

Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem

July 2018



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

DETAILING AGENCY AGREEMENT TO IMPLEMENT THIS CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The agencies signing this Conservation Strategy agree to use their respective authorities to maintain and enhance the recovered status of the grizzly bear in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) by implementing the regulatory mechanisms, interagency cooperation, population and habitat management and monitoring, and other provisions of the Conservation Strategy as per the details and responsibilities described in this document. All signatories recognize that each has statutory responsibilities that cannot be delegated and that this agreement does not and is not considered to abrogate any of their statutory responsibilities. This agreement is subject to and is intended to be consistent with all appropriate Federal and State laws. Funding of this MOU is subject to approval and appropriations by State, Tribal, and Federal entities. All agencies will take appropriate steps within their obligatory authorities and identified roles to seek funding to implement this document. The adequacy of the regulatory mechanisms demonstrated by this Conservation Strategy are dependent upon funding being available to fully implement the management and monitoring actions detailed in this document. To address the need for long-term coordination among signatory agencies, this Conservation Strategy would remain in effect beyond recovery, delisting, and the minimum post-delisting monitoring period as described in the USFWS's Final Rule to delist grizzly bears in the NCDE. Every five years, the NCDE Coordinating Committee will evaluate this Conservation Strategy and revise it as appropriate to ensure the conservation of grizzly bears in the NCDE.

Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service, Northern Region

Date

Director
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Date

Regional Director
National Park Service, Intermountain Region

Date

State Director
Bureau of Land Management, Montana

Date

Director
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Date

Western Regional Director
USDA APHIS, Wildlife Services

Date

Deputy Bureau Director – Field Operations
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Date

Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6

Date

Tribal Council Chairman
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Date

Tribal Business Council Chairman
Blackfeet Nation

Date

PREFACE

Development of this Conservation Strategy began in 2009, when the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Subcommittee appointed State, Tribal and Federal representatives to the Interagency Conservation Strategy Team. The NCDE Subcommittee is one of the ecosystem subcommittees established under the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC), a larger interagency body formed to help ensure recovery of viable grizzly bear populations and their habitat in the lower-48 States through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management, and research. The NCDE Conservation Strategy Team included representatives from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP); the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC); the Blackfeet Nation; the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CS&KT); the National Park Service (NPS); the U.S. Forest Service (USFS); the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS); the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); and USDA Wildlife Services.

This interagency team of biologists, researchers, and managers worked on this Conservation Strategy from 2009–2013. At that time, although not required to do so, the agencies agreed to release a draft of the Conservation Strategy and the USFWS opened a 60-day public comment period via a notice of availability published in the Federal Register on May 3, 2013 (78 FR 26064). Over 2,400 comments and three peer reviews were received on that 2013 draft Conservation Strategy.

During the next several years (2014–2016), other agency priorities within USFWS reduced the time available for concerted work on developing responses to public comments and on subsequent revision of the draft Conservation Strategy. However, during this time, work continued on other documents and efforts related to the management of NCDE grizzly bears and their habitat (i.e., USFS Forest Plan revision and amendment processes, USFWS Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria, etc.).

In 2017, the NCDE Subcommittee re-assembled the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy team to respond to the public comments and to update and revise the draft Conservation Strategy in response to those comments and to new information, as appropriate. Although some editing was also done to reduce redundancy and improve clarity, effort was made to keep as much of the Conservation Strategy as possible compared to when the public reviewed it in 2013.

The following chapter by chapter summary is provided to assist the reader in understanding the general types of revisions that were made to the Conservation Strategy since the 2013 draft version.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background

We reorganized and streamlined Chapter 1 to reduce redundancy, improve flow, and clarify discussions. We revised zone descriptions to improve clarity and to reflect the increases in grizzly bear numbers and distribution since the draft Conservation Strategy was released in 2013. We

also removed detailed discussion about Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements (e.g., recovery criteria, post-delisting monitoring, and status review triggers) and refer readers to the USFWS source documents (e.g., Recovery Plan, potential delisting rule) to reduce confusion between ESA requirements and agency commitments to maintain a recovered population (see Glossary) after the population is delisted and ESA-required post-delisting monitoring has concluded.

Chapter 2 – Demographic Monitoring and Management

The changes in Chapter 2 are due to availability of new science and response to public and peer comments. Since the draft Conservation Strategy was prepared in 2013, several additional analyses have been completed (Costello et al. 2016), which have provided us with better information about the population changes since 2004 (both numerically and geographically), increased our understanding of the level of uncertainty in our estimation of population size, and laid the groundwork for an improved monitoring approach using stochastic population modeling.

