



GOVERNOR'S GRIZZLY BEAR ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Montana Governor's Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Consolidated DRAFT Recommendations June 6, 2020

This DRAFT consolidated document integrates the comments from the draft dated 6.4.20. All Council members had opportunity and access to comment on the 6.4.20 document between 5.26.20 to 6.4.20. This DRAFT also incorporates additional discussion items that have been further synthesized in writing – notably in the vision section as well as in the role of hunting section.

Council members will review and discuss this iteration during the upcoming GBAC June 8th and 9th meeting.

Preamble

Grizzlies are important to Montana's heritage, and their presence in the state is intrinsically valuable to people around the world. Significant progress toward recovery has occurred since their Endangered Species Act listing in 1975, but more is needed. Montana is unique in its conservation opportunity to provide connectivity for grizzly bear populations to make that goal a reality. Grizzly bear expansion across the state has and will continue to bring challenges to traditional livelihoods as the human population of Montana increases simultaneously with the population of grizzly bears.

The Grizzly Bear Advisory Council was charged with providing citizen recommendations for how Montana might address these challenges, while striving for and maintaining recovery and eventual delisting. *Jonathan's rewrite: The Grizzly Bear Advisory Council was charged with providing citizen recommendations for how Montana might address these challenges while continuing to support and progress existing interagency management strategies towards viable populations and eventual delisting.* We also recognize the diversity of cultural perceptions of grizzly bears across the state, including the tribal significance. Alongside wilderness and parks, we underscore the essential role of working farms, ranches, and forests, in helping maintain a Montana landscape capable of supporting grizzlies. The Grizzly Bear Advisory Council acknowledges the importance of its role in this process as a citizen advisory group and intends to provide meaningful guidance and feedback that will inform but not constrain the management and recovery of grizzly bears into the future. *Erin's rewrite (with a couple edits from Trina): The Grizzly Bear Advisory Council acknowledges the significant task with which it has been charged, and worked to utilize all information provided by support staff, as well as public comment, to provide meaningful guidance and feedback that will inform but not constrain the management and recovery of grizzly bears into the future.*

Vision

Vision Writing Team revised version of vision 6.5.2020

We envision fully recovered grizzly populations in the four recovery zones located in Montana, and landscapes in-between that accommodate grizzly bear presence and facilitate connectivity.

We also recognize that grizzlies will likely continue to move beyond these areas. Therefore, all those living in or visiting Montana should expect the potential presence of grizzly bears, and should be able to access adequate education, assistance and resources.

This vision brings challenges to working landscapes, recreationists, and local communities on both public and private lands as the human population (both resident and visitors) of Montana increases. Advancing this vision will require an inclusive and proactive effort and significant resources. Conversely, without adequate resources, this vision and Montana's ability to meet the challenges of effectively managing an expanding grizzly bear population will be limited.

At a minimum, we envision grizzly bear populations managed at levels sufficient to prevent their reclassification as "threatened" under federal law. The Montana Grizzly Bear management plan should recognize this and prioritize human safety, personal property, and timely conflict response and mitigation.

Chuck's addition: We recognize the need for connectivity travel corridors for the continued recovery of grizzly bears in the identified ecosystems. Simultaneously, we recognize that further restrictions and limitations in these corridors on access to our public lands, on working landscapes, on recreation opportunities, and on forest management projects will result in a negative attitude towards the grizzly bear by the local citizens that reside near or regularly utilize these lands. Education and proactive programs will facilitate the use of connectivity corridors by grizzly bears far more effectively than additional physical restrictions and land use limitations.

Michele's edits:

We recognize that connectivity is important to the long-term health of grizzly bear populations, but it also brings concerns for the people that live, work and recreate on public lands that provide connectivity habitat. State and federal agencies must work closely with local communities and the public to address concerns around land use.

Advancing this vision will require significant, new resources and an inclusive, proactive, and timely approach to conflict response and conflict prevention. Suitable, remote habitat should be preserved to provide distance between bear and human populations.

We envision sound management that finds a balance between the needs of local communities and the conservation of grizzly bears. Management should follow current law and the best available science while accounting for unique localized conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Everything highlighted below is for continued council discussion.

