

# Bitterroot Grizzly Bear Ecosystem Meeting

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service

### January 22-23, 2020

#### DAY 1

##### Attendees<sup>1</sup>:

Jodi Bush, FWS MT ESO Supervisor  
Chris Savage, FS R1 Director, Renewable Res.  
Hillary Cooley, FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coord.  
Jennifer Fortin-Noreus, FWS Grizzly Bear Rec.  
Lee Jacobson, FS R4 TES program lead  
Scott Jackson, FS National Carnivore Program  
Lydia Allen, FS R1 TES Program lead  
Sandi Fisher, FWS ID ESO Asst. State supervisor  
Chris Swanson, ID FWS ESO Acting State Sup.  
Steve Beverlin, FS R4 Director, Natural Res.  
Laura Berglund, FWS ID ESO Sec 7 lead  
Kevin Labrum, NPCNF wildlife biologist

Mike Pruss, NPCNF wildlife biologist  
Cheryl Probert, NPCNF supervisor  
Carolyn Upton, LNF supervisor  
Matt Anderson, BNF supervisor  
Chuck Mark, SCNF supervisor  
Tom Ford, SCNF staff officer  
Ben Conard, FWS MT ESO deputy supervisor  
Greg Gustina, LNF staff officer (afternoon only)  
Wayne Kasworm, FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery  
Office (on the phone)  
Carly Lewis, FWS Liaison (notetaker)

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#### INTRODUCTIONS, OBJECTIVE(s)

- ⇒ Identify relevant issues and establish a common understanding of current conditions and FWS expectations of FS
- ⇒ Set the framework for future 'next steps' and associated assignments

#### **BITTERROOT ECOSYSTEM BACKGROUND-** (Hillary Cooley, FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery leader)

- Updates on bear distribution
  - Bear 927 crossed I90 in June, Hwy 12 in July, spent ~ 2 months in and near Selway Wilderness
  - Stevensville, MT grizzly bear was captured on the golf course in 2018
  - Sightings have increased in the BE; however, none confirmed at this time (e.g. White Bird, Elk City in 2019)
  - 2007 grizzly killed in Clearwater in Kelly Creek
- Why was the Bitterroot chosen as a recovery zone??
  - One of the largest blocks of federal land, much of it is wilderness
- Bitterroot Recovery Timeline—(see slide from Hillary's presentation for details)
  - 10j as nonessential experimental population in 2000

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout notes, some acronyms/abbreviations are used:

RZ= Recovery Zone; BE= Bitterroot Ecosystem; FWS= Fish & Wildlife Service; FS= Forest Service

- 2001 proposed rule to select "no action" alternative (do not introduce), but this was never finalized.
- Bitterroot Evaluation Area from Recovery Plan Chapter (1996)
  - Map in recovery plan is NOT the recovery zone- just an evaluation area
  - EIS in Alternative 1 showed a boundary for a recovery area associated with reintroduction; EIS alternative 2 showed a different boundary for Natural Recovery
  - Task tomorrow is to spend some time talking about boundaries-- what is the recovery zone, what is adequate?
- Additional Tasks Outlined in FEIS
- Jodi distributed a letter from FWS to agencies that says Current 10j rule does not apply to grizzlies that have made their way into the Bitterroot Ecosystem on their own (i.e. Natural recovery).
  - 10j experimental population has more flexibility to manage. However, if bears move in naturally the options for using the 10j flexibility are no longer there.
  - All bears in lower 48, no longer where they are residing are considered to be 'Threatened'.
  - Before Recovery can happen, land management restrictions/conservation strategy has to be in place

⇒ Questions and discussions:

- Carolyn asked for clarification regarding the original NEPA (EIS)—who signed decision?
  - It was FWS, and the Decision was Alternative 1
- Is Alternative 1 still in place as the selected alternative?
  - Jodi-- because we never implemented it and because natural movements are occurring, lawyers are telling us we are in a different place with this dated decision.
  - So, at this point we need to explain how we got here and how we'd like to move forward with grizzly bear recovery
- What is the Evaluation area in Recovery Plan (see map)?
  - It IS a 10j; but the FWS has not implemented their 2000 decision to introduce bears within its boundaries
  - The FEIS ROD was for the establishment of a 10j population. The 1993 Recovery Plan (and 1996 Bitterroot recovery chapter) is separate from this and it is the Recovery Plan that the FWS has been—and will continue to—implement.
- Cheryl asked for clarification about 927-- wat's his status?
  - Hillary-- there's not a designation for him; as far as Bitterroot, we didn't put him there, he moved there on his own after a year following his movement as an augmentation bear into the Cabinets. There are additional bears that are moving into the BE.
  - Jodi-- bears that are moved into the Cabinets are Threatened bears, regardless of where they move
- What did the settlement of the lawsuit say?

