

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Virgil Moore, Director

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**Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone Conservation
USDA Forest Service, Panhandle National Forest**

Final Performance Report



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Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone Conservation

Challenge Cost Share Agreement Report, August 2020

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the Grizzly Bear Enforcement and Education Project is to reduce human-caused mortalities of grizzly bears in the Selkirk and Cabinet/Yaak Ecosystems in Idaho, assisting with the recovery and ultimately the delisting of grizzly bears as a threatened species. Extensive field patrols are conducted throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Field contacts serve to educate all user groups on grizzly bear identification, natural history, and conflict avoidance strategies. Field patrols act as an enforcement deterrent, help prevent and detect road closure violations, and permit the collection of information that might prove useful in solving grizzly bear poaching's. Field contacts also build a one-on-one relationship with people using grizzly bear habitat, provide information on human activities within the recovery zone, and help to gather information on human-grizzly bear encounters. A comprehensive educational program is conducted during the winter months to teach grizzly bear biology, identification, and methods for coexisting with bears. As the grizzly population recovers, dealing with depredating bears and the associated landowner conflicts has also become a major focus. Seven (7) grizzly bear depredations were reported during 2019 in north Idaho. One (1) adult male grizzly bear was euthanized after repeated livestock depredations in the Kootenai Valley. One (1) adult female grizzly bear was mistaken for a black bear, shot and killed. That case has been adjudicated.

INTRODUCTION

Since the arrival of European man in western North America, the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) has been eliminated from 99% of its original range in the contiguous United States (Herrero 1985). Consequently, the species was classified as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1975. With the exception of national parks, the illegal killing of grizzlies is a major source of mortality throughout their range (Peek et al. 1987). Knick and Kasworm (1989) observed that during 1983-1987, illegal shootings were the only known cause of grizzly deaths in the Idaho panhandle and suggested that maintaining a viable population was dependent on curtailing shooting mortality.

The Idaho Department Lands (IDL) and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) provide principal funding for this project. Additional funding has been provided through generous grants from: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Past contributors include: Mr. Ripley Comegys, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Owen's Foundation for Wildlife Conservation, Riley Creek Lumber Company, the Vital Ground Foundation, Mr. Keith Johnson, Forest Capital, Inc., and the Woodland Park Zoo.

In this report, I summarize my activities for 2019/20 and provide recommended activities for 2020/21.

PROJECT AREA

Although I attempted to devote time to all Grizzly Bear Management Units (GBMU's) within Idaho, effort was concentrated in the Long-Smith, Blue-Grass, and Kalispell-Granite GBMU's in the Selkirk Mountains. Special emphasis was also placed patrolling IDL property located in the Trail Creek drainage within the Grouse GBMU.

METHODS

Most grizzly bear poaching occurs during legal hunting seasons for other species (Knick and Kasworm 1989). In the Selkirk and Cabinet/Yaak Ecosystems, humans have killed more than 70 grizzly bears since 1982 – the majority of which occurred during big-game hunting seasons (results). Enforcement patrols and in-field educational efforts are therefore a high priority during these periods.

Where possible, I contacted backcountry recreationists and discussed grizzly bear natural history, identification, management, and methods for minimizing bear/human conflicts. Many contacts were made while hiking behind closed gates or on trails. Depending on the type of recreationist and their level of interest, I distributed various informational pamphlets and cards. Bear identification signs were posted in all drainage's within recovery areas and the location and description of all vehicles recorded. All gates were physically monitored for violations. When radio-collared bears frequented particularly vulnerable areas, extra patrol effort was directed to those locations.

From December to April, the project's emphasis shifted from enforcement to information and education (I&E). Public presentations were prepared and delivered emphasizing grizzly bear ecology, identification, and conflict avoidance techniques. An aggressive I&E program designed to heighten the public's awareness about bears was conducted during the winter months. Presentations were given at public and private schools (K-12), rod and gun clubs in Idaho, and hunter education classes. Presentations focused foremost on grizzly bear identification and strategies for conflict avoidance. Shoot or don't shoot slide presentations were shown with pictures of grizzly and black bears to emphasize the importance of proper bear identification. Bear biology, management, and goals of the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan were also taught.

RESULTS

Since the inception of this program in 1989, local conservation officers agree that public awareness concerning grizzly bears has increased significantly. The project continues to reach nearly 3,000 people every year, teaching them how to coexist with grizzlies and how to identify bears. Enforcement patrols provide a deterrent to bear poaching and help enforce the road closure program, helping provide secure habitat for Selkirk grizzly bears.

Enforcement Activities (Totals)

Hunting and fishing licenses checked	317
Security gates checked	212
Hikers, campers, and recreationists contacted	1,596
Citations issued	25
Warnings issued	17

Patrol Methods (Totals)

Miles of 4x4 pickup truck patrols conducted	21,676
Miles of foot patrols conducted	110
Check stations performed	8

Information and Education Information and Education Activities (Totals)

Presentations given	22
People attending grizzly bear presentations	655
School presentations	5
Hunter education class presentations	3

Emphasis Patrols on Idaho Department of Lands Property

Since entering a cooperative law enforcement agreement with the IDL, the Sandpoint District conservation officers have placed special emphasis on patrolling property managed by IDL. From spring through fall, efforts focus on enforcing road closures. Snow machine patrols were not conducted during 2019 because all woodland caribou activity was well north of IDL property, allowing all IDL “Caribou Habitat Cells” to remain open to motorized use.