Education and Outreach

1. In recognition of the grizzly bear being Montana's state animal and the strides made since the species was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1975, the Grizzly Bear Advisory Council recommends the establishment of a date to annually celebrate the grizzly bear and the landscapes, communities, and continued collaboration in Montana that has allowed for human - grizzly bear coexistence.
2. Create a comprehensive Bear Aware program with a lead bear education coordinator and technician within FWP:
 - 2.1. Include an incentive program that encourages Montana communities to become Bear Aware communities;
 - 2.2. Use the best available science, bear biology and conflict prevention strategies to streamline and create a catalog of all educational materials;
 - 2.3. Coordinate with tourism, realtors, VRBOs, chambers of commerce, outdoor businesses, etc. to provide bear safety information and outreach;
 - 2.4. Work with agency partners to address outreach and education needs on public lands with rapidly increasing use;
 - 2.5. Addition: Establish a state-wide program to create and certify Bear Aware businesses. This program would provide guidelines, window stickers, promotional materials, and a list of bear aware businesses in state tourism publications.
 - 2.6. Addition: Develop a recreation plan that identifies and addresses potential conflict zones for recreationists. Plan should include a map of core habitat and linkage zones and identify appropriate activity within these zones.
 - 2.7. Encourage broader availability of bear spray rental programs. For example - similar to the bear spray rental program available at Glacier International through Glacier Outfitters.
 - 2.8. Coordinate with agencies and tribal partners to develop K-12 Bear Aware curriculum guides, activities, and games for teachers to implement grizzly education into learning objectives that include the best available science, bear biology, and conflict prevention strategies.
 - 2.9. Continue the Grizzly Bear Education and Outreach Summit so people can brainstorm and discuss new challenges and ways to address them, as well as create consistent messaging, reporting, and to share effective strategies.
 - 2.10. Provide the bear identification video and test online, coupled with a bear spray proper use video. Require all recreationists, commercial and personal foragers, hunters, and anglers to purchase a conservation license, watch the videos, and take the identification test.
 - 2.11. Look into occupational safety and health safety standards for businesses for requiring bear safety standards.

- 2.12. Identify gaps in intergovernmental, interagency, and tribal coordination and create an action plan to address the gaps and improve the communication and coordination.

Grizzly Bear Distribution

3. Grizzly bears should be managed to meet the recovery population goals within the existing recovery areas, with opportunities to move between these areas in connectivity zones. Rewrite: Management should sustain population and habitat goals while provisioning for movement between recovery zones.
4. Allow natural movement to new areas while protecting habitat, private lands and local communities. Communities should be enabled and prepared to have grizzlies on the landscape and to prevent conflicts.
5. Create plans (working with appropriate agencies/communities/landowners) to establish suitable re-location/occupation areas in Montana.
6. Naturally occurring connectivity between populations is preferred. However, historically, augmentation has been necessary (Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone). Previous agreements regarding augmentation should be evaluated periodically for their effectiveness and continued if warranted.
7. Utilizing best available science from FWP, independent scientists, and Universities, we support and encourage research and monitoring around:
 - 7.1.1. Food resources, habitat, road densities, and other identified research needs related to habitat security in areas of current and future grizzly bear occupancy;
 - 7.1.2. Assessment of human activities and impacts on grizzly bears.
 - 7.1.3. Preserve grizzly core habitat.

Connectivity

8. Connectivity is vital to the long term sustainability, persistence, and resiliency of grizzly bears. MTFWP should rely on the best available science to determine connectivity zones.
9. Addition: FWP should continue to identify acceptable relocation sites on public lands in connectivity zones in coordination with nearby private landowners, working lands, and communities.
10. Connectivity zones will exist in diverse social and environmental settings. Not all of these settings are conducive to permanent habitation, but should be managed to promote genetic connectivity in biologically suitable and acceptable habitat, being mindful that biologically suitable does not always mean appropriate. Connectivity between ecosystems should be facilitated where appropriate with human safety always being a priority.
11. Work with relevant agencies to create a streamlined way for reliable public reporting of possible grizzly bear sightings in connectivity areas. (Prairie Bear Monitor)