The revised Chapter 2 addresses the most common public comment issues, including concerns about the goal of a population size of 800 bears, the proposed mortality limits, the levels of uncertainty, and the opportunities for connectivity with other ecosystems. The draft Conservation Strategy included four standards addressing population size and mortality rates; the revised CS instead includes three objectives, with four thresholds and two monitoring requirements.

To meet Objective 1, to “maintain a well-distributed grizzly bear population within the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA),” we have established a threshold that retains the occupancy requirement for females with offspring within the Primary Conservation Area (PCA, see Glossary) from the draft Conservation Strategy, and added a requirement for occupancy of Zone 1.

A substantive change in the revised Conservation Strategy is the approach of using stochastic population modeling, with continual updating of vital rates, to establish survival and mortality thresholds for specified management periods. The thresholds established for these management periods must be consistent with Objective 2, a modification of the goal of maintaining a minimum of 800 bears within the PCA and Zone 1 stated in the draft Conservation Strategy. In the revised Conservation Strategy, Objective 2 is to “manage mortalities from all sources to support a 90% or greater estimated probability that the grizzly bear population within the DMA remains above 800 bears, considering the uncertainty associated with all of the demographic parameters.” Importantly, given the commitment to incorporate all forms of uncertainty into the population modeling, this objective necessitates maintaining an actual population size that is likely closer to 1,000 bears, and an even higher population size should uncertainty increase.

We developed three thresholds to accomplish Objective 2. For management of independent female survival within the DMA, we have retained the draft Conservation Strategy requirement of survival of ≥ 0.90 as a minimum, and have added that the threshold rate must be adjusted upward as needed so that it remains consistent with Objective 2. For management of independent female mortality

within the DMA, we have retained the draft Conservation Strategy requirement of $\leq 10\%$ as a maximum, but have added that the threshold percent must be adjusted downward as needed so that it is also consistent with Objective 2. For management of independent male mortality, we have revised the draft Conservation Strategy requirement of $\leq 20\%$ to a threshold of $\leq 15\%$, provided that it is consistent with the established female thresholds and Objective 2.

Lastly, we have added an additional Objective 3 to “monitor demographic and genetic connectivity among populations,” through biennial estimation of the spatial distribution of the entire NCDE population and DNA analyses of population of origin for sampled bears to detect movements of individuals to and from other populations.

Chapter 3 – Habitat Management and Monitoring

In revising Chapter 3, we addressed public comments, corrected any inconsistent use of terminology, and reorganized some sections to reduce redundancy, improve flow, and clarify the intent. We changed the term used to describe agency commitments under the Conservation Strategy to “objectives” to avoid confusion, because the meaning and use of the terms “standards” and “guidelines” differ between the agencies. The use of the term “objectives” in this Conservation Strategy does not change the way the terms “standard” or “guideline” are used or applied relative to each agency’s land use management plan that provides the required regulatory direction when agency actions are implemented.

We received many questions and comments about the baseline to be used in the PCA, so a section was added to Chapter 3 that provides the rationale for how and why 2011 was selected as the baseline year, under what circumstances adjustments can be made to the baseline, and to which habitat features and management activities the baseline will be applied and monitored.

We streamlined the lists of Application Rules by removing terms and definitions that are contained in the Glossary, adopting a consistent format, eliminating duplication, and removing any material that is not needed to assist with implementation. The developed recreation site (see Glossary) objectives and Application Rules were modified to more clearly explain that the primary concern related to these sites is grizzly bear mortality risk, and to distinguish the direction applicable to sites that are designed and managed for overnight use versus the direction applicable to sites with day use only.

Chapter 4 – Conflict Prevention, Response and Management

Overall, in revising this chapter we incorporated public comment, updated pertinent sections, and removed redundant language to increase concision and clarity. To begin, we elaborated on agricultural damage from grizzly bears to explain producer responsibility and department response. Additionally, we addressed the issue of areas near residential areas sometimes providing important habitat, but that excessive bear use may be considered a conflict if complaints occur. We also clarified that only maintained orchards receiving damage are conflict situations

since many abandoned apple trees are used by grizzly bears without causing problems. We added more language on increasing positive human attitudes towards grizzlies. Further, we included a statement that education and other conflict prevention efforts will be initiated in areas where we expect grizzlies in the future (connectivity areas). Next, we added two additional education messages – the tourism and cultural benefits of grizzly bears, and proper use of conflict prevention tools. We updated food storage orders as more have been established in the past five years. Also, we added information on other sanitation efforts such as carcass removal and bear-resistant grain bin doors.

