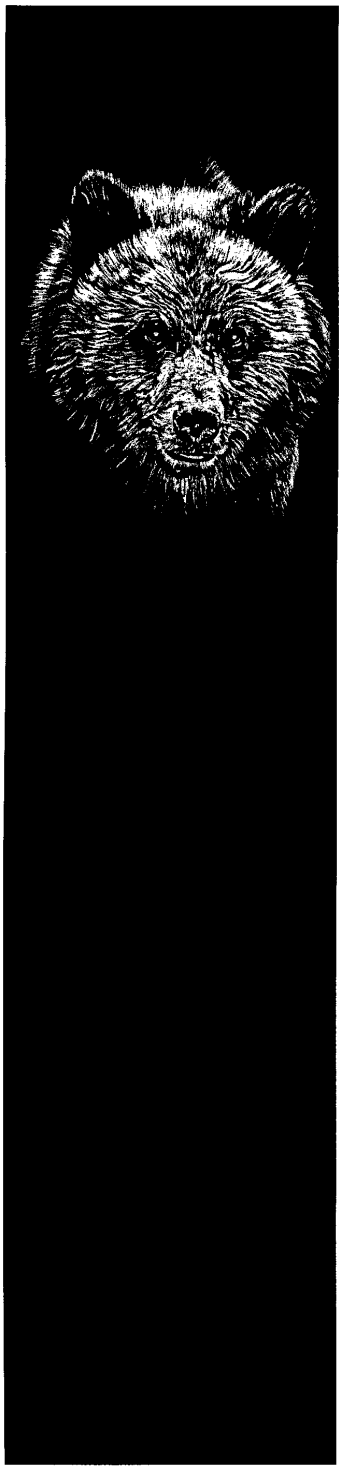
APPENDIX 16. GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY IN THE BITTERROOT ECOSYSTEM - SCOPING OF ISSUES & ALTERNATIVES BROCHURE



Grizzly Bear Recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem

Central Idaho and
Western Montana

Scoping of Issues and Alternatives

Nearly 200 years after the Lewis and Clark expedition camped with the Salish and Nez Perce Indians, the Bitterroot Ecosystem of central Idaho and western Montana still supports a broad diversity of wildlife.

Yet one part of the Bitterroot Ecosystem is missing — the grizzly bear.

After a century of excessive killing by people, the once common grizzlies were eliminated from the Selway-Bitterroot area by the late 1930's. Ample habitat still exists here, however, for a healthy population of grizzly bears.

People differ in their views of grizzly bears. For some, the grizzly symbolizes the essence of wild America and strikes images of power, freedom, and beauty. They recognize it as a native species that is missing from much of our public lands. Many Native Americans have great respect for the grizzly as a spirit symbol. Some people express fear and intimidation at the mention of grizzly bears. Others worry more about government regulations than they do about bears.

The challenge is how to pioneer new ways of melding the interests of people with the needs of the grizzly bear. ***Public participation — especially by local citizens — in crafting a sound and acceptable grizzly bear recovery strategy is essential. We want to hear your views about options for grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem.***

> "The grizzly bear is the last great symbol of our wildlands in North America. I think it's important that we talk to each other, we learn what our common values are, we come to sensible consensus on compromise, and we continue to preserve this wonderful wildlife and these wild places that we have in this great country of ours."
>
> *- General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Army (Retired)*
> *National Spokesperson for Grizzly Bear Recovery Program*

Need and Purpose of the Proposed Action

For thousands of years, grizzly bears lived in a variety of habitats throughout most of western North America. More than 50,000 grizzlies roamed the American West prior to European settlement. Due to loss of habitat and killing by people, grizzly bears have been eliminated from virtually all of their historic range in the contiguous United States.

Today, only 800 to 1000 grizzlies remain in a few isolated populations in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Washington. Many people believe that the long-term future of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states is in jeopardy. Why? Because wildlife species like the grizzly bear are most vulnerable when confined to small portions of their historic range and limited to a few, small populations in isolated areas.