12. Private landowners are an important part of the decision-making process, and should be included in the process and provided the needed resources to protect their livestock, crops, etc.
13. The threat from increasing climate change and the impacts it may have on Montana ecosystems and their inhabitants should be addressed.
14. Work with Montana Department of Transportation and Federal Railroad Administration to reduce transportation mortalities, facilitate movement and enhance public safety:
 - 14.1. Work with partners to develop a wildlife transportation safety campaign;
 - 14.2. Work with appropriate entities to explore ways to minimize train/bear collisions due to grain spills and carcasses near train tracks;
 - 14.3. Identify and model potentially important grizzly bear crossing points on major highways, and seek funding to incorporate wildlife connectivity into the transportation system as infrastructure upgrades are made.
 - 14.4. Wording change: Encourage voluntary incentive-based conservation in areas identified as important to wildlife passage.

Relocation

15. Clarification and education is needed when communicating with the public about the difference between re-locating a bear and reintroduction/augmentation.
16. All agencies should work together to develop a protocol for moving bears between ecosystems, within an ecosystem, and outside of a designated ecosystem, which further the conservation, connection and recovery of grizzly bears in the state of Montana.
17. Previous agreements regarding augmentation should be evaluated periodically for their effectiveness and continued if warranted.
18. Agencies should use the best available science to work together with local landowners, local watershed groups, and county governments to identify new relocation sites outside of the designated management areas, especially in connectivity zones.
19. If bears are already in or near unoccupied areas, allow for flexibility to move bears to the nearest relocation site.

Conflict Prevention

20. Human/Grizzly Conflicts
 - 20.1. MTFWP should work with planning boards to proactively recommend actions to governing bodies on how to minimize bear conflicts;
 - 20.2. Encourage innovation and implementation of new preventative tools for communities, bear managers, and landowners;
 - 20.3. Provide easy access to education about hunting safely in grizzly bear country for out-of-state hunters;
 - 20.4. Encourage outfitters to provide bear spray and training to clients;
 - 20.5. Partner with outdoor recreation companies to offer training. Could be made mandatory with a conservation license purchase;
 - 20.6. Encourage neighborhood communication networks to coordinate with local bear managers;

- 20.7. Investment should be made into conflict prevention and outreach focused on the safety of people working in grizzly country;
 - 20.8. Management protocols should continue to include flexibility.
 - 20.9. Educate residents and landowners on the effective use of non-lethal methods to haze grizzly bears;
 - 20.10. Continued research for prevention and reimbursement for indirect losses, ie: hobby farms, orchards, buildings, crops, etc.
 - 20.11. Review all subdivision recommendations to update and standardize Human Bear Conflicts-Appendix C-4.
21. Agriculture
- 21.1. Addition: We encourage the Montana legislature to fully fund the Livestock Loss Board Trust Fund. This would increase the LLB's capacity to provide grants for grizzly bear conflict prevention as well as to increase the adequacy of its livestock loss compensation program to help offset unconfirmed losses and indirect costs.
 - 21.2. Addition: We encourage the Natural Resources Conservation Service state director to modify "Conservation Practice" definitions to make carcass pickup and composting, electric fencing, and range riding eligible for federal NRCS funding.
 - 21.3. Encourage a consistent messaging system between bear managers, residents, and producers;
 - 21.4. Provide proper resources for livestock producers to implement appropriate conflict prevention measures on private and public lands;
 - 21.5. Increase partnership, funding and support for local watershed groups and other organizations to:
 - 21.5.1. Support local conflict mitigation efforts;
 - 21.5.2. Expand outreach efforts;
 - 21.5.3. Provide salary cost shares with local groups;
 - 21.5.4. Support cooperative monitoring and conflict mitigation programs around grizzly bear livestock conflicts on public allotments and private land facilitated by local watershed groups or similar collaboratives.
 - 21.6. Secure long term and additional funding for the Livestock Loss Board to be used for compensation and conflict prevention.
22. Public and State Land
- 22.1. Encourage carrying accessible bear spray in bear country while recreating and hunting.
 - 22.2. Create consistent food storage requirements across state and federal lands and encourage the same standards on private lands.
 - 22.3. Bear resistant infrastructure should be available at all federal, state, and local campgrounds, and other public areas.
 - 22.4. Trails and other public areas should be subject to seasonal closures when necessary for human and bear safety.