Across our “Non-Lethal Conflict Prevention Tools and Techniques” and “Management Bear Direction and Conflict Response” sections we simplified language and updated information. In the “Non-Lethal Conflict Prevention” section, we broke the information into three separate paragraphs for better organization: introduction, homeowner tools, and agency techniques. The “Conflict Response” section was simplified because much of the language was redundant.

Chapter 5 – Implementation and Evaluation

In revising Chapter 5, we incorporated public comment, updated pertinent sections, and removed redundant language to increase clarity. We had an opportunity to interview members working with the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee about their Conservation Strategy’s implementation chapter and incorporate any lessons learned. Much of the public comment received regarding Chapter 5 was related to the composition of the Coordinating Committee. We did address additional agency representation from Federal land managers not previously represented. We added USDA Wildlife Services to the Coordinating Committee. We also added the USFWS recovery coordinator and USGS, both in an advisory capacity. We emphasized opportunities for work groups and/or task forces to help address future challenges to address the important role Non-Government Organizations can contribute.

We made some changes to Management Review triggers, to reflect Chapter 2 (demographic) and Chapter 3 (habitat) monitoring and management objectives. The Management Review information is in Chapter 5’s “Evaluation and Consequences Related to Monitoring Results” subchapter, which was reorganized for better continuity.

Also added is a commitment to reviewing the Conservation Strategy every five years after adoption. The Coordinating Committee will evaluate the regulatory mechanisms (see Glossary), interagency cooperation, population and habitat management and monitoring, and other provisions of this Conservation Strategy and will revise this Conservation Strategy as appropriate to ensure conservation of the grizzly bear in the NCDE.

Chapter 6 – Regulatory and Conservation Framework

This chapter summarizes the relevant State, Tribal and Federal regulatory mechanisms that are in place to help conserve grizzly bears and grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE if there are no ESA protections. Minor revisions were made to some sections to improve clarity and accuracy.

Questions have arisen about opportunities for public review and comment on this Conservation Strategy. The NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy is not a decision document that requires public review and input. This document describes the commitments the agencies are making relative to how they will cooperate and coordinate management of grizzly bears and grizzly bear habitat if NCDE grizzly bears are no longer protected by the ESA; but the agency commitments themselves are contained in the State, Federal and Tribal management plans, etc. that have been developed during processes that included public review and comment.

That said, opportunity for public review and comment was provided for the draft NCDE Conservation Strategy. The more than 2,400 comments that were received were reviewed and responses to the concerns raised are provided in Appendix 1. This information was used to help revise portions of the Conservation Strategy where appropriate. In addition to the public comments received, responses from three peer reviewers were also received. The peer reviewers were in agreement that the NCDE Conservation Strategy is sufficient to maintain a recovery grizzly bear population.

Furthermore, there has also recently been public review and comment solicited and received on a number of important components of this Conservation Strategy. The grizzly bear habitat management direction contained within the Flathead National Forest (NF) Plan revision and the Forest Plan amendments for the Helena-Lewis & Clark NF, Lolo and Kootenai NF received extensive public comment. There is intentional alignment between the grizzly bear habitat management and monitoring components included in these Forest Plan revision and amendment efforts with objectives that are included in the Conservation Strategy. Additionally, the Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria for the NCDE that the USFWS published in the Federal Register received a large amount of public input. These Habitat-based Recovery Criteria, which are now a supplement to the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan, were developed to align with the habitat management and monitoring objectives for the PCA that are contained in the Conservation Strategy.

MFWP is developing an Administrative Rule for its NCDE grizzly bear population management objectives that are described in the Conservation Strategy. There will be public review and comment opportunities included in this rulemaking process. Components of the Conservation Strategy, including the underlying Tribal, Federal, and State plans and regulations, will be included in any Proposed Rule that the USFWS may publish relative to delisting the NCDE grizzly bear population, which would be available for public review and comment. In addition, MFWP is developing an Administrative Rule for its NCDE grizzly bear population management objectives that are described in the Conservation Strategy. There will be public review and comment opportunities included in this rulemaking process.

In sum, the Conservation Strategy provided here will guide management of a healthy grizzly bear population in the NCDE after delisting from the Endangered Species Act. It contains commitments to manage the population and habitat at or improved upon specific levels, and to monitor population and habitat metrics. In addition, it describes how the State, Federal, and Tribal agencies will work together and coordinate to ensure its successful implementation. It is intended that this document will be adaptable in response to ongoing review and consideration of new information by the Coordinating Committee.

