

Swan View's News

Summer 2013



Swan View Coalition
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

"Nature and human nature on the same path."

www.swanview.org
www.swanrange.org
swanview@swanview.org

Your Help Needed to Keep Grizzly Bears Protected!

Imagine you're a grizzly bear sow in the Swan Range with newly born cubs. It's April, you've just emerged from your winter den, and you haven't eaten since October or November.

You can't look for early spring vegetation to eat on the east side of the Swan Crest because everything below 3,600' is buried under Hungry Horse Reservoir. So you take your chances instead in the heavily populated foothills of the Flathead and Swan Valleys, where the likelihood of running into trouble with people is very high.

To make matters worse, the government is removing your Endangered Species Act protection. This will make it easier for citizens or government agents to kill you if you show up in the wrong place at the wrong time - or to kill you simply for "sport."

You and your brethren in the lower 48 States are still confined to some 1-2% of your former range and numbers, a distinction that in 1975 won you protection as a

species threatened with extinction. But now you are being stripped of your protected status because the government spent \$5 million dollars to snag your hair, estimate your numbers using DNA, confirm your numbers are still 2% of what they once were (perhaps 100,000), yet proclaim your population now "recovered."



Grizzly sow with new cubs in spring.

MDFWP Photo

We wish we were kidding, but this is what bears are up against in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem! Although more people continue to move into bear habitat to live, play and work, the Feds have deemed it time to "de-list" griz from ESA protection.

This newsletter will summarize problems with the Draft NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy, the first step in de-listing, and ask you to email or mail your comments on behalf of bears by August 1, 2013.

Please read on, write - and Thank You!

Keith

FWS Launches Removal of Grizzly Bear Protections!

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a draft NCDE (Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem) Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy announcing the bear is "recovered" and outlining how it would be managed when stripped of Endangered Species Act protection. FWS hopes to "de-list" NCDE bears in the next few years. You can help stop this nonsense by reading this newsletter and submitting an email to FWS!

The grizzly bear was listed under the ESA as a species "threatened" with extinction in the Lower 48 States due to its low numbers and a lack of "adequate regulatory mechanisms" necessary to protect and recover the Lower 48 population. This article will explain why these circumstances still exist and ESA protections must remain in place.

As the map on this page shows, grizzly bears once roamed from Mexico to Canada and from the Great Plains to the Pacific. Now they are relegated to about 1% of their former range in a few small areas of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Washington. The map on the next page shows the remaining fragments of habitat FWS has designated as "recovery zones."

Rather than recover grizzly bears in all six Lower 48 zones and insure they are re-connected to provide long term genetic and demographic health, FWS is trying to de-list one zone at a time. A few years ago FWS

de-listed the Yellowstone population. It is today back under ESA protection due only to citizen lawsuits over the diminishment of key bear foods as the planet warms!

With release of the NCDE Conservation Strategy, FWS marches on toward de-listing the NCDE population even though it is far from robust enough to insure long term survival either on its own or through interbreeding with Yellowstone and other Lower 48 ecosystems. Nor can the NCDE rely on rescue by Canadian bears, whose

populations are becoming increasingly fragmented and isolated by east-west Highway 3 and other developments.

FWS claims U.S. Geological Survey's \$5 million DNA study shows the NCDE population has recovered. It instead confirms the NCDE population still contributes to a Lower 48 population that remains some 2% of its former self. A wealth of scientific research

indicates a population of some 5,000 bears is needed for long term survival, far more than the 950 estimated to occupy the NCDE or the 600 isolated in Yellowstone!

The NCDE Conservation Strategy ignores this need for more bears. It reduces habitat protections and reduces bear numbers through sport hunting and relaxed mortality quotas. This is not recovery! We'll sketch out what recovery should look like in the following pages!



Historic grizzly distribution. Oregon State U. Graphic

It's the Habitat, Stupid!

To settle a lawsuit filed by Swan View Coalition and others against its Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan, Fish and Wildlife Service promised it would develop "habitat-based recovery criteria" rather than rely only on shaky population estimates. FWS has never done this in the NCDE!