- 22.5. Establish cooperative monitoring programs on public land grazing allotments and public recreation areas as applicable and available.
- 22.6. We encourage the state to work with federal agencies to make existing funding sources for private lands (e.g. NRCS) available to more effectively address local needs in Montana.
- 23. Waste Management/Sanitation
 - 23.1. Support the development of consistent local sanitation ordinances that require attractants to be stored in a bear-resistant manner and includes entities for enforcement.
 - 23.2. Encourage counties and local governments to create a bear resistant disposal option and encourage local sanitation companies to modify practices to mitigate bear conflicts.
- 24. Conflict Response and Protocols
 - 24.1. Providing an adequate number of year-round bear management specialists and technicians would:
 - 24.1.1. Better allow for transfer of expertise from bear managers to bear managers in training, especially since additional managers and technicians will likely be needed as grizzly populations increase;
 - 24.1.2. Improve response time;
 - 24.1.3. Allow time for relationship building, outreach, and communication with landowners and agriculture producers.
 - 24.2. Clarify management protocols for conflict bears. **Addition: USFWS-FWP-WSvcs to ensure that their messaging is the same with regard to this protocol, then continue to share it with ranchers and their collaborators to maximize transparency.**
 - 24.3. Periodically review interagency MOUs for opportunities to improve efficiency and capacity for conflict response.
 - 24.4. Establish clear guidelines for lethal removal of grizzly bears that are consistent with federal regulations and allow for flexibility.

Role of Hunting - entire section needs further discussion

Because we cannot reach consensus that hunting has a role in grizzly bear management, this topic is presented as such and includes opposing views and discussion for context and consideration. The conversation on the role of hunting focused on two threads of conversation: (1) a values-based conversation about whether or not Council members believe there ought to be a hunt; and (2) beyond the question of whether there should be a hunt, what guidance would the Council like to provide in the event that the FWP Commission moves forward with hunting regulations.

Pro-hunting statement

Hunting big game is a large part of Montana’s heritage, and the hunting of grizzlies is no exception. Those of us that support a hunting season(s) for grizzlies in Montana recognize that a hunt has the potential to be a source of additional income for grizzly management, and could also be a good way to build trust between the public and FWP. That said, we recognize that

hunting will not replace the need for conflict prevention. We recommend that USFWS, MTFWP, and Tribal agencies, work together to use their expertise, best available science, geographic area, and connectivity to establish a hunting season or seasons in Montana that will both maintain and help control the population. We recommend that grizzly bear license fees be modeled after moose, sheep, and goats, with the additional fee going to bear management and conservation.

Anti-hunting statement - added 6.6.20

As stated in the preamble of the Governor’s Grizzly Bear Advisory Council (GGBAC), “Grizzlies are important to Montana’s heritage, and their presence in the state is intrinsically valuable to people around the world.” Therefore, grizzly bears should be and need to be managed in perpetuity under regulations that preclude trophy and/or sport hunting of the species similar to what is proposed in the Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act. (HR 2532). In consideration of the spiritual and cultural significance of grizzly bears shared by some Montana Tribes, trophy and/or sport hunting should not have a role in bear management. Hunting is a value-based decision, not a requirement for wildlife management. USFWS, MTFWP AND USDA Wildlife Services, and Tribal agencies, should work together to use their expertise, best available science, geographic area and connectivity to maintain and help control the population utilizing existing tools not trophy and /or sport hunting. Based on the presentations made to the GGBAC about the role of hunting for bear management as well as well documented independent studies, there does not appear to be adequate data that supports the need for trophy and/or sport hunting to effectively manage grizzly bear populations. Some studies indicate hunting is an impediment to migration and population linkage and could possibly threatened the distribution, abundance and social structure of these endangered populations. It is premature to discuss the role of hunting for grizzly bear management until the endangered species protections are removed. Based on current research and data, the most effective tools for managing bear populations are through robust conflict prevention and coexistence programs with a strong outreach and education component. And existing strategies for management of bear-human conflicts is sufficient if properly resourced. (See resource recommendations from the GBAC). Studies also indicate that shrinking habitat will effect overall grizzly bear populations and connectivity – the Canadian hunt was suspended because of habitat concerns. To give communities, land owners, and ranchers the sense that they have some control over increasing and migrating grizzly bear populations, the case can be made that strengthening and increasing coexistence and conflict prevention programs with a robust outreach and education component can be the same as offering some sort of hunting option. The data is clear that a trophy and/or sport hunt will not play a role in population management. Based on current tourism trends, the case can be made that grizzly bears occupying the Montana landscape is a valuable economic asset – viewing bears brings in more revenue than shooting bears. A “Backpack Tax” or something similar would be a better revenue stream to support an increase in coexistence and conflict prevention programs with an increased outreach and education component than a trophy/sport hunting tag.