- There was no official settlement, there was an agreement outside of the court. Proposal to revise was never finalized. Never took the step of saying the original was invalidated.
- What do the different lines mean?
  - BE is the only one with a 10j!!
  - Orange boundary (purple in packets)= the 10j boundary, Experimental Population Area
  - There's direction in the 10j rule for how to manage
  - Recovery Zone= most important habitat for bears; for other Recovery Zones, there are criteria. Is there Direction in the EIS for what to do in the Recovery Zone for Alt 1?
- ⇒ Clarification of Terms—
  - Relocation- occurs as a common practice because of conflicts; do not relocate conflict bears as augmentation into different Ecosystems
  - Augmentation-- specific to Cabinet-Yaak
  - Reintroduction-- was specific to Bitterroot; cannot have a breeding population and introduce bears on top of them
- Connectivity/Linkage
  - If we have no connectivity, we will not have bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem
  - Early 2000's report identified linkage areas
  - Linkage zone action plan
    - Where movement opportunities exist (new study possible)
  - Concern about linkage and Forest management in the area where the linkage area does not overlap with the red-outlines 'Natural Recovery Area'
  - NCDE identified Demographic Connectivity Areas (DCAs) in their Conservation Strategy; self-imposed restriction on road densities were incorporated into Forest Plan
  - 10 j Status summary-- see Hillary's slide for details; also see letter from FWS dated 1/21/2020
    - FWS has not reintroduced bears into the Bitterroot
    - Intent of 10j was to allow management flexibility for an introduced population

#### **SPECIES STATUS/DISTRIBUTION IN BE-** (Jennifer Fortin-Noreus, FWS grizzly bear biologist)

- Verified sightings-
  - A 5-point system that FWS uses to verify sightings
- NCDE and GYE use all known locations and calculate likelihood that it's associated with a population to define current distribution; includes distance and time to decide if it's an expansion in distribution of the population, or if they sightings are outliers (i.e. Krieger (sp?) method)
- Many sightings in Montana in between NCDE and BE and GYE, but have been distant in time and space enough to not show an expansion of the population
- FWS is developing a sightings database within the FWS Grizzly Recovery Office; sent out request to Forests, states, BLM to inform agencies that a sightings database is being developed to collect data
  - FWS looking at potential funding for seasonal crews to look in Sapphire Range, and in Big Hole areas to verify if there are females with cubs

- Kevin asked how FWS gets info on whether it's one bear or multiple individuals; Jennifer says that it's good if there are cameras, but not always able to distinguish if there are multiple individuals or not
- Defenders of Wildlife has approached FWS with a proposal to use volunteers to do some DNA sampling, similar to the wolverine study that was done in the Bitterroots a few years ago
  - Talking with FWP and DOW to see if that's a possibility
- Peck et al. 2017 paper modelled potential dispersal corridors to and from NCDE and GYE;
  - Work is continuing to add females to the model to increase the predictions for females between NCDE and GYE
  - Post-doc student is seeking funding to work with FWS to analyze predictions for connectivity/dispersal corridors between NCDE/GYE and the Bitterroot

#### **MAY BE PRESENT MAPS—led by FWS**

- What do these maps do?
  - First step to whether you need to look at/evaluate effects
  - If bears may occur....
  - Necessary for Sec 7 consultation-- federal agencies must consult on actions that may affect in areas where bears may be present
- FWS working to consolidate or coordinate efforts to map where bears may be present
  - See Jennifer's slide for scoring system for sightings
- FWS will have the sightings database and do an annual call for data; data sharing with partner agencies
- Standard mapping procedures:
  - States evaluate maps, annually
    - Right now, distributions are updated biennially (even years for NCDE and GYE; odd years for CYE and SE)
  - NCDE and GYE distributions based on Bjornlie et al. (2014)
  - CYE and SE based on BORZ process identified in Forest Plans and Access Amendment
  - Consultation with species experts on whether to add an area
  - Use easily identifiable boundaries such as major roads or public land admin units
- Currently have large tracts of historically occupied range that are not currently occupied; the predictions of where bears may be expanding can help to inform where expansion is likely to occur; research is working on those efforts to better predict and map
- IPAC is the FWS database for record (MT and ID)
  - MTESO has hired MT Natural Heritage to keep the maps updated
  - ID has not gotten there yet; ID biologists should have discussions at Level 1 meetings for now to determine where grizzlies may be present and need consultation