Instead, the federal government spent over \$5 million dollars collecting bear hair DNA to make a one-time (2004) estimate of 765 grizzly bears in the NCDE! More money has been spent estimating the population to be increasing 3% each year. Yet the Conservation Strategy (CS) warns this is not known "with the conventional level of statistical certainty" and "yearly population size of the NCDE grizzly bears remains unknown."

This multi-million dollar investment in fleeting population estimates could have instead been spent on buying habitat for grizzly bears and enforcing habitat security standards on public lands. The CS continues this reliance on shaky numbers, ignoring its own warnings and claiming the NCDE population increased from 765 bears in 2004 to 942 in 2011, the year the CS arbitrarily deems the population "recovered."

To make matters worse, the CS would quit increasing grizzly habitat security through limits on motorized vehicle use of backcountry roads and trails - "one of

the most powerful tools" it says helped the population increase! In other words, because increasing habitat security levels was apparently working to recover grizzly bears, the CS proposes it be stopped!

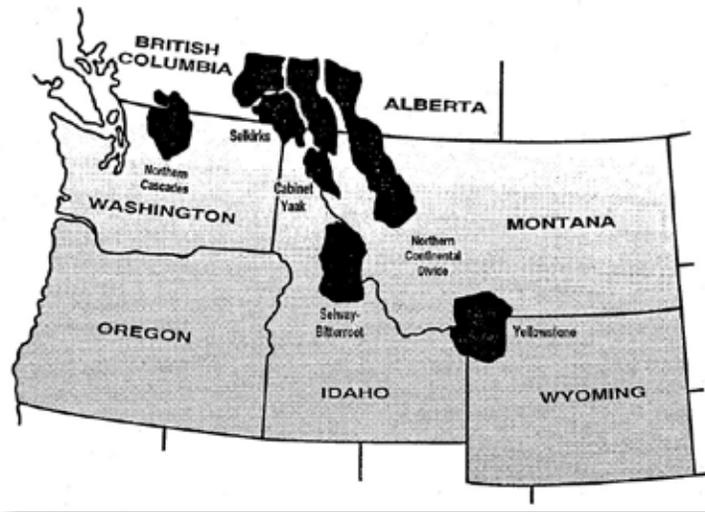
Worse yet, the CS would trim the NCDE population back to 800 bears or less through sport hunting, agency trapping and relaxed limits on bear mortality! The NCDE population could plummet to 500 bears before an emergency re-listing under the ESA would be required!

Such a disaster is not unlikely, given the CS reliance on manipulating population numbers rather than securing and monitoring habitat. Research has found more than a decade can pass before habitat degradation may be detected as population decline,

by which time it may be too late to reverse!

In essence, the CS declares the NCDE population "recovered" at 942 bears. It then sets about reducing the population to 800 bears by reducing habitat protections and allowing greater bear mortality through sport hunting and agency trapping. Claims that the NCDE would become a source population for grizzly bears venturing off to breed in the Yellowstone or Bitterroot ecosystems ring entirely hollow.

On the following pages, we suggest what grizzly bear recovery should look like and ask you to write a quick note to FWS!



The Six Lower 48 Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. FWS graphic

What Grizzly Bear Recovery Should Look Like!

Fish and Wildlife Service should be establishing habitat management and habitat monitoring criteria that would support at least 5,000 grizzly bears in the Lower 48 States. These bears can be spread among the remaining ecosystems, provided their habitat is connected well enough that both male and female bears can move freely among them. Dozens of experts, including Dr. Fred Allendorf and Dr. Dale McCullough, say this will require "greatly increasing the connectivity among populations over a wide geographic area."

The map on this page demonstrates how the five Northern Rockies grizzly bear recovery zones can be reconnected largely through better management of public lands. It is patterned after Mike Bader's "Spatial Needs of Grizzly Bears in the U.S. Northern Rockies" and is also an underlying tenant of the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act.

