

Grizzly Bear Relocation FAQs

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – July 2022



Are relocated bears a threat to human safety?

- No, relocation is not an eligible management tool for grizzly bears that are considered a threat to human safety, and wildlife managers will not relocate a bear regarded as a threat to humans. Relocated grizzly bears are not considered a threat to human safety any more than other grizzly bears. This does not mean any bears are “safe” to interact with; the public should continue to follow commonsense [bear safety guidelines to avoid encounters](#) with any grizzly bears – relocated or not.

What criteria determine when a bear gets relocated?

- 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 are 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, hazing, and euthanasia in certain situations. 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 are not relocated.

How are the relocation sites determined?

- Relocation sites are established in remote areas away from homes and concentrated human use and only on federal lands. When a bear is captured, wildlife managers consult with staff from the land management agency to determine which relocation site is most suitable for the bear, considering age/sex of the bear, conflict history, and current human use at available relocation sites. On-site or near-site release may be appropriate under certain circumstances, such as when a bear is captured for research purposes or during management actions and considered “non-target”, or categorized as “pre-emptive”, as well as in certain emergency situations involving grizzly bear family groups.

Who is responsible for relocating grizzly bears in Montana?

- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will continue the primary responsibility of relocating grizzly bears within areas designated by the state’s wildlife commission – primarily within recovery zones. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be responsible for relocations outside the state designated areas.

How often will grizzly bears be relocated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Montana?

- Over the past five years, an average of 30 grizzly bears per year have been relocated in Montana by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

What happens if a relocated bear gets into conflict again?

- The Service follows the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Guidelines, which outline descriptions and recommendations for control actions based on the type of offense, condition, sex, age, and the number of times the bear has committed the offense. Options include an additional relocation to another area.

Do bears return to the site where they were captured?

- Relocation is one of several options that bear managers use to help prevent further conflict. Other tools, such as electric fencing, work great for bears that have broken into grain bins, chicken coops, livestock piles, etc. Cleaning up attractants at the capture site to prevent repeat conflicts is essential to the success of preventative actions. However, bears do sometimes return to the site.

Does the Service track relocated bears?

- Every grizzly bear that is captured for relocation receives a collar. The tracking capabilities of the collars vary; most are radio collars that allow for on-the-ground triangulation and location approximation. Wildlife managers do not have access to 'live' data showing current location information.

Do female grizzly bears with offspring get relocated together?

- This depends on the situation, location where the conflict occurred, and age of the offspring at the time of relocation. Most female bears with offspring will be relocated together; however, if this is a female's third conflict, it is possible that only the offspring would be relocated.

How far does a bear get relocated?

- Relocated bears are kept within the same ecosystem. The exact location depends on the situation, location of conflict, nature of conflict, the sex/age of the bear, and availability of suitable relocation sites. Sometimes it is desirable to move the bear far from the conflict so that it does not return (e.g., livestock depredation); other times it is desirable to move the bear within its home range to allow time to clean up a human attractant (e.g., unsecured garbage or chicken coop).

Where is more information available?

- More information about grizzly bears can be found online from [the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee](#) and the [Service's species page](#).