoever closest and available responding to bear calls. Thus, these summary statistics don't necessarily provide the whole representation of bear management efforts across the region, but instead reflect the work coordinated by the Conrad field office. Grizzly bears in the area remain federally protected via the Endangered Species Act, thus final management authority is under the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.



*Figure 1: Public meeting and safety training in the town of Big Sandy, following observations of grizzlies in the area.*

### **Conflict Prevention and Response Efforts**

- Participated in 10 organized education events involving over 364 people, including public meetings in Lewistown and Big Sandy, where grizzlies are just showing up (Fig. 1)
- Provided bear spray training to over 160 people
- Donated  $\geq$  33 bear sprays to public
- Installed 16 new steel bear aware signs
- Communicated 156 bear aware alerts to let people know about bear presence

- Established first call tree for Dupuyer
- Answered 144 service requests, 208 contacts for information, 49 bear observations, & 44 bear complaints (445 phone contacts total)
- Helped create a bird hunter bear aware video
- Removed the carcasses of 45 dead animals
- Supervised carcass driver who picked up 96 dead animals for 34 producers
- Cleaned up >19,596 lbs. of spilled grain (Fig. 2)
- Provided 1 bear proof garbage can
- Distributed 5 air horns
- Provided 1 guard dog to grain producer for conflict prevention and research project (Fig.3)
- Deployed ≥ 56 scare devices
- Deployed ≥ 65 trail cameras
- Helped obtain a \$4,000 Vital Ground grant for new Choteau bear team
- Loaned out grain vacuum trailer to Choteau team and Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife
- Obtained 12 grizzly bear DNA samples
- Lent one paintball marker
- 279 trap nights total for capturing grizzly bears
- Hazed grizzly bears 22 times with 54 cracker-shells, > 50 paintballs, and 3 rubber bullets
- Built 10 permanent electric fences, 5 temporary electric fences, and repaired 4 fences
- Helped identify grizzly bear relocation sites for public comment and commission review
- Coordinated FWP R4 maintenance team building/installing 1 bear-proof grain bin door
- Helped establish range rider pilot program on Upper Dupuyer Creek
- Coauthored successful \$70k Safari Club International grant for conflict preventionist
- Grizzlies detected for the first time in the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument



Figure 2: Thousands of pounds of spilled grain that we removed, then donated to neighbor for feed (was e-fenced).



Figure 3: Livestock guard dog deployed at farm with grain spills to test its deterrence efficacy.

### Human-Grizzly Bear Complaints

2021 was a relatively mild year for grizzly bear conflicts. We received 44 complaints about bears this year, of which nine were transferred to the Choteau team, and 33 were confirmed as bear issues by the Conrad team (Fig 4). Of those confirmed bear issues, 20 were conflicts where bears caused property damage or obtained reasonably secured attractants, while 13 complaints were preemptive responses where bears were near people or obtaining unsecured attractants (Fig. 5). Of the conflicts, there were 15 livestock depredations and five property damage complaints. Livestock loss caused by grizzlies totaled ten calves, two cows, one beehive, and four sheep.

Complaint type	Number
Cattle	12
Near people	5
Property damage	5
Harvested grain	3
Garbage	2
Birdseed	2
Sheep	2
Beehives	1
Encounter	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

Figure 4: Bear complaints confirmed by Conrad team in 2021.

Most of the livestock loss occurred on Dupuyer creek (Fig. 6). Bears caused property damage on; two grain bags, one haylage bag, two bird coops. For bears using unsecured food – twice each for birdseed and garbage, and three times for grain spills. There were no attacks this year, but one encounter – people bumped a bear at close range and it ran off. We received five complaints about bears near people without any attractant being acquired. We responded to all calls as quickly as possible, with most of our bear complaint responses occurring within 30 minutes.



Figure 5: Two yearling grizzlies at unoccupied farm eating spilled grain.

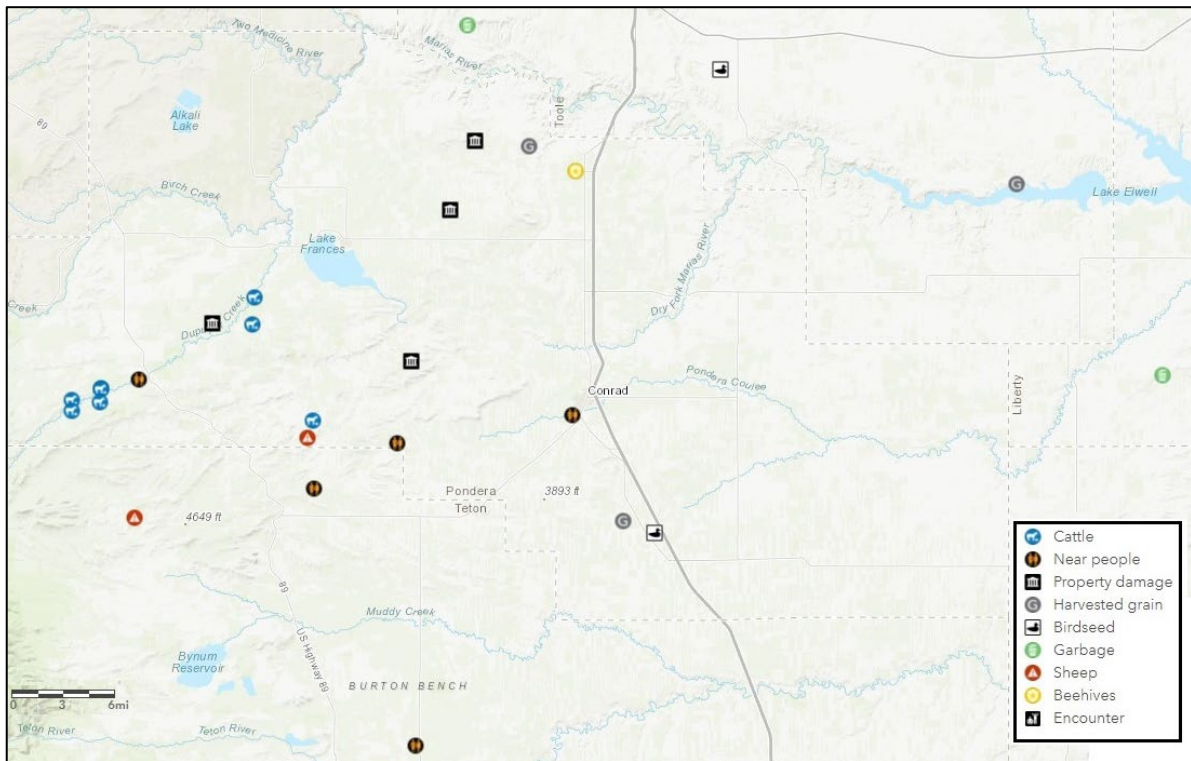


Figure 6. Map of 2021 grizzly bear complaints. Six complaints are outside map area, including two calf depletions near Augusta, two cow depletions in the Big Snowy mountains, and one bird coop damage and encounter near Sun River.

### Grizzly Bear Captures

- 1) In conjunction with USDA, a non-target adult female captured on Dupuyer Creek and relocated to Glacier National Park (4/28).
- 2) In conjunction with USDA, an adult male euthanized in Fergus County due to depredation on two adult cows, as relocation wouldn't have reasonably eliminated the issue (5/12).
- 3) In conjunction with USDA, an adult male euthanized on Dupuyer Creek for several calf depletions, as relocation would not have reasonably eliminated the threat (5/26).
- 4) Yearling male caught south of Conrad for accessing spilled grain near residence and not responding to hazing or conflict prevention equipment (6/23). Relocated to Pike Creek.
- 5) Subadult female caught for a research project testing if guard dogs are an effective bear deterrent for farmsteads with abundant grain spills (8/20).

- 6) Subadult female for a research project testing if guard dogs are an effective bear deterrent for farmsteads with abundant grain spills (8/29).
- 7) Subadult male caught for a research project testing if guard dogs are an effective bear deterrent for farmsteads with abundant grain spills (9/6).
- 8) An adult male caught for a research project testing if guard dogs are an effective bear deterrent for farmsteads with abundant grain spills (9/14).
- 9) An adult female caught for a research project testing if guard dogs are an effective bear deterrent for farmsteads with abundant grain spills (9/16).
- 10) A subadult female caught for a research project testing if guard dogs are an effective bear deterrent for farmsteads with abundant grain spills (10/16).

### **Grizzly Bear Mortalities**

- 1) Adult male euthanized in the Big Snowy Mountains (Fergus County) due to depredation on two adult cows (5/12).
- 2) Adult male euthanized on Dupuyer Creek for several calf depredations (5/26).
- 3) Adult male bear was found dead near Marias River (10/20). Death under investigation.

### **Acknowledgements**

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*Figure 6: Dupuyer creek range rider, Preston Spotted Eagle, saddles up for a ride with our wolf management specialist, Ty Smucker.*