

News Release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mountain-Prairie Region

Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota,
Utah, and Wyoming
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Federal Agencies Transition Grizzly Bear Relocation Responsibilities in Montana

New Montana law prohibits state wildlife agency from relocating grizzly bears in certain areas

DENVER — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in cooperation with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) National Forests in western Montana, will now be responsible for relocating grizzly bears to prevent or mitigate conflicts in parts of Montana. Relocation of grizzly bears is not new – Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks typically relocates 30 bears/year to try to stop or prevent conflicts. Beginning in March, 2022, FWP can no longer be involved in relocations in certain areas due to Montana Senate Bill 337. The USFWS will now assume these responsibilities.

Under new Montana state law, FWP may only relocate grizzly bears in certain areas as previously approved by the state's wildlife commission. Outside of the state's pre-approved areas, the USFWS will now take the lead in relocating grizzly bears. The USFWS has worked closely with the USFS to identify remote areas in Montana that would be conducive for grizzly bear relocations. Areas identified for possible relocation include, but are not limited to, remote locations in Northwest Montana, the Sapphire Range and Big Hole Mountains.

Bears eligible for relocation would be relocated within the same ecosystem. These relocations would not introduce grizzly bears to new areas. As grizzly bears recover in numbers and geographic areas it is important to remember that all of Montana is within the historic range of grizzly bears as they naturally reoccupy this habitat. Relocating a bear from a more developed area to a remote area is mutually beneficial to both the bear and humans, allowing the bear to be removed from another potential conflict, while creating more space between them and human development. USFWS and USFS National Forest units are committed to distributing additional notices to local communities whenever the relocation of a grizzly bears occurs.

Commented [SA1]: Pending details from USFS we are still waiting on

Commented [CH2R1]: We should include all areas that we might relocate to - not just the new areas

Commented [SA3]: Pending confirmation from USFS

A grizzly bear is eligible for relocation if they are involved in a conflict, or to prevent them from becoming involved in a conflict. Bears may also be relocated if they have been incidentally caught in other situations, such as wolf traps. Relocation is just one tool available to wildlife managers, other options include conflict prevention, such as installing electric fences, using bear resistant trash cans, and hazing. Relocation is not an eligible management tool for grizzly bears that are considered a threat to human safety; bears posing a threat to human safety would not be relocated. The public should continue to practice good [bear-aware habits in bear country](#), including the carrying and knowledge of [how to use bear spray](#).

Grizzly bears in the lower-48 States are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Management authority for grizzlies in the lower-48 rests with the USFWS, working closely with the USFS and other state, Tribal, and federal agencies. Each situation is unique and requires input from staff on the ground, a thorough history of bear interactions and behavior, and coordination with other agencies.

The public can help prevent the need for relocations and make a difference in a bear's life by doing its part to ensure bears never obtain food rewards. Residents of local communities are encouraged to secure attractants around their homes in bear-resistant containers, buildings, or electric fences. Attractants include items with a scent, such as trash, livestock feed, compost, or beehives. Ensure bird feeders are at least ten feet up and four feet out from any building. Avoid planting fruit trees. Help your neighbors create a bear-wise community to protect wildlife. It may be cliché; however, more often than not, "a fed bear is a dead bear."

Please visit the [Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Bear Aware page](#) for more information about staying safe in bear country.

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