

Meeting Minutes

IGBC BITTERROOT ECOSYSTEM SUBCOMMITTEE

Fall 2022 Meeting – Virtual – Monday 11/21/22

1100 – 1150mst Executive session (1000-1100 pst)

1200-1700mst Fall Open Meeting(1100-1600 pst)

AGENDA: (All Times MST)

1100-1150 Executive Session – IGBC members only

1200-1215 Welcome, Agenda Review and Introductions – JJ Teare, Chair

1215-1230 IGBC Executive Committee Update – David Diamond, Exec Coordinator

- IGBC Mission
 - The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) supports the recovery and delisting, and ongoing conservation of grizzly bear populations and their habitats in areas of the western United States through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management, research and communication.
- Winter Meeting, Bozeman, MT – Dec. 6-8th
 - Agenda items:
 - 5 year plan- Subcommittee goals
 - 2023-2024 planning
 - IEO Summit, CDA in March?
 - Conflict working group
 - Summer field work
 - New website, www.igbconline.org/news
- Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee
 - Document presence/absence of grizzly bears in the ecosystem
 - Promote natural recovery of the population through immigration
 - Short-term-
 - DNA/Camera Surveys
 - Verified location database
 - G-bear conflict database for use by MT, ID & FWS
 - Montana FWS connectivity area modeling
 - Bear location information
 - Information & Education on food storage
 - Long-term-
 - Habitat modeling & monitoring
 - Potential funding and mapping project
 - Bitterroot Ecosystem recovery zone BMU mapping project
 - Human Attitude Survey

12:30-12:45 Science Sub-committee Report – Jennifer Fortin-Noreus

2022 Activities

- DNA/camera survey (USFWS)
 - SW MT DNA Survey
 - Status – Completed 2nd Year
 - No G-bears yet detected this year
 - Future – continue in Montana if funding comes available
- Verified location database – finalize, populated, keep updated
 - Standardize across ecosystems/states
 - Status – in progress
 - Future – continuous
- Conflict database – finalize, populate, keep updated
 - Standardize across ecosystems/states
 - Status – in progress
 - Future – continuous
- MFWP post-doc at UM (Sarah Sells) - Modeling Connectivity Areas (MCA)
 - Status – initiated, in progress
 - Future – 2 years

Long-term

- BMU mapping – within the Recovery Zone
 - This is a USFWS function, but it will likely benefit from new information provided by the MCA post-doc analysis
 - Status – pending
 - Future – USFWS dependent, but likely at least 2 years out
- Human attitudes survey
 - Mirror MFWP and Cabinet Yaak Ecosystem efforts (Cecily Costello et. al.)
 - Powerful to evaluate effectiveness of I&E efforts are over time within the BE.
 - Status – pending
 - Future – unknown
- Identification of habitat outside the recovery zone (to be informed by post-doc)
 - Status – pending
 - Future – at least 2 years out
- Habitat modeling and monitoring
 - To be informed by MCA post-doc and Resource Selection Function (RSF), as well as other new research
 - Status – pending
 - Future – at least 2+ years out

Other discussions

- Ongoing Monitoring Efforts that might document bears
- SSA (Species Status Assessment) to complete – current science
- UM/MFWP predictive conflict map.
 - Will have a predictive conflict projection for the Bitterroot valley, riparian areas and the foothills are particularly important.
- IEO subcommittee collaboration opportunities

1245-1300 Information, Education and Outreach Sub-committee Report – Jen Bruns, Chair

- I, E&O subcommittee chairs from each ecosystem met on 11/22 to discuss and select I,E&O award recipients. Approx. 42K to award.
- Working with Nez Perce-Clearwater NF on a bear aware trailer with option for charging bear
- Received award last year to purchase charging bear materials, 3D targets, bear spray, bear resistant trash can, cooler & bear resistant hanging container.
- Jenna Becar from NPCNF discussed youth crew working on bear boxes at Kelly Forks campground.
- Idaho Fish and Game and USFS interview with National Public Radio regarding bear aware messaging. 'To-be' aired.

1300-1315 SW MT DNA project plan for 2022 – Jennifer Fortin-Noreus

- The goal of this project is to document presence of grizzly bears in SW Montana outside current distributions.
- Showed map of grizzly bear recovery zones and estimated distributions.
- Showed site locations by season (early, mid & late) with showing land ownership (Lolo NF, Bitterroot NF & Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF).
- 2021 results: Grizzly bears detected at 1 site, black bears detected at 100 sites, 52 sites with camera issues, 805 hair samples collected, 181 hair samples sent to lab for DNA analysis, 2 unrelated male grizzly bears, both from NCDE. 2022 Field Effort
- Crews:
 - USFWS (2 full-time crews, 1 part-time crew)
 - Defenders of Wildlife (1 part time crew)
 - Assistance from Lolo, Bitterroot, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF's, MCC and MFWP
- Survey sites:
 - 124 site on USFS land
 - 1-4 months per site
 - 10,090 corral nights
- Timing:
 - Mid May-mid Sept
 - Sit location based on previous verified sightings and recommendations of biologists.
 - Hair Corral set-up:
- Protocol used in the CYE and SE
 - Hair corrals (with lure, no bait) with cameras
 - Sites >200m open roads, >500m campgrounds, >100m closed roads and trails

1315-1330 **Public Q&A and Comments**

1330-1340 **Break**

Agency Reports – Conservation Actions for 2022

1340-1350 **Salmon Challis NF**

- Focusing I&E efforts on bear aware signage in “may be present” areas in N. Fork & Leadore
- Looking for funding opportunities for additional funding for signage.