This Conservation Strategy is the culmination of many years of work by an interagency team of biologists, researchers and managers who have assembled the best information available on maintaining a recovery grizzly bear population within the NCDE. It is also the culmination of a revision process that has included multiple agency reviews, independent peer reviews and opportunities for public input.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background

The overarching goal of this Conservation Strategy, and the signatory agencies, is to maintain a recovered, genetically diverse grizzly bear population throughout the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA: the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) and Zone 1) while maintaining demographic and genetic connections with Canadian populations and providing the opportunity for demographic and/or genetic connectivity with other ecosystems (Cabinet-Yaak, Bitterroot, Greater Yellowstone). This Conservation Strategy was developed by an interagency team of State, Tribal, and Federal managers and scientists to describe the coordinated management and monitoring efforts necessary to maintain a recovered grizzly bear population in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) and to document the commitment of these agencies to this shared goal. This Conservation Strategy provides a cohesive umbrella for all signatories to operate under and reference, but each signatory has their own legal process and authority to implement the Conservation Strategy. This Conservation Strategy would remain in effect beyond recovery, delisting, and the minimum five-year post-delisting monitoring period required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The agencies are committed to be responsive to the needs of the grizzly bear through adaptive management (see Glossary) actions based on the results of detailed annual population and habitat monitoring.

The purposes of this Conservation Strategy are to:

- Describe and summarize the coordinated strategies, standards, and guidelines developed for managing the grizzly bear population, human-grizzly bear conflicts (see Glossary), and grizzly bear habitat to ensure their continued conservation in the NCDE;
- Compile and reference the regulatory mechanisms, legal authorities, policies, management documents, and monitoring programs that will maintain the recovered grizzly bear population;
- Document the commitments agreed upon by the participating agencies.

Within the NCDE, the grizzly bear population and its habitat will be managed using an approach that identifies a PCA and three additional management zones (Zone 1, Zone 2, and Zone 3: see Figure 2). The PCA is the area currently known as the NCDE Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. This is where the most conservative habitat protections would remain, with maintenance of habitat conditions that were compatible with the increasing grizzly bear population from 2004–2011. Grizzly bears are also expected to occupy habitat outside the PCA in Zones 1 and 2 where they may serve as a source population to other grizzly bear ecosystems in the lower-48 States. Habitat and population protections would vary by management objective in these Zones with more protections in areas identified as Demographic Connectivity Areas (DCAs, see Glossary). In

contrast to Zones 1 and 2, Zone 3 does not provide habitat linking to other grizzly bear ecosystems. Grizzly bears currently occupy Zone 3 (adjacent to Zone 1), and their numbers are expected to increase, but this may be incompatible with human presence because these areas often lack forest cover, land ownership is mostly private, and agricultural uses predominate. In Zone 3, grizzly bear occupancy will not be actively discouraged and will be managed primarily through conflict response.

Relationship to Other Plans

Relationships with State, Federal, and Tribal plans are discussed throughout the Conservation Strategy. In the NCDE, land and resource management plans for National Forests (NF), National Parks, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Blackfeet Indian Reservation (BIR), the Flathead Indian Reservation (FIR), and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) have incorporated, or will prior to any delisting rule, the habitat objectives and other relevant provisions of the Conservation Strategy. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) is considering an administrative rule making process to incorporate relevant provisions of the Conservation Strategy later in 2018.

Chapter 2 – Demographic Monitoring and Management

To maintain a healthy, recovered grizzly bear population in the NCDE, it is necessary to have adequate numbers of bears that are well distributed with a balance between reproduction and mortality. This section details the demographic monitoring protocols and management objectives developed to maintain and enhance a recovered grizzly bear population in the NCDE. These will be focused within the DMA (Figure 2). Because grizzly bears are a difficult species to monitor, multiple objectives and thresholds are identified to provide sufficient information upon which to base management decisions.

As described earlier in this summary, the goal of the Conservation Strategy is to maintain a recovered, genetically diverse grizzly bear population throughout the DMA while maintaining demographic and genetic connections with Canadian populations and providing the opportunity for demographic and/or genetic connectivity with other ecosystems. This will be achieved by the meeting the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Maintain a well-distributed grizzly bear population within the DMA;
- Objective 2: Manage independent female survival and independent male and female mortalities from all sources to support a 90% or greater estimated probability that the grizzly bear population within the DMA remains above 800 bears, considering the uncertainty associated with all of the demographic parameters; and

- Objective 3: Monitor demographic and genetic connectivity among populations.