#### **SEPTEMBER 2019 CHANGES IMPACTING LOLO, BITTERROOT, NEZE PERCE/CLEARWATER, AND SALMON-CHALLIS**

##### Discussion and Questions:

- What were the circumstances that resulted in the Bitterroot NF to be mapped?
  - Several verified sightings that led to MT Ecological Services Office to 'turn it on'

- Jodi—the bar is very low; have lost where actions may affect and a species may be present (e.g. Fleecer decision on B-DNF)
- Why did the Bitterroot not consult on west portion of the Forest when consulting on Forest Plan recently?
  - At first, only portions east of Hwy 93 were mapped as “may be present”
  - Forest’s concern was not wanting to over-reach and create a precedent for their neighbors on the surrounding forests
- Considerations for Clearwater-Nez Perce for consulting on grizzlies for Forest Plan revision?
  - Bears are expanding rapidly
  - FWS is concerned about not over-mapping where bears may be
  - Potentially use forest district boundaries for determining where to consult?
  - FWS open to options for what may work
  - It’s a long-term plan; need to consider how much expansion may occur in the timeframe
  - Continue to work with Spokane office for consultation

## SECTION 7(a)(1)<sup>2</sup> CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY MEASURES (what and where?)

- Ongoing actions that assist with protection, conservation and recovery of listed species (see summary documents in packets)
  - Travel management plan
  - Bear safety training and public information
- Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee’s 5 Year Plan Overview for the Bitterroot Ecosystem
  - Goal 1: document presence/absence of bears in ecosystem
  - Goal 2: promote natural recovery of the populations through immigration
- Updates from Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee (from Chuck, with help from others)
  - Information and Education
    - FWP sponsoring a summit next week
    - Bear rangers in Bitterroot NF
    - Cheryl- working with fire folks on the Forest; looking for pamphlets and information; interest is in talking about it in terms of “Bears,” not just grizzly bears
  - Sanitation issues
    - Scattered efforts—need to be coordinated (e.g. issues in Bitterroot valley where there are sanitation issues)
    - Need to expand effort into ID
    - Need to start talking about grizzlies on Salmon-Challis

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<sup>2</sup> **Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is a tool to aid in the recovery of listed species.** Section 7(a)(1), is an affirmative conservation mandate which directs federal agencies to use their authorities to carry out their programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species. Section 7(a)(2) requires federal agencies to **consult** on their management proposals to ensure the actions they fund, authorize, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or adversely modify or destroy critical habitat.

- Chris Swanson says this is a really important piece for FWS in ID, too; interested in being pro-active, connecting PAOs between agencies to make sure messaging is consistent and coordinated
- Scott Jackson says if there are areas adding food storage order, hopefully can be consistent with what's being done in other areas
- Cheryl starting some discussions about that with public, with outfitter/guides, with recreation staff on the Forest; interest in being consistent, getting good information to people
- Matt—lots of sanitation issues between valley bottom and wilderness boundary; have a lot of work to do in the WUI
- Vacant membership from Subcommittee needs to be addressed (tribal)
- Technical Committee/Science Committee for Bitterroot subcommittee
  - Hillary says there's a need to establish that support
- Scott J mentioned that a Conflict Management Database may be helpful for supporting the questions about "why do we need to do xxx for bears?"
  - No centralized database for black bears in MT; what about in ID?
  - Jennifer—NCDE has long tried to have a centralized database; recently got all agencies permission to use Survey 123 for tracking conflicts
    - It is private, not a public database;
    - Working on an MOU regarding data ownership;
    - Working on getting iPads or tablets to field personnel for easier in-the-field data entry
- Is going to take time to develop relationships, make investments. However, it is headed in the right direction
- More on conflicts/data on whether I&E efforts are effective
  - Recovery Office is looking more into this; developing inter-agency database (see above)
  - Defenders of Wildlife has been a huge player in providing funds for agencies and private citizens
  - Wildlife Services received substantial money for non-lethal program for conflict prevention

## **NEEDS and POC/Lead**

### **⇒Communication Plan (BE IGBC subcommittee I & E)**

- Talking points related to Idaho grizzly bear 'species may be present' (Jen)
- Community based
- Pathway and Key POC

### **⇒Conservation and Recovery Actions (7a1) (ALL)**

- Re-examine the Recovery Plan for options

### **⇒Relocation Sites (BE IGBC Subcommittee)**

- Short term vs. Long Term Plans

### **⇒Synopsis of Bitterroot Recovery History (Hilary)**

- Include glossary!