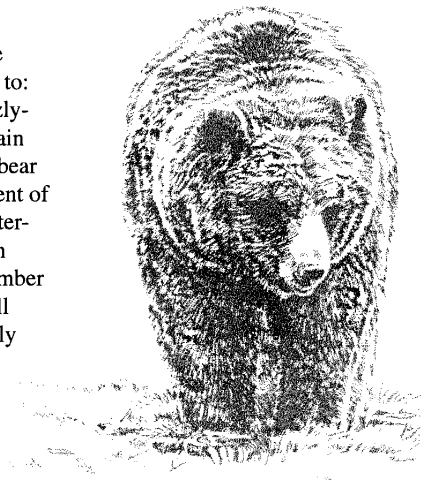
Only two grizzly bear populations (in the Glacier/Bob Marshall and Greater Yellowstone areas) have several hundred individuals. The others have 5-30 grizzly bears each, and room for expansion is limited. The only way of boosting the long-term prospects for grizzly bears in the contiguous United States is to develop a third major population over time. The Bitterroot Ecosystem of central Idaho and western Montana offers one of the last, best places for recovering grizzly bears.

The action proposed here is to reintroduce 20-30 grizzly bears over a 5-year period from which a population could grow over time. The purpose is to help recover the grizzly bear and restore the integrity of the Bitterroot Ecosystem by reintroducing this species to a small portion of its historic range.

What do grizzly bears need?

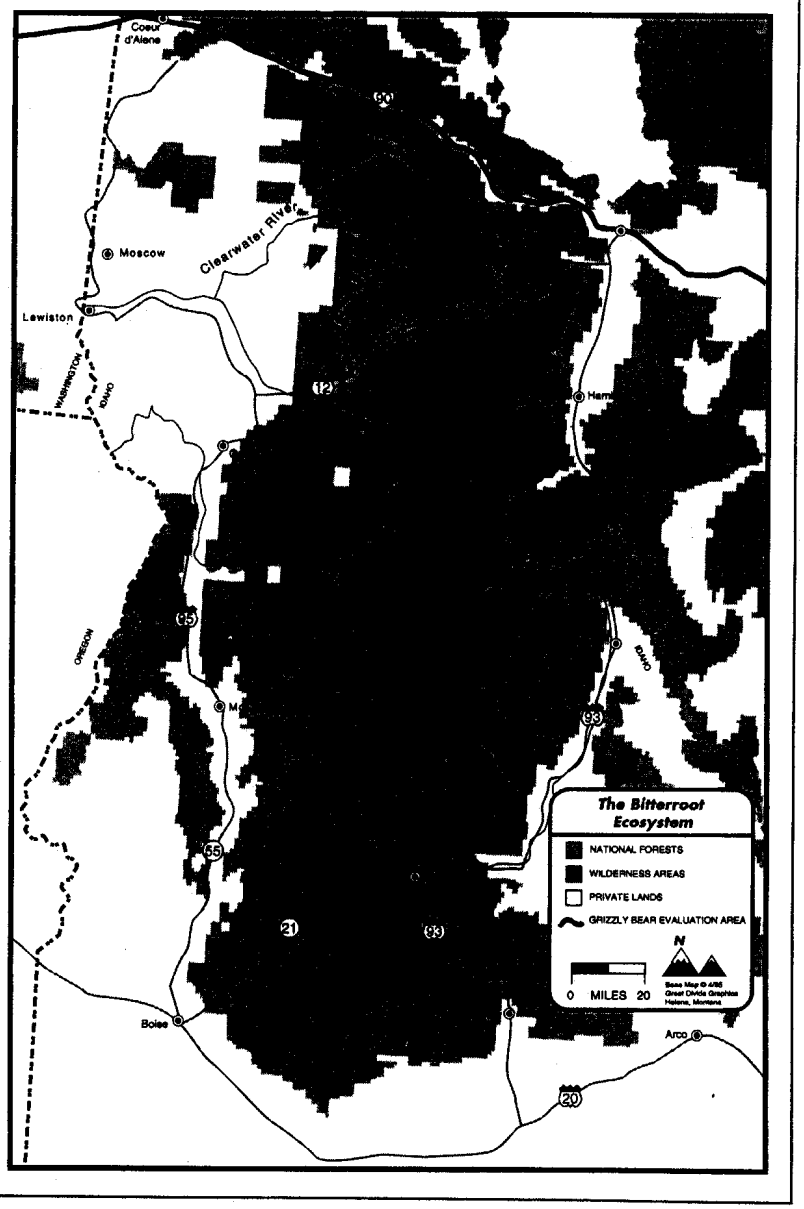
- minimal mortality caused by humans
- sufficient space and isolation from human developments
- diversity of habitats that provide key foods during different seasons

