



BASIC COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

FOR ROUTINE NON-CONTROVERSIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS



SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Plan title:** Federal agencies transition grizzly bear relocation responsibilities in Montana
2. **DTS number:** N/A
3. **What is the action triggering this communications plan?** *(Please explain in no more than three sentences)*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with U.S. Forest Service units, is taking over responsibility for relocating grizzly bears in certain areas of Montana. This is a result of Montana Senate Bill 337, restricting where and when state employees may participate in grizzly bear relocations.

4. **What is the proposed date for this action? Why has it been selected? Is it flexible?**

Late April 2022. With grizzly bears emerging from their dens and on the landscape for the season, the potential need for a relocation is increasing.

5. **Which office is leading this communications effort and which other programs, regions or groups are involved?**

- USFWS: R6 External Affairs in coordination with the Ecological Services Grizzly Team and the Regional Director's Office

SECTION II: GOALS AND MESSAGES

6. **What story do we want to tell?**

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. This was previously the responsibility of the State. Relocations will take place to remote areas within USFS units in the state of Montana to prevent and mitigate conflicts with individual bears. The relocation of these bears is beneficial to both grizzly bears and humans, by moving them away from human development and to areas where they have a better chance of not returning to conflict.

7. What are our key messages? *(These should be top concepts that readers should take away, including an understanding of why this action matters and why they should care, not a list of facts, which should be placed in the appendix. List no more than four!)*

- 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. The relocation of grizzly bears in Montana has previously been the responsibility of Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP).
- 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.
- 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 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 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.

SECTION III: IMPLEMENTATION

8. Implementation timeline *(If not known, put TBD or the number of days/hours before/after the announcement)*

Target Date	Tactic	Responsible
All times are in the Mountain (ET -2) time zone		
Ongoing	Coordinate with USFS units	R6: ES Grizzly Team and EA Szuszwalak
Ongoing	Notify local/county agencies of possibility grizzly bears may be relocated to a nearby USFS unit	R6: ES Grizzly Team
As soon as materials are cleared	Notify Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks of pending announcement	R6 EA: Szuszwalak
Day prior to announcement	Distribute release and FAQs to local/county agencies	R6: EA Szuszwalak and ES Grizzly Team
April XX, 2022 Day of announcement	Distribute release and FAQs to Montana media outlets	R6 EA: Szuszwalak

9. **Which communications tools are needed to support these strategies and tactics?** *(Be as specific as possible about the products identified and who will produce them)*

Tool	Responsible	Due Date
Outreach plan	R6 EA: Szuszwalak	April 22, 2022
Draft news release (final details needed from USFS)	R6 EA: Szuszwalak R6 ES: Grizzly Team	April 22, 2022
Develop FAQs	R6 EA: Szuszwalak R6 ES: Grizzly Team	April 22, 2022

10. **Social media plan** *(Provide a list of accounts to be used as well as sample hashtags, messages, multimedia and other links, etc. as appropriate)*

No social media planned for this announcement. USFS units welcome to share the USFWS release/messaging.

11. Stakeholder contact grids *(For each, paste in a table that provides organization name, contact person, how the person will be contacted, phone or email address as appropriate and a name of the person who will be making contact)*

Internal

- USFWS: R6 Leadership, Ecological Services Leadership, MT ES Field Office, Grizzly Bear Team

External

Stakeholder Name	Contact Info	Contact By
U.S. Forest Service	Bitterroot NF, Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, Lolo NF, Helena-Lewis and Clark NF, [others pending information from USFS]	R6: ES Grizzly Team and EA Szuszwalak
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks	Regional Information and Education Program Managers	R6: EA Szuszwalak
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks	Carnivore staff	R6: ES Grizzly Team
Sanders County		
Mineral County		
Missoula County		
Ravalli County		

12. Congressional member email list

Congressional outreach is not planned for this announcement.

13. Congressional committee email list

N/A

SECTION IV: PRIMARY POINTS OF CONTACT

14. Media coordinators *(For national-level plans, list at least one person from HQ Public Affairs and others from region/program if appropriate. For regional-level plans, only regional coordinators are required. Enter name, email and phone)*

- USFWS: Joe Szuszwalak, 303-236-4336, joseph_szuszwalak@fws.gov
- Questions specific to USFS operations (food storage orders, resource questions, etc.) will be directed to the appropriate PAO:
 - Bitterroot NF: Tod McKay, 406-363-7122, tod.mckay@usda.gov
 - Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF: Catherine Mcrae, catherine.mcrae@usda.gov
 - Lolo NF: Kate Jerman, katelyn.jerman@usda.gov
 - Helena-Lewis and Clark NF: Chiara Cipriano, chiara.cipriano@usda.gov
 - [Other additions pending information from USFS]

15. Congressional coordinators *(For national-level plans, list at least one person from HQ Public Affairs and others from region/program if appropriate. For regional-level plans, only regional coordinators are required. Enter name, email and phone)*

- Joe Szuszwalak, 303-236-4336, joseph_szuszwalak@fws.gov

16. Subject matter experts available for interview *(Must be approved by HQ Public Affairs for an HQ-led announcement or by Regional Public Affairs for region-led announcement. Enter name, email and phone)*

Representatives for Media Roundtable:

- Hilary Cooley, USFWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Program Coordinator, 406-243-4903, hilary_cooley@fws.gov
- Jennifer Fortin-Noreus, USFWS Grizzly Bear Biologist, 406 243-4994, jennifer_fortin-noreus@fws.gov

17. Additional technical experts for reference *(Enter name, email and phone)*

N/A

18. Are there any non-FWS points of contact for this action? *(Enter name, organization, role, email and phone)*

- USFS units have declined 'joint' participation in the announcement, USFWS will refer questions regarding USFS operations to the appropriate contact.

SECTION V: DOCUMENT INFO

19. Date Created

Created By

4/21/22	Joe Szuszwalak
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20. Date last edited

Edited By

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

DO NOT PUT OTHER MATERIALS SUCH AS FAQs, NEWS RELEASE OR TALKING POINTS IN THIS SECTION. KEEP THOSE AS SEPARATE DOCUMENTS.

(Consider the following: What is the historical context? Does this relate to other issues that may not immediately be apparent (consider other programs and regions)? Is there a scientific basis to this issue? If so what is it?)

Definitions

Habituated Bear: A bear that shows little to no overt reaction to people as a result of being repeatedly exposed to human stimuli without substantial consequence (Hopkins et al. 2010).

Food Conditioned Bear: A bear that has learned, through prior food reward(s), to associate people, human activities, human-use areas, or food or garbage storage receptacles as sources of anthropogenic foods (Hopkins et al. 2010).

Hazing: Technique where deterrents (i.e., pain, noise, threat, or other unpleasant stimuli) are administered to bears opportunistically to immediately, but temporarily, modify the bears' undesirable behavior (Hopkins et al. 2010).

Human-Bear Conflict: Incidents when bears damage property, obtain human foods (e.g., compost, apiary, pet food, garbage, bird-food, etc.), depredate on livestock, or injure (or kill) humans.