



August, 4, 2020

Grizzly Bear Advisory Council
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 E. 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Members of the Grizzly Bear Advisory Council:

Introduction

This report details a partial analysis of the public comment submitted to the Council conducted by the Sierra Club with the assistance of volunteers. The comments we analyzed are currently available on the Grizzly Bear Advisory Council (GBAC) website:
<http://fwp.mt.gov/export/resources/pdf/GBAC-All-Comments.pdf>

The most recent press release from FWP stated that the Council has received more than 16,000 public comments to date. Over 11,000 pages of these comments were submitted between July 2019 - June 2020 and are available for review on the Council webpage. We have reviewed and organized almost 6,000 of these comments in an effort to better understand public sentiment on the issues discussed by the Council over the past year, we hope that this analysis will aid the Council in formulating its recommendations. Through our analysis and the amount of detailed comments, it was clear that there is both a strong local and national interest in grizzly bear management.

While a variety of topics concerning grizzly bear management and recovery were raised, the vast majority of the public comments in this document were focused on hunting. The question we were trying to quantify was; how many comments supported a grizzly hunt and how many opposed a grizzly hunt?

Method

We divided the *July 2019 - June 2020 Public Input* document into five equal sections and assigned them randomly to a group of five volunteers and staff. Each person worked through their section in chronological order to the best of their ability. Four sections were either fully or

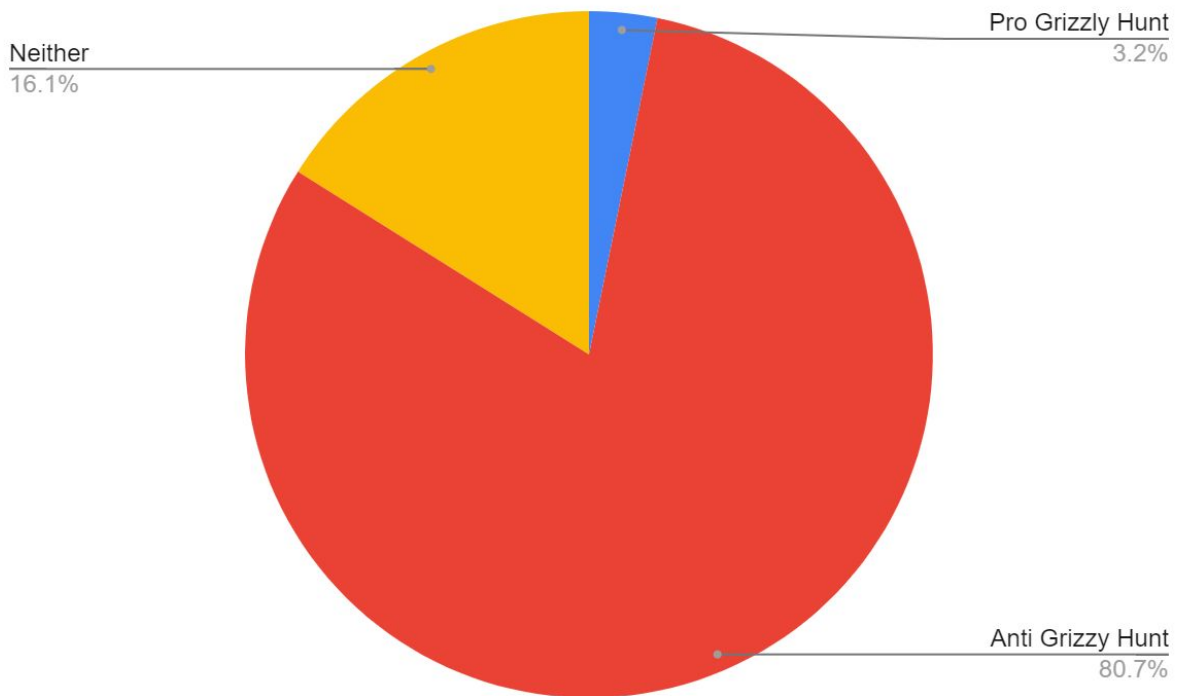
partially completed. We compiled all of the information on August 3rd. The page numbers we were able to read, analyze, and organize were:

Pages
1 - 785
2,273 - 4,545
4,546 - 6818
9,092 - 10,090

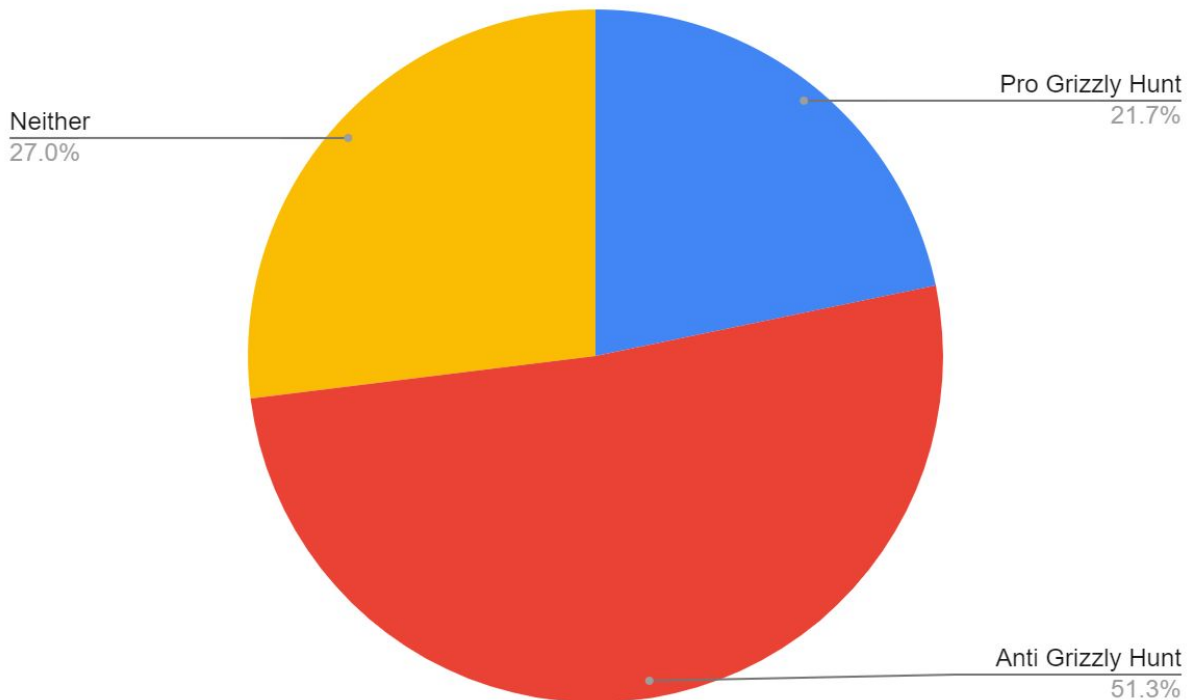
This is a total of 5,946 comments over 6,327 pages. Since the majority of the comments addressed hunting, we organized the comments either as pro grizzly hunt, anti grizzly hunt, or neither. Comments were categorized as neither if they did not address hunting or were too vague to make a determination. We also indicated whether a commenter self identified as a Montanan within the comment.