### **⇒Role of BE IGBC subcommittee**

- Report out to Executive IGBC in spring 2020
- Incorporate actions into new 5-year Action Plan

### **⇒Recovery Zone Boundaries and Connectivity (BE Science Tech Team)**

- Define Connectivity
- Revisit Recent IGBC Discussions on these topics

### **⇒Identify Science Technical Team (BE IGBC subcommittee Chair)**

### **⇒Signing Protocols for Expanding Bear Population (BE IGBC I&E Team)**

### **⇒Food Storage Orders & Sanitation (BE IGBC Subcommittee + Scott Jackson)**

- Consistency across the Ecosystem!!
- Sanitation messaging focused on ALL bears

### **⇒Coordination with State/Tribal Partners**

- Part of multiple 'needs' such as communication plan

### **⇒Credible Sightings, Conflict Databases and Survey 1-2-3 (Jen)**

- Summary/Briefing Sheet
- POCs

### **⇒Database and GIS layers Point of Contact (Lydia)**

- Consider RO

### **⇒Consistent Analysis Unit for Section 7 Consultation (Lydia & R1 Team)**

### **⇒Training (R1 and R4 forests) (Lydia and Lee)**

- Section 7 consultation on grizzly bears for biologists that haven't had that exposure

## **January 23, 2020**

Lydia, Jennifer, Hillary, Jodi, Scott, Sandi, Chris Swanson, Laura, Dave Lockman (wildlife biologist Bitterroot NF), Rob Gump (staff officer Bitterroot NF), Chris Savage, Mike, Cheryl, Carolyn, Matt, Chuck, Tom, Ben, Lee, and Brandon Barr (wildlife biologist Lolo NF).

### **Review/recap:**

- Bears are coming, let's get ready. Conservation measures
- Need to ramp up understanding in Bitterroot Ecosystem
- Setting bears up for success will require a lot of work, especially socially
- Need more time to evaluate the Needs list that was created yesterday afternoon, and come up with a joint prioritized list for the Federal agencies; short-term, mid-term, vs. long-term needs
- Communicate with IGBC in June about what the FS/FWS is looking at in terms of needs, momentum, etc.

### **Review of Needs List (see page 7)**

- **Communication Strategy:**
  - Pathway & key points contacts
  - Community-based? Rob suggested that messaging may need to be different for different communities
  - Cheryl feels very strongly that human safety focus should be on all bears, not just grizzly bears
- **Section 7 Consultation Training:**
  - Science updates, how are they done?
  - FWS staff are constantly looking at new information and how it changes what we know. Not a lot has changed, but we do have more specific information. Part of Lydia's role is to lead the Sec 7 Regional Consultation Team—several working groups are addressing bears such as:
    - how to address bears outside of recovery zones in terms of access management;
    - grizzly bears and non-motorized recreation—new science and old science being reviewed, with intent of developing a white paper that reviews and explains the implications

### **Review/re-address Recovery Zone and Linkage Areas**

- Intent for lines of map—what's the guidance, what does it mean to be within a line, what's the appropriate process
- Black line = Recovery Zone that was put forward in the preferred alternative in the 2000 FEIS—plan was to reintroduce bears; FWS does not have plans to reintroduce
- Red line = Natural Recovery alternative from the 2000 FEIS showed a Recovery Zone that was slightly to the north and east; this line is not “on the books”
- Orange = Evaluation Area that stems from the 1993 Recovery Plan—it was to guide where to think about recovering bears in the ecosystem



Remember, the 1993 Recovery Plan does not have a Recovery Zone for this ecosystem

- EIS has a Recovery Zone outlined, but has not been implemented, and is questionable whether that zone is still valid
- Managers need to identify a Recovery Zone and potential Linkage Areas

Discussion, Q and A:

**Chris Savage**—FWS needs to see what is the validity of the FEIS. If the boundary were to change, would it be supported? Forest Plan components are non-existent right now. Need to chart a path forward for putting standards and guidelines in the Forest Plans for the Recovery Zone.

