

NEWS RELEASE

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FOREST SERVICE AMENDS MANAGEMENT PLANS TO SUSTAIN THE RECOVERED YELLOWSTONE GRIZZLY BEAR POPULATION

OGDEN, UT – The U.S. Forest Service announced today that it supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife’s decision last week to remove the Yellowstone grizzly bear population from the U.S. list of threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The Forest Service is taking the next critical step in conserving the population by amending the resource management plans for six national forests to include measures important for sustaining the recovered grizzly bear population.

Intermountain Regional Forester, Jack Troyer acting on behalf of himself and the Northern and Rocky Mountain Regional Foresters, affirmed the Forest Service is amending the resource management plans for six national forests. The six National Forest Supervisors made the concurrent decision to amend their respective forest plans to provide direction for management of grizzly bear habitat security, developed sites, and livestock grazing within the Primary Conservation Area for the grizzly. The six National Forests impacted by this action include the Beaverhead-Deerlodge; Bridger-Teton; Caribou-Targhee; Custer; Gallatin; and Shoshone.

“This conservation effort is a monumental achievement and the Forest Service is proud to be part of it,” stated Troyer. “The recovery of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population is the result of intensive work by the agencies to improve the condition of grizzly bear habitat and provide for safe visitor experiences throughout the bear’s range.”

The Conservation Strategy, a collaborative interagency effort, outlines habitat standards, guidelines, and monitoring important for sustaining a recovered grizzly bear population within the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The Conservation Strategy allows for adjustments to the management provisions as new scientific or environmental information becomes available. To protect the grizzly bear, the six national forests that in part comprise the Yellowstone ecosystem – Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Gallatin, Custer and Shoshone – have committed to implementing the principles described in the Conservation Strategy. These principles include a continued emphasis on food storage, monitoring of critical food sources, reducing conflicts with livestock grazing (especially sheep), holding numbers and capacity of developed sites at 1998 levels inside the PCA, and maintaining current road and motorized trail miles inside the PCA.

The amendment to the six National Forest plans incorporates the principles described in the Conservation Strategy. In early May 2007, the amendments would become effective in managing grizzly bear habitat on national forests within the PCA. Based on a comprehensive review, the Forest Service believes that the amendments, and the Conservation Strategy upon which they are based, adequately address public concerns regarding protection of the bear, range of alternatives, road standards, pro-development interests, and social and economic issues.

The Intermountain Regional Forester and six Forest Supervisors have full confidence that management of the grizzly bear habitat will sufficiently protect the population for years to come. "We have been involved in the conservation effort for decades, and now the grizzly bear in the Yellowstone ecosystem not only survives, it thrives," stated Troyer. "We are extremely pleased with the progress that has been made, and we are optimistic that the population will continue to flourish."

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