Sandpoint District enforcement efforts produced the following results during 2019.

Security gates checked	212
Citations issued on IDL property	2
Warnings issued on IDL property.	3
Gate violations detected	26

Miscellaneous

In addition to enforcement patrols and educational activities, other duties relating to grizzly bear management were performed. These included:

1. Worked with the USFS on road management in the grizzly bear recovery zones.
2. Worked with the IDL on road management within the grizzly bear recovery zones.
3. Monitored the movement of marked bears with portable radio telemetry equipment.
4. Participated in the grizzly bear subcommittee of the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative.
5. Attended interagency meetings concerning grizzly bear recovery in the United States.
6. Attended law enforcement training sessions sponsored by the IDFG.
7. Responded to seven (7) grizzly bear depredations including the capture and euthanization of grizzly number 865 after repeated livestock depredations in the Kootenai valley.
8. Secured a grant from the Vital ground Foundation for twenty-two (22) bear resistant trash cans which I distributed free-of-charge to landowners in high use grizzly bear areas.
9. Participated in three (3) “Living in Bear Country” workshops sponsored by the Idaho Conservation League. Venues included Sandpoint, Coeur d’ Alene, and Priest Lake.

DISCUSSION

Maintaining a high public profile seems an effective law enforcement strategy and will be continued in the future. I will continue using the Bismarck Meadows patrol cabin during black bear hunting seasons to maximize field contacts with the public. We will vigorously investigate all grizzly bear killings as they occur.

Of the thousands of personal contacts that I made during 2019, few individuals openly expressed negative attitudes towards grizzlies or bear management. When they did, however, the most commonly voiced concerns were: 1) gates or road management, 2) fear of grizzlies, and 3) economic impacts from management policies. I believe that a strong public relations effort will help alleviate these concerns. Therefore, I will continue to deliver presentations focusing on grizzly ecology and backcountry techniques in bear country, targeting campground visitors and local clubs during summer months and schools in fall and spring. The ability of black bear hunters to correctly identify their targets before shooting will continue to be of primary importance in 2020.

As grizzlies recover throughout the ecosystem, managing depredating bears is becoming a major focus of the project. Working with landowners – particularly on low elevation spring range – will be vital to the long-term success of grizzly bear recovery. Tolerance for the bears can be achieved through swift management actions coupled with a concerted educational effort.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Release newspaper articles on grizzly bear identification and conflict avoidance strategies throughout northern Idaho and northeastern Washington.
2. Continue grizzly bear presentations in public and private schools, rod and gun clubs, and hunter education classes during winter. The use of visual aids such as grizzly hides, radio-collars, and portable receivers add significantly to the effectiveness of presentations. The acquisition of a full body mount stuffed grizzly bear has proven tremendously popular with the public throughout the Panhandle.
3. Work to build strong relationships with educators of Bonner and Boundary counties - especially in the communities of Sandpoint, Priest River, Priest Lake, Bonners Ferry, Clark Fork, and Moyie Springs.
4. Continue extensive enforcement patrols during spring and fall hunting seasons, maximizing the number of field contacts. Provide the information necessary for the users of grizzly bear areas to make sound decisions concerning bear identification and conflict avoidance.
5. Organize and conduct a saturation patrol during the spring black bear hunt, recruiting as many additional officers as possible to patrol the recovery zone.
6. Work within our own agency, and with USFS officers to insure a continuous enforcement presence in the lower elevations of the Smith Creek and Boundary Creek drainage's during spring bear season.
7. Prioritize, by season, field patrols in areas most likely to have human-grizzly bear encounters.
 - a. Boundary Creek
Low elevations: spring bear/ late fall big game
 - b. Smith Creek
Low elevations: spring bear/ late fall big game
Mid-high elevations: early mule deer/ fall big game
 - c. Cow Creek
Low elevations: spring bear
Mid-high elevations: early mule deer/ fall big gamed.
 - d. Grass Creek
Mid-high elevations: early mule deer/ fall big game
 - e. West Fork Cabins
Summer
 - f. Hidden Lake
Summer
 - g. Trapper Creek
Low elevations: spring bear
Mid-high elevations: early mule deer/ fall big game
 - h. Hughes Meadows
Spring bear/fall big game
 - i. Gleason Meadows
Spring bear
 - j. Bismarck Meadows
Spring bear
 - k. Cedar Creek
Mid-high elevations: early mule deer/ fall big game
 - l. Continental Mine
High elevations: summer mule deer/ fall big game
 - m. Kalispell-Granite Grizzly Bear Management Unit
Spring bear

- n. Two Mouth Creek
High elevations: summer
- o. Lion Creek
High elevations: summer
- p. Canuck Basin
Mid-high elevations: fall big game
- q. Grouse Creek
Mid-high elevations: fall big game
- r. Trestle Creek
Low elevations: spring bear
Mid elevations: summer
High elevations: fall big game
- s. Moose Lake
Summer
- t. Lightning Creek
Mid-high elevations: summer/fall big game

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