The primary objectives for grizzly bear management in the Bitterroot Ecosystem would be to: (1) minimize potential for grizzly-human conflicts, and (2) maintain quantity and quality of grizzly bear habitat. Successful establishment of grizzly bears in the Selway-Bitterroot area will depend upon high survivorship of an adequate number of colonizers. This, in turn, will hinge upon acceptance of grizzly bears on public lands by local citizens whose interests are addressed in a fair and objective manner.



Bitterroot Ecosystem of Central Idaho and Western Montana

A 5500-square mile evaluation area extends from the Salmon River north to include the North Fork of the Clearwater River (see map). Approximately 97% of this area is public land managed by the Forest Service; the remainder is owned by timber corporations. About half of the area is located in the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church River of No Return Wildernesses designated by Congress. (Other portions of the River of No Return Wilderness south of the Salmon River have not been assessed for grizzly recovery.) Satellite images, supplemented by field checking, have revealed a diversity of grizzly habitat in the Bitterroot Ecosystem. Due to geographical patterns of precipitation, it appears that habitats north of the Lochsa River may be more productive of bear foods than those farther south. Current National Forest plans emphasize habitat security for elk on non-wilderness lands there. One paved highway bisects the area. No cattle or sheep grazing occurs in the evaluation area at present. The potential for oil, gas, and mineral development appears low. Far fewer people visit the Selway-Bitterroot area compared to Glacier or Yellowstone National Parks or the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Thus, there is a large core of remote country with a diversity of bear habitats.



History of Grizzly Bear Recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem

1938 - Last kill of a grizzly bear in the Bitterroot Mountains recorded.

1975 - Grizzly bear listed as a *threatened* species in the contiguous U.S.

1982 - Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan calls for evaluation of Selway-Bitteroot country as a potential recovery area

1986 - Status report concludes that a resident population of grizzly bears was eliminated from the Selway-Bitterroot area 50 years ago.

1991 - Based upon a 5-year study of the Bitteroot Ecosystem, independent bear scientists estimate that area eventually could support 200+ grizzly bears. Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) endorses the Bitterroot Ecosystem as a grizzly bear recovery area.

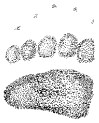
1993 - An interagency task force, working with a citizen's involve ment group, drafts a chapter on grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem. In response to public comments from local commu nities of central Idaho and western Montana, several changes are made in the final chapter. It calls for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate a full range of recovery alternatives.

1995 - The Fish & Wildlife Service continues public involvement and assembles an interdisciplinary team to begin the EIS process. Team members include specialists from the Fish & Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and the Nez Perce Tribe. Dr. John Weaver brings 12 years of grizzly bear research and management experience to job as team leader.

Preliminary Issues

During scoping meetings concerning the chapter on the Bitterroot Ecosystem for the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and the Notice of Intent to complete an EIS, the public identified several issues.

* recovery options and legal classification of grizzly bears
* possible restrictions on human uses of public lands
* geographic boundaries for recovery
* location and cost of a reintroduction program
* illegal killing of grizzly bears
* participatory role of citizens in grizzly bear recovery
* concern for human safety
* control of nuisance grizzly bears



Preliminary Alternatives

1 No-Action (Natural Recolonization)

Grizzly bears would be allowed to expand from their current range in north Idaho and northwestern Montana southward into central Idaho and western Montana. The likelihood of such natural recolonization appears very low because grizzly bears do not move far into new areas. If grizzlies did disperse, they would be protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act wherever they occurred. Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service would be mandated for all human activities (such as logging, recreation, etc.) that may affect grizzly bears. Additional annual or seasonal restrictions on public access could be implemented to provide habitat security especially for grizzlies. The Fish & Wildlife Service would have management authority for all aspects of grizzly bear recovery.