25. There will be no hunting of any grizzly bear population until endangered species protections are removed.
26. Hunting should be a value based decision, not a requirement of wildlife management.
27. USFWS, MTFWP and USDA Wildlife Services, Tribal agencies, should work together to use their expertise, best available science, geographic area, and connectivity to establish a hunting season or seasons in Montana that will both maintain and help control the population. Rewrite: USFWS, MTFWP and USDA Wildlife Services, Tribal agencies, should work together to use their expertise and the best available science, taking into consideration the geographic area, and connectivity when considering a hunting season.
28. Hunting is a part of Montana’s heritage.
29. Building trust, especially with private landowners.
30. Messaging to the public should establish that hunting will not replace the need for conflict prevention.
31. Hunting regulations must recognize the importance of females and females with young to the grizzly bear population.
32. In consideration of the spiritual and cultural significance of grizzly bears to the Montana Tribes, sport hunting for grizzly bears should not have a role for bear management.
33. Hunting should be considered as a management tool using the best available science to determine limited quota hunts.
34. Grizzly bear license fees should be modeled after moose, sheep, and goats, with the additional fee going to bear management and conservation.
35. Strict enforcement of poaching is necessary for the long-term conservation of bears, and stringent fines and enforcement should continue regardless of ESA status.

Resources

The Council understands in order to implement the recommendations above, it will take funding from diverse entities and sources. Resources are key to the success of all our recommendations. As resources are developed, we need to be aware that both public and private land needs must be considered.

36. Support funding for conservation easements in identified grizzly bear habitat.
37. Addition: The Montana Congressional Delegation should help to advance the collection of wildlife conservation fees in national parks to be used for conservation work outside park boundaries.
38. Consider how other states fund wildlife management and consider adopting similar approaches if appropriate.
39. Help local communities identify and use available local grants for conflict prevention. For example, grants for neighborhood improvements have been used for bear-resistant sanitation projects.
40. Consider funding sources from within the Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation.
41. Establish a dedicated permanent fund including state and national partners for grizzly conservation, compensation, and prevention. This permanent Grizzly Fund would pay

for management and preventative measures for human and grizzly co-existence in the United States. Seed money from federal appropriations would start this fund.

42. Various potential taxes have been discussed as possible opportunities to provide long term sustainable funding to the grizzly bear program. These include, but are not limited to, a resort tax, gas tax, recreation and bed taxes. None of these was explored in-depth. We encourage collaborative partnerships that continue to explore these various ideas.
43. Grizzly Bear Conservation license plate.
44. Look at increasing funding for and including grizzly bears in the federal Livestock Loss Demonstration grant program.
45. Funding sources should be explored to assist producers with crop losses and indirect losses due to grizzlies;
46. Look at the Montana Sage Grouse Initiative and how funding comes through that specific to sage grouse habitat and conservation easements. (WLA Pay for Presence conversation)
47. **Recovering America's Wildlife Act**
48. Establish partnerships with insurance companies for funding wildlife friendly transportation infrastructure.
49. Work with the state legislature, agencies and other partners to develop novel funding mechanisms.

Appendix:

- A. Governor's Executive Order
- B. Public comments
- C. GBAC notes and discussion points
- D. Hunting
- E. Funding ideas