

Questions and Answers

Grizzly Bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem: What you need to know

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What are some of the delisting considerations for the grizzly bear?

To delist grizzly bears in the BE, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (Service) must determine that the species is no longer threatened based on a number of factors, such as population size and recruitment. To delist or downlist a species, the Service follows a process similar to when a species is considered for listing under the ESA: the population is assessed along with its recovery achievements; existing threats are assessed; and, advice is sought from species experts in and outside of the Service.

To assess the existing threats, the Service must determine that the species is no longer threatened or endangered based on five factors: 1) Is there a present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of species' habitat or range? 2) Is species subject to overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes? 3) Is disease or predation a factor? 4) Are there inadequate existing regulatory mechanisms in place outside the ESA (taking into account the efforts by the States and other organizations to protect the species or habitat)? 5) Are other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence? If the Service determines that the threats have been sufficiently reduced, then we may consider delisting the species.

What should I do if I see a grizzly bear?

Do not approach the bear. Report bear sightings, encounters and conflicts to your state or tribal wildlife management agency. Visit <http://igbconline.org/> for information on proper reporting processes.

The Service is developing a central database to collect sightings and encounters in the Bitterroot and between ecosystems. We ask that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) report as soon as possible if a grizzly bear, active den, tracks, photos, or other evidence of grizzly bear occurrence is observed. Reports should go to the Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Program: Jennifer_fortin-noreus@fws.gov

What are my options if a grizzly bear is causing a conflict, such as threatening humans or chasing chickens or livestock?

Shooting a grizzly bear that is causing a conflict is illegal except if human safety is at risk. Grizzly bears are protected as threatened under the ESA. It is illegal to intentionally “take” or approach a grizzly bear or disrupt its normal behavior of feeding, breeding or sheltering unless human safety is at risk. The definition of “take” includes harm, harass, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect any wildlife within the United States. If a grizzly bear is causing conflict, the public should call the nearest state or tribal wildlife management agency.

How are the Service and USFS working together to recover grizzly bears?

Per section 7(a)(1) of the ESA, all federal agencies are responsible for taking proactive conservation efforts for threatened and endangered species. The Service is responsible for providing advice and assistance to other federal agencies on appropriate conservation measures. The Service will work with federal agencies to develop conservation measures (e.g., food storage and bear awareness outreach) that meet recovery needs of listed species. Codifying such measures will minimize human-bear conflicts, maximize the conservation of grizzly bears, and strengthen the federal agency position in the face of litigation.