**Hilary**—FWS must designate habitat-specific recovery criteria prior to delisting each ecosystem

**Cheryl**—right now the EIS with a decision has a Recovery Zone, but the alternative that wasn't selected seems to be the default. Without a subsequent decision, don't see how we can consider anything besides what was in the selected alternative for the RZ

- Jodi—we have an opportunity to revise the RZ to be something more meaningful; it will have a process, will go thru public review, go in Federal Register, etc. But right now, we can be thinking about “is there a better area?” There'd be a lot of work to be done to make changes

**Carolyn**—please clarify—designation of Recovery Zone is the responsibility of the FWS? Recovery Zones only need to be designated in the Recovery Plans, do not have to do an EIS to change the Recovery Zone—but because we have an EIS, we may need to do that.

**Chuck**—do we need Critical Habitat?

- Jodi- no, grizzly bear was listed before that.

**Tom**—if FWS designates RZ, that has management implications, what decision space does the FS have?

- Jennifer—the agencies decide what specific direction they'd implement (i.e. Forest Plan amendment)

**Kevin**—would the BE need to be populated in order to delist?

- Hillary—that is something FWS is trying to work out. May have to revise into Distinct Population Segments.
- Jodi—BE was established before the 10j. FWS said recovery was required in each of the 6 RZ's (per the Recovery Plan)

**Cheryl**—motorized access to public lands is the single biggest issue in Idaho. Makes sense to be thinking about that, but is this the time to enact anything? Intended and unintended consequences could be hugely negative to bears, agencies, etc.

**Jennifer**—if you look at red line, the area was identified because that's where connectivity could occur, a lot of that is roadless area. Need to look at motorized routes (not just roads) within those areas.

**Hilary**—connectivity and linkage is something we should be thinking about. Servheen did linkage study, identified places on map where linkage is likely.

1. ID opportunities for bear movement

2. Prioritize linkage areas
3. Develop management strategies
4. Develop work plan with local communities

Ongoing efforts (e.g. Vital Ground purchasing properties in key linkage areas), etc. that would be helpful for guiding conservation.

**Kevin**—2012 Planning rule requires considering linkage in plans. Connectivity is analyzed at 4 scales (within home range, to within continent). What does connectivity mean to this group?

- Jennifer—example of Ninemile Demographic Connectivity Area—need to have females with cubs able to live there to reach the Bitterroot Ecosystem. There were already roadless areas there, and FS chose to establish road density restrictions.

**Cheryl**—There's a lot of interest in increasing motorized trails in roadless areas in Idaho around many communities. Be careful about saying status quo is ok to maintain. When you draw a Recovery Area, is that around pure biological areas, or something else? There's a lot of Wilderness already out there. Is any more needed?

- Hilary—we need RZs that support the core population and that includes supporting around 280 bears in the ecosystem. That's how FWS bases the size—how productive is the habitat, how big of an area do we need? But it's also “can we get bears there? If we were moving them there, the black line would work. If we're not going to move bears there, we need to look at it in terms of biology. There's the option of not moving the black line, but looking at connectivity areas.

**Chuck**—discussion with Governor's Advisory Committee—one of the themes was that folks did not believe the habitat was there in the BE to support bears. Salmon runs, whitebark pine blister rust, etc. may impact how many bears may be able to live in BE. See Carlos Velado 2005 M.S. Thesis.

**Jennifer**—females getting into the core of the ecosystem requires stepping stones, not just a corridor to walk there. That's the big difference.

**Scott J**—when we designated Demographic Connectivity Areas in the Conservation Strategy, we looked at chunks of roadless areas that could provide the basic components of secure habitat. Likes the idea of keeping the black line, if it's still appropriate to support recovery.

**Hilary**—would it make a difference to the Payette/Salmon-Challis to move the line northward and relieve those Forests of some of the Recovery Zone? Chuck/Lee—probably not?

**Lee**—lump the Recovery Zone and Conservation Strategy together, and amend Forest Plans with those. RZ should be part of the discussion for how we're going to manage in a Strategy.