1350-1400 **Bitterroot NF** – Matt Anderson (report given by Cole Hayn)

- Working on signage with Wind River Bear Institute & FWP
- Fully staff wildlife shop- more involved with IGBC moving forward

1400-1410 **Nez Perce Clearwater NF**- Cheryl Probert

- Finishing up G-bear Biological Assessment for the Forest Plan revision
- Been installing more bear proof containers – Black bear issues currently
- Working with IDFG on Bear Aware Trailer
 - I,E, & O effort, Bear spray training, charging bear
- Developed and worked on a dispersed camping site assessment
 - Gathering cost est. for infrastructure replacement to bear proof containers
- Wildlife staff set out cameras on a potential g-bear sighting in Newsome Cr, no confirmations just detected BBs

1410-1420 **Lolo NF**- Carolyn Upton (report given by Scott)

- Lolo National Forest, Forest wide food storage order
- Worked with FWS to collect data regarding DNA analysis of bear distribution across Lolo

1420-1430 **Payette NF**

- No report

1430 -1440 **Sawtooth NF** – TBA

- No report

1440-1500 **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** – Sandi Fisher/Ben Conard/ Wayne Kasworm/ Jennifer Fortin-Noreus

- 5 new G-bear Conflict Mgt Positions
 - 1 IN Jackson and 4 in MT
- SW MT DNA Study
- Assisted MTFWP on relocations of Lolo Bears
 - Effort identified a need for NF Relocation Plans
 - Also, a need for increase communications and collaboration between agencies and states
- Working on relocation sites in the Montana BE
 - Identified need with relocation of Lolo bears
 - MFWP has approved sites
 - Working with Montana national Forests on Relocation Plans
 - Flathead and Panhandle NF have plans
 - Coordination needed in Idaho, both with IDFG and CPCNF

1500-1510 **Bureau of Land Management** – Linda Price

- Continue I& Outreach with USFS and other agencies
- Working with “Bear Aware” signage and messaging to outfitters

1510-1530 **Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks** – Jamie Jonkel

- Extremely busy black bears with the berry crop failure this year. Includes home entries, vehicle break-ins. Business as usual with Grizzlies
- Quite a few grizzlies (4-5) in the Missoula area this year.
 - Investigating some of the grizzly bear sightings/still have reports to confirm
 - 2 sibling subadults (male and female) in Bitterroot – Bonner area
 - Bears feeding on roadkill's, became comfortable around houses. Decided on a proactive relocation
 - With USFWS trapped & collared the 2 bears and release in Welcome Cr./Sapphire range
 - Bears crossed I90 and rejoined into the Seeley country in Rocky Mtn. front range
 - No other verifications in BE
- Bear Smart Missoula is going strong
 - Working with Bear Smart Missoula -<http://missoulabears.org/bear-smart-missoula/>
 - Bear hazard assessment & bear management is approved by mayor & city council
 - Conducted hazard assessment for community and worked on bear management plan
 - Mayor of Missoula & city council voted in favor of proceeding forward with bear smart initiative
 - Looking to expand effort to other communities, e.g. Lolo
- Bitterroot Bear Resource Committee still active
 - Mostly working on sanitation infrastructure issues and opportunities for improvements
 - Relations and support of sanitation entities, like Bitterroot Disposal, are productive

1530- 1540 **Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game** - Jen Bruns, JJ Teare

- No grizzly bear reports to R2 office or field staff
 - No new grizzly bears detected or confirmed in Clearwater since spring 2020
 - Confirmed Bear in our Salmon region – North Fork
- Continued with remote camera work for wolves and wolverines
 - No pic of G-bears 2021 – 2022 pictures still being processed
- Training and new members to the Wildlife Human Attack Response Team (WHART) team
 - Increase in black bear calls coming into office this spring/summer/fall compared to other years
 - As with MT, poor berry crop in areas and late dry summer
- Sent out information (press release & email) to spring bear hunters/recreationists regarding 'as bears aware' from hibernation 'be bear aware'. Pushed out on IDFG website, Facebook and other social media outlets.
- Door hangers to notify neighboring residents if there is close by bear issues (all black bear related) in 2022. More calls this year coming into office this spring/summer/fall compared to other years.

1540-1550 **Nez Perce Tribe** - Kerey Barnowe-Meyer

- Committed to outreach efforts on cultural significance and importance of grizzly bears to the NPT within the BE
- Looking forward to more involvement in the BE and Sub-committee

1550-1600 **County Perspectives** –Ravalli (MT), Clearwater (ID), Idaho (ID) and Lemhi (ID)

- No reports

1600-1620 **Public Q&A and Comments**

1620-1640 **Other Business**

- Transfer of Chairs
 - New Bitterroot Ecosystem Subcommittee Chair - Sandi Fisher – FWS
 - Vice Chair to be decided
 - New BE I, E & O Subcommittee Chair – Alley Turner – FWS
 - Vice Chair to be decided
 - New BE Science Subcommittee Chair – Jennifer Fortin-Noreus – FWS
 - Vice Chair – Katy Oelrich - IDFG
- Next Meeting (Sandi)
 - Will send out doodle poll for spring and fall dates and location

1700 **Adjourn**