Data Collected

Total Comment Analysis: 5,946 comments



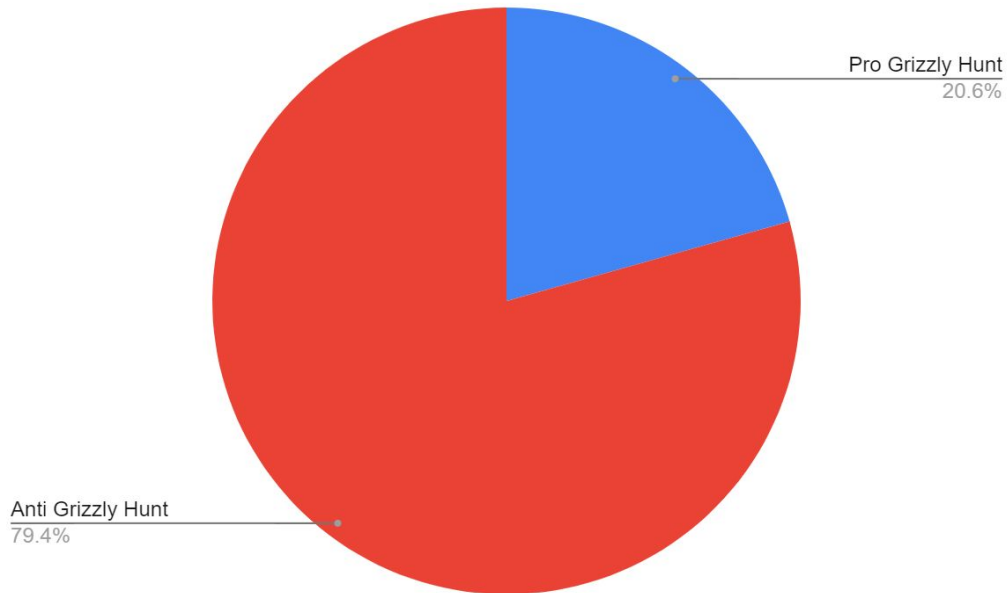
Montana Residents: 118 comments



Estimate of Remaining Comments

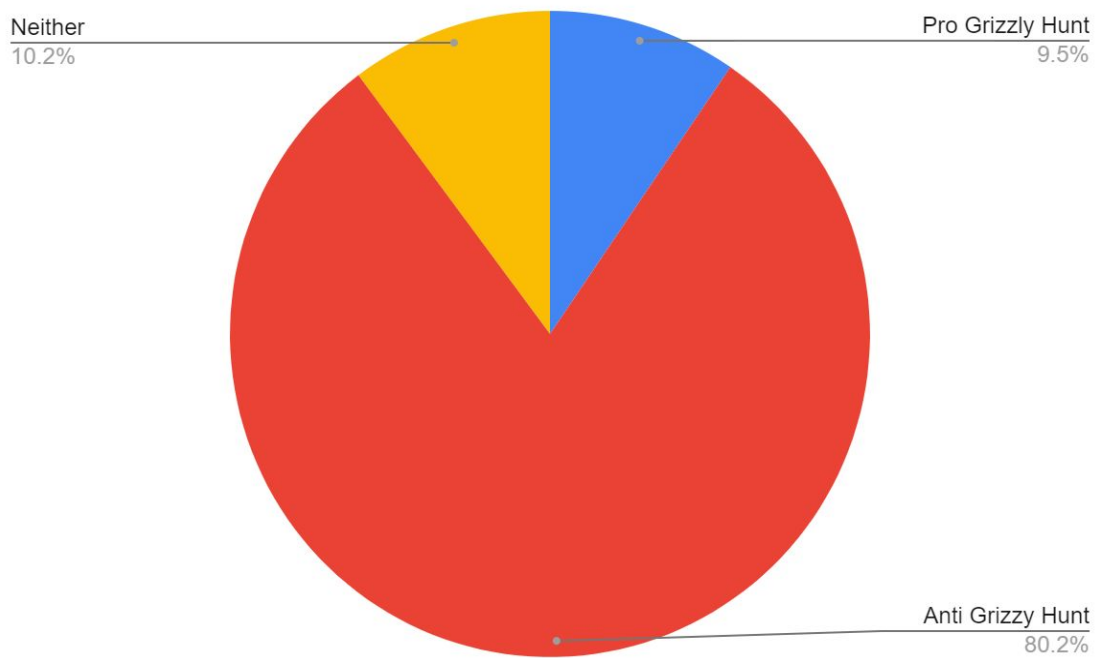
We acknowledge that this is an incomplete analysis; we were unable to read the remaining 5,034 pages in detail due to capacity constraints. However, we believe that understanding the rest of the document provides important context. The graph pictured below is an estimate of the remaining comments created by scanning the document and recognizing patterns in responses. Patterns were identified by visually scanning the pages not included in the detailed analysis and reading individual comments at frequent intervals. This estimate does not include the form letters from Wild Earth Guardians (pages 1411-2251) or the attachments and form letters at the end of the PDF (pages 10,618 - 11,361) to remain consistent with individual comment submissions that were part of the detailed analysis. This estimate also assumes that the comments fall in either pro grizzly hunt or anti grizzly hunt and does not attempt to indicate the “neither” category. We want to emphasize that this is only an estimate, not an exact count of each individual comment.

Estimate of Remaining Individual Comments: 3398 comments



The graph below displays the estimate combined with the detailed analysis to provide an estimate of overall sentiment

Detailed Analysis Combined with Estimate of Individual Comments: 9344 comments



Results

Consistent in both the detailed analysis and the estimate, approximately 80 percent of the comments were opposed to a grizzly hunt. Comments supporting a grizzly bear hunt fluctuated between low in the detailed analysis to approximately 20 percent in the estimate. The overall estimated percentage of comments supportive of hunting is approximately 10 percent. Within the detailed analysis authors of 118 comments identified themselves as Montanans, of these 51 percent were opposed to a grizzly hunt, 22 percent were supportive of a grizzly hunt, and 27 percent were categorized as neither.

Conclusions

It is difficult to draw concrete conclusions without a detailed analysis of the entire document. We encourage FWP or the Governor's office to conduct a detailed analysis of the public comments including the most recent additions. What is clear, of the 5,946 that we were able to analyze and organize the public sentiment was overwhelmingly opposed to a grizzly hunt and interested in protecting the species for a variety of reasons. The estimate of the 3,398 comments also indicates that a majority of the comments are in opposition of a hunt. People voiced desires to restore balance to the ecosystem, concerns over the current health of the grizzly population, concerns over climate change and loss of habitat, and a desire for grizzlies to be there for their children and grandchildren, among many other reasons. What is also highlighted in this analysis is the level of public interest in the fate of grizzly bears in Montana is incredibly high. The people who submitted comments were located in Montana and across the country; the sheer number of comments demonstrates a vested interest in the outcome of this Council. We hope that this analysis is helpful in better understanding public sentiment and we urge the Council to take into account the thousands of people who dedicated time to this process before offering recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Paul". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Organizing Representative,

Greater Yellowstone/Northern Rockies Campaign - Our Wild America