- Jodi—have a precedent for developing a Conservation Strategy “at the end” when we're looking at how to manage post-listing
- Jennifer—we could revise the Recovery Plan chapter to evaluate the area. Right now it only has broad goals, not a habitat-based criteria
- Jodi—Recovery Plan= what we need to biologically recover the species; Forest Plan= how we get there

**Chris**—to get to eventual goal of 280 bears is a long time out in the future; designing our partnership to get to some of those strategies is important

**Jodi**—if you provide the secure habitat, they will come. Managing to avoid conflict are the biggest strategies to take.

**Jennifer**—back to example of Ninemile DCA, they had some females with cubs there, decided to keep the status quo, not to force improving conditions. Could look at BE and evaluate where females with cubs could live at this time.

- Cheryl—have the opportunity to look at that right now with Forest Plan revision. Especially hopes ID FWS looks at it in terms of future management, invites Grizzly Recovery Office to look at it
- Kevin—have some plan components for elk that would work to serve grizzly bears; e.g. when putting in motorized routes, will maintain blocks of habitat 5,000 acres or larger in roadless areas. When looking at summer and winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), it shows where routes may be able to go in. Different alternatives change the ROS.

**Jodi**—internal black line IS the Recovery Area; red line was from the EIS, is for discussion; experimental population area is null and void, doesn't mean anything

- Definition of a Recovery Zone: Core area with adequate amount of suitable habitat for a viable population
  - Recovery Plan # of bears is not enough to be an isolated population; need that many in the core area, but also need ongoing connectivity to other populations
  - Density for BE may be lower density because there is drier habitat, more similar to ; north end of BE may have higher density capacity, as it's more similar to NCDE
  - Recovery criteria- no more than 4% human mortality
- When FWS developed boundaries for buffers around NCDE and GYE, i.e. the DCAs, did consider other factors already existing

**Kevin**—suggestion that Science Tech Team address Connectivity—what does it mean, where should it occur?

- Scott J—suggest looking at IGBC notes from last summer with discussion on that; connectivity means different things to different people

## **BEAR MANAGEMENT UNITS/ ANALYSIS UNITS**

Tools for evaluation baseline conditions—how do we take it into consideration and evaluate effects on grizzly bears?

- Evaluating habitat components has relied on discreet analysis units, i.e. Bear Management Units or Bear Management Areas *within* Recovery Zone boundaries
  - BMUs/BMAs for other ecosystems are based on female home range sizes
  - There's direction in FS manual (see grizzly-specific language in 2670 manual)
- What are we interested in for the effects analysis? Themes we've focused on= motorized routes, food storage and sanitation, livestock grazing.
- Do we need to have BMUs for the BE? No—not yet!
  - Reasons for them—recovery plan has goals for females with young in BMUs (14 BMUs with females over a 6 year average); allow a static analysis area for tracking changes on the landscape
  - There are areas outside of the RZs and people want to know how to measure effects to bears; people have used other analysis areas (e.g. HUCs, LAUs, Elk Management Units, etc)
  - We use it as a tool for Section 7 analysis

- Lydia's quick snapshot of history:
  - As bears have started expanding out of NCDE and GYE, FNF, LNF, KNF started seeing more bears
  - Still needed Section 7 coverage; so a Region 1-led effort mapped occupied grizzly bear areas, and Forests consulted on Forest Plans for bears outside those Recovery Zones
  - The metric being used for consultation was road density or linear miles of routes, but in very large areas, not necessarily associated with female home range
  - In 2017 the HLC NF got sued, deliberated what to use as an analysis area for bears way outside of RZ
  - FWS, R1 TES, griz researchers all convened, and concluded it doesn't matter if it's in RZ or not, but what you can hang your hat on for science is an *average female home range*;
  - New FP efforts on Custer-Gallatin and HLC are using fixed analysis units; this sets a baseline that FWS can tie their analysis to, and gives predictability and lack of arbitrary constructs for project-level analysis
  - Regional Consultation Team has been working on developing guidance for how to define bear analysis units on Forests, whether in or out of RZs
  - BMUs don't have to necessarily be part of a Forest Plan; but they may be useful for analyzing effects of a Forest Plan when you need to consult
  - BMU is very similar to what we do for lynx with LAUs in terms of having an analysis area, but may or may not have standards (standards would be specific to Forest Plans)
  - FWS hangs BO conclusions on best available science; researchers are saying that female home ranges are the best area to assess effects to an individual; bear ANALYSIS units can be used outside of RZs to assess effects to the individual for Sec 7
- Metrics for analysis regarding roads/motorized routes:
  - Much of the GYE and NCDE focus has been on roads, but Regional Consultation team is moving towards developing metrics for analysis using "secure habitat" instead of linear road miles or road densities
  - Summary in the packet that would be good to review

