



# USDA Forest Service National Forest System Briefing Paper

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Date: May 8, 2006

**Topic:** Yellowstone grizzly bear forest plan amendment and Fish and Wildlife Service delisting process

**Issue:** Last November, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a draft rule proposing to delist the Yellowstone grizzly bear population as a threatened species. As part of the delisting process, the Forest Service was required to amend some forest plans to incorporate the habitat standards from the *Final Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Greater Yellowstone Area*. This effort was managed as one process and resulted in the amendment of the six affected Greater Yellowstone Area national forest land and resource management plans. The process began in the spring of 2003 and came to closure with the signing of the ROD on April 18, 2006. The Notice of Availability and release of documents is scheduled for May 12, 2006.

**Background:** The Forest Service is amending the forest plans for the Beaverhead, Bridger-Teton, Custer, Gallatin, Shoshone, and Targhee National Forests to provide additional programmatic direction for management of grizzly bear habitat.

- The purpose of the amendment is to 1) incorporate interagency agreements for habitat management as described in the *Final Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Greater Yellowstone Area*, and 2) demonstrate that adequate regulatory mechanisms exist to maintain habitat for the recovered grizzly bear population on National Forest System lands to support delisting.
- The FEIS and ROD were developed under the 1982 NFMA forest planning regulations.
- The ROD was signed by the six national forest supervisors; the amendment will be implemented when the grizzly bear is delisted.
- The substance of the amendment takes into consideration the fact that the population recovery objectives for the grizzly bear were met in 1998. Consequently, the habitat conditions that existed in that year were used as the baseline that needs to be maintained. Since these conditions have existed for some time, changes to current practices will not be dramatic.
- The selected alternative for the amendment includes modifications to the proposed action that were identified through scoping and public comment. These modifications include commitments to expand monitoring of habitat conditions outside the Primary Conservation Area, commitments to continue public information and education, and emphasis on proper food storage and reduction of livestock/grizzly bear conflicts in occupied grizzly bear habitat outside the Primary Conservation Area.
- The selected alternative was coordinated with all three state wildlife management agencies and is compatible with their state grizzly bear management plans.

**Contact:** Questions on the documents or their contents may be addressed to Mr. Kim Barber, wildlife biologist, Shoshone National Forest, 808 Meadow Lane Avenue, Cody, WY 82414-4549, telephone 307.527.6241.

The documents are being distributed to the public on May 10, 2006. Limited numbers of hard copy documents are available and can be requested by contacting Susie Douglas, writer/editor, Shoshone National Forest, 808 Meadow Lane Avenue, Cody, WY 82414-4549, telephone 307.578.1214. The documents are available on CD upon request. Beginning May 12, 2006, the FEIS, Executive Summary of the FEIS, and ROD can be viewed and/or downloaded from

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/Subcommittee/yes/YEamend/gb\\_internet.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/Subcommittee/yes/YEamend/gb_internet.htm)