2 Reintroduction of an Experimental Population (Proposed Action)

For a period of 5 years, 4-6 grizzly bears from British Columbia (and perhaps recovered populations in the U.S.) would be captured per year and reintroduced to wilderness areas of central Idaho. No bears with any known previous conflicts with humans would be reintroduced. Released bears would be designated as an experimental, non-essential population under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. The purpose of this ESA amendment was to promote local acceptance of reintroductions by allowing greater management flexibility. The 5500-square mile evaluation area would provide the core of a larger "experimental population area" wherein consultation for land uses would not be required. Land-use allocations, standards, and guidelines under current Forest Plans appear adequate for habitat security of grizzly bears. Appropriate sanitation practices would be encouraged through information and education and various incentives. The Fish and Wildlife Service would retain management responsibility for capture and reintroduction of grizzly bears. Under state or tribal management plans approved by the Fish and Wildlife Service, a state or tribal bear management specialist could be assigned to the reintroduction area. Reintroduction and monitoring would cost about $160,000 a year. Citizen participation in the development and implementation of the special rule for grizzly bear management in the Bitterroot Ecosystem would be encouraged. A rulemaking for the experimental population would be presented as part of the draft EIS. Estimated time to recovery would vary between 40 and 60 years, depending upon how many of the released bears survive. Results of the experimental program would be monitored annually, with a complete evaluation at the end of 5 years.

3 Accelerated Reintroduction of a Standard Population

For a period of 5 years, 10 grizzly bears from British Columbia (and perhaps recovered populations in the U.S.) would be captured per year and reintroduced as a fully protected (threatened) species under the Endangered Species Act. Grizzly bears would be released in suitable habitat, including areas outside of the wilderness. No bears with any known previous conflicts with humans would be released. A 9000-square mile area from Interstate 90 south to the south end of the River of No Return Wilderness would be delineated as a recovery zone. The Fish and Wildlife Service would lead grizzly bear reintroduction and management at an annual cost of about $300,000 a year. As in other grizzly bear recovery areas, consultation would be mandated for all human activities (such as logging, recreation, etc.) that may affect grizzly bears. Estimated time to recovery would vary between 25 and 40 years, depending upon how many of the released bears survive. Results would be monitored annually, with a complete evaluation at the end of 5 years.

** **Under all alternatives** - Regulations under the Endangered Species Act allow killing of a grizzly bear in defense of human life. Under existing IGBC guidelines, grizzly bears that frequent areas of high human use, act aggressively toward humans, or kill livestock would be relocated to remote areas or killed by authorized personnel from state, tribal, or federal agencies. Information would be provided on (1) common-sense hiking and camping practices to avoid surprising or attracting grizzly bears, and (2) identification of bears in the field to avoid accidental shooting of a grizzly bear.

How you can become involved

The Bitterroot Grizzly Bear EIS will be prepared according to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of NEPA is to ensure that the public and decision makers have quality information on the effects of different alternatives prior to making a decision. The EIS will follow this schedule:

June-July 1995	**Identify issues and alternatives**
December 1995	Evaluate effects of alternatives in Draft EIS
January 1996	Public review of draft EIS
April-May 1996	Public review of final EIS
June 1996	Record of Decision on EIS

You are encouraged to provide ideas and comments throughout preparation of the Bitterroot Grizzly Bear EIS. Periodic updates will be mailed or reported in the media to keep the public informed of progress on the EIS.

OPEN HOUSES FOR SCOPING ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES

Open houses will be held 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

July 5, 1995	Grangeville, Idaho	
	Orofino, Idaho	
July 6, 1995	Hamilton, Montana	
	Missoula, Montana	MEETING SITES TO BE ANNOUNCED
July 10, 1995	Boise, Idaho	
	Helena, Montana	
July 11, 1995	Salt Lake City, Utah	

There are several ways that grizzly bears can be recovered. How bears are managed will determine what positive and negative effects grizzly bear conservation may have on people and the environment. It is important that we know what new or modified alternatives that you wish the Bitterroot Grizzly Bear EIS Team to consider. Thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES
DUE JULY 20, 1995

BITTERROOT GRIZZLY BEAR EIS,
P.O. BOX 5127
MISSOULA, MT 59806