**WRAP UP: Where do we go from here? What additional needs are there? Round-robin from leadership:**

- **Carolyn**—where is FWS going, what do you need from FS for changing RZ on map?
  - Jodi- RZ line stands as it is for now; in the 5 year review that FWS is initiating, they'll talk about BE and the RZ and its biological relevance
- **Brandon**—if DCA is an option, rather than changing the RZ boundary; logically it would make sense to connect that to the Ninemile DCA. What would be the criteria for delineating the DCA?
  - Jennifer: likely sufficient levels of secure core to support females with cubs
- **Chris**—would make sense for LNF & BNF to be consistent with NPCNF in terms of Forest Plan direction when they revise; Chris—there could be some things that come out post-NPCNF Forest Plan revision that shows the need to do something different, where maybe LNF & BNF pick it up
- **Chuck**—Key focus of this groups efforts at this time should be on:
  1. **More robust I&E effort**
  2. **Draft EIS for NPCNF Forest Plan**

3. **Messaging on how we roll this out in terms of bear recovery**
  4. Other identified NEEDS will come—including workloads, developing science tech committee; we're going to need to be nimble!!!
- **Jodi**
    - FWS needs to reevaluate the RZ boundary to see if it will meet recovery needs
    - Communication plan will be super crucial moving forward. Can start from the Ecosystem Talking Points that Sandi started developing. Would like us to develop talking points collectively within next 30-45 days
    - Hillary will be looking at Recovery Plan
    - What can we start doing to prepare for bears coming on to the Forests? This is another crucial discussion, and need to show partners and public what we're doing; wants this to be a plan of action that is developed, not "random acts of conservation kindness," but a strategic look. Hillary suggests reviewing the Recovery Plan for a list of actions that are needed
  - **Hilary**
    - Relocation sites—it's a complicated issue that has to do with States, FWS and the FS. We need to be prepared for another "Stevensville" bear this summer! Should consider developing a short-term response while we wait for MT Governors Advisory Council. A statement from IGBC that says "we support" or "we don't support" the movement of bears into the BE or "release as close as possible to where it was"
    - Recommend that the IGBC Bitterroot Subcommittee address this—a short-term vs. long-term plan for relocations
    - Should we give a synopsis of this meeting at IGBC Subcommittee meeting? What would it say? Report out and give progress report.
    - 5 year plan development
  - **ID FWS**—it's been helpful to hear perspective from ID Forests, and communication is going to be especially important as we move forward, making sure we can meet our respective missions

## **PRIORITY WORK and WORKING GROUPS:**

### **#1—COMMUNICATION PLAN**

- **PLAYERS:** Sandi, Hillary, Amy Bauer (IGBC I&E lead), Todd McKay (BNF Public affairs officer), someone from Nez-Clear NF (*Cheryl to provide a name suggestion*), Andy Brunell (ID state liaison for FS), Allie Turner (PAO for ID ESO)
- **TIMELINE:** = draft available for review in 45 days (by early March)
- **APPENDIX** = history/synopsis of BE that Hilary is going to produce (complete in 30-40 days)
- Chuck re-engage I&E from IGBC subcommittee, tie to Recovery synopsis
- Key Pieces
  - Living with bears; bears are coming
  - Technical aspects of Recovery Plan and what FWS needs to recover bears in the ecosystem

### **#2 FOREST PLANS and TIE-IN WITH BITTERROOT ECOSYSTEM**

- Cheryl to lead, other Forest Supervisors involved
- 2 components:
  - Planning piece-- how to incorporate into Forest Plans
  - 7(a)(1) Conservation and Recovery ideas to consider

### **#3 SYNOPSIS OF THIS MEETING for Internal and Public—TALKING POINTS**

- Lydia and Chris will draft something and send out to the group
- Touching bases with States (courtesy calls?)
  - Chris Swanson- talk with OSC in ID
  - Carolyn- call Randy Arnold

### **#4 IGBC BE SUBCOMMITTEE:**

- Set up a Science Team
- Develop 5 year plan
- Relocations plan