Chapter 3 – Habitat Management and Monitoring

The goal of habitat management in this Conservation Strategy is to provide reasonable assurance that habitat on Federal, State, and Tribal lands will continue to be managed to levels that support a stable to increasing grizzly bear population in the NCDE. Therefore, the general approach is to maintain the habitat conditions that existed during the period when the NCDE grizzly bear population was stable to increasing. Habitat management objectives are specific to the PCA and Zones 1, 2, and 3 (Figure 2), each with varying levels of habitat protections depending on their relative importance to the NCDE grizzly bear population. Each zone is a mosaic of land ownerships, with different types of resource management that reflect the mandates and interests of each agency or Tribal government.

Based on the best available science, this Conservation Strategy focuses habitat management on the following key habitat features and human activities in the NCDE: (1) secure core and the density of open and total motorized routes; (2) developed recreation sites; (3) livestock allotments; (4) vegetation management; and (5) oil and gas and/or hardrock mining activities. These features were selected for consideration because of their potential to impact habitat availability and/or increase the risk of grizzly bear mortality within the NCDE. In addition, in order to manage mortality of grizzly bears at sustainable levels, anthropogenic food (see Glossary), garbage, and other attractants (see Glossary) associated with resource management activities that increase the risk of grizzly bear mortality will be managed. Requiring proper storage of food and attractants has been demonstrated to be an effective tool to promote public safety and to reduce grizzly bear mortality risk.

The PCA has the most rigorous habitat protections in order to achieve the goal of continual occupancy by a source population of grizzly bears. Habitat conditions that were compatible with an increasing population under baseline conditions will be maintained. Habitat management in the PCA will be focused on maintaining or improving upon baseline levels of secure core and motorized route density, developed recreation sites, and livestock allotments. Attractant storage rules will be in place on Federal, State and Tribal lands in the PCA.

As described in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS 1993), Bear Management Units (BMUs (see Glossary)), and BMU subunits are used for habitat evaluation and population monitoring within the PCA (Figure 3). A BMU is an area large enough to meet the yearlong habitat needs of both male and female grizzly bears, while BMU subunits represent the approximate size of a female grizzly bear's annual home range. The NCDE Recovery Zone was divided into 23 BMUs and 126 BMU subunits. This Conservation Strategy will continue to use these BMUs and BMU subunits as a tool for managing and monitoring certain habitat conditions and management activities within the PCA.

Management Zone 1 surrounds the PCA. The PCA and Zone 1 together comprise the DMA, the area within which population data are collected and mortality limits apply. Here, habitat

protections will focus on managing motorized route densities within levels specified in current Federal, State, and Tribal land use plans because these are known to have been compatible with a stable to increasing grizzly bear population. Attractant storage rules would be implemented on Federal, Tribal, and most State lands. On the northwest and southwest corners of Zone 1, there are two DCAs that are intended to support female occupancy and eventual dispersal to the Cabinet-Yaak (CYE) and Bitterroot (BE) ecosystems. In the Salish and Ninemile DCAs, habitat protections will focus on no net increase in motorized route miles or density and managing current roadless areas as stepping stones to other ecosystems.

Management Zone 2 will be managed to provide the opportunity for grizzly bears to move between the NCDE and adjacent ecosystems (e.g., the GYE). Habitat management direction compatible with the goal of providing for genetic connectivity will be maintained on Federal and State lands. Attractant storage rules would be implemented on most Federal and State lands.

Management Zone 3 consists of other areas within the NCDE. Efforts here will be focused on prevention and response to human-grizzly bear conflicts. There is no need for habitat protections specifically developed for grizzly bears on Federal and State lands in Zone 3 in order to support recovery of the NCDE population. The extent of Zone 3 will be determined in the USFWS' Final Rule delisting grizzly bears in the NCDE.

Chapter 4 – Conflict Prevention, Response, and Conflict Bear Management

The grizzly bear population in the NCDE has expanded its distribution while the number and distribution of people living and recreating in grizzly bear habitat have increased. For grizzly bear conservation to be successful, providing habitat on the landscape is not enough. For grizzly bears to survive, people must accept the grizzly bear as a cohabitant of the land. Tolerance can be maintained when the public has confidence that management agencies will respond quickly and appropriately to human-grizzly bear conflicts and when the public has the knowledge to understand and avoid human-grizzly bear conflicts. The objective of conflict management is to maximize human safety and minimize property losses while maintaining a viable population of grizzly bears (Dood et al. 2006). When human-grizzly bear conflicts are not adequately addressed, there are negative consequences for the individual bear and the people involved, and support for grizzly bear management and conservation is undermined.

The emphasis of grizzly bear conflict management will be quick response by management authorities, removal of the source of the conflict where possible, and the use of non-lethal solutions. Depending on the circumstances of the conflict, appropriate responses may include:

- Proactively removing or securing attractants
- Public education and outreach
- Discouraging the grizzly bear from visiting the site using non-lethal methods (e.g., aversive conditioning (see Glossary))
- Reactively or preemptively capturing and translocating a grizzly bear to a new area

- Removing the bear from the wild, including lethal control

The focus and intent of conflict grizzly bear management inside and outside the PCA will rely on strategies and actions to prevent human-grizzly bear conflicts. Securing potential attractants is the single most effective way to prevent bears from becoming habituated (see Glossary) or food conditioned (see Glossary), thereby limiting human-caused grizzly bear mortality, human-grizzly bear encounters, and other human-grizzly bear conflicts. Rules requiring attractants to be stored in a bear-resistant manner on most public lands will continue under this Conservation Strategy. The NCDE's existing Information & Education (I&E) subcommittee will continue to coordinate outreach efforts to ensure the consistency of messages. All grizzly bear conflicts, relocations, and removals will be documented and reported annually in the NCDE Annual Report.

Chapter 5 – Implementation and Evaluation

Upon implementation of this Conservation Strategy, the NCDE Coordinating Committee will replace the current NCDE Subcommittee, although its membership will remain largely the same. The Coordinating Committee will evaluate implementation of this Conservation Strategy, promote the exchange of data and information about the NCDE grizzly bear population among agencies and the public, and make recommendations to the management agencies regarding implementation of this Conservation Strategy. The Coordinating Committee will continue to communicate with the IGBC. The Coordinating Committee is not a decision-making body, although it may provide recommendations to member agencies from time to time. The Coordinating Committee does not supersede the authority of the management agencies beyond the specific actions agreed to as signatories to this Conservation Strategy.

Once adopted by the agencies, this Conservation Strategy's goals, objectives, and/or monitoring procedures may only be changed through a clear demonstration of need based on biological data, the best available science, and/or new techniques. Any such amendments will be subject to public review and would be guided by and consistent with the agreements reached in this Conservation Strategy and its overall goal to maintain a recovered grizzly bear population in the NCDE and conserve its habitat.

The Coordinating Committee will be supported and informed by the NCDE I&E Team and Monitoring Team. The I&E Team will be comprised of information/education specialists from the signatory agencies. The goal of this team will be to work with agencies, Tribes, elected officials, non-governmental organizations and the public to share knowledge and increase understanding of grizzly bears, their habitat, conflict prevention and management actions. The NCDE Monitoring Team will take the lead in preparing an annual monitoring report with staff support from the Coordinating Committee member agencies. Monitoring results and analysis will be provided to the Coordinating Committee and the public. If there are deviations from any of the

population and/or habitat objectives and/or thresholds stipulated in this Conservation Strategy, a Management Review will be initiated. A Management Review examines management of habitat, populations, or efforts of participating agencies to complete their required monitoring. The NCDE Monitoring Team is not responsible for completing impact analyses for projects proposed by any agency; such analyses are the responsibility of the agency making the proposal. The Coordinating Committee will respond to the Monitoring Review with actions to address the deviations from the population or habitat standards. If desired population and habitat objectives specified in this Conservation Strategy are not being met, and cannot be met in the opinion of the Coordinating Committee, then the Coordinating Committee may request the USFWS conduct a status review to determine if protections under the ESA are warranted.

Chapter 6 – Regulatory and Conservation Framework

The management of grizzly bears and the habitats they require for survival are dependent upon the laws, regulations, agreements, and management plans of the State, Tribal, and Federal agencies in the NCDE. This chapter documents the regulatory mechanisms and conservation framework that would continue in the absence of ESA protections. These laws, regulations, and agreements provide the legal basis for coordinating management, controlling mortality, providing secure habitats, managing human-grizzly bear conflicts, regulating hunters and hunting seasons, limiting motorized access where necessary, controlling livestock allotments, regulating oil and gas development, mitigating large scale mining operations, maintaining education and outreach programs to prevent conflicts, monitoring populations and habitats, and requesting management and petitions for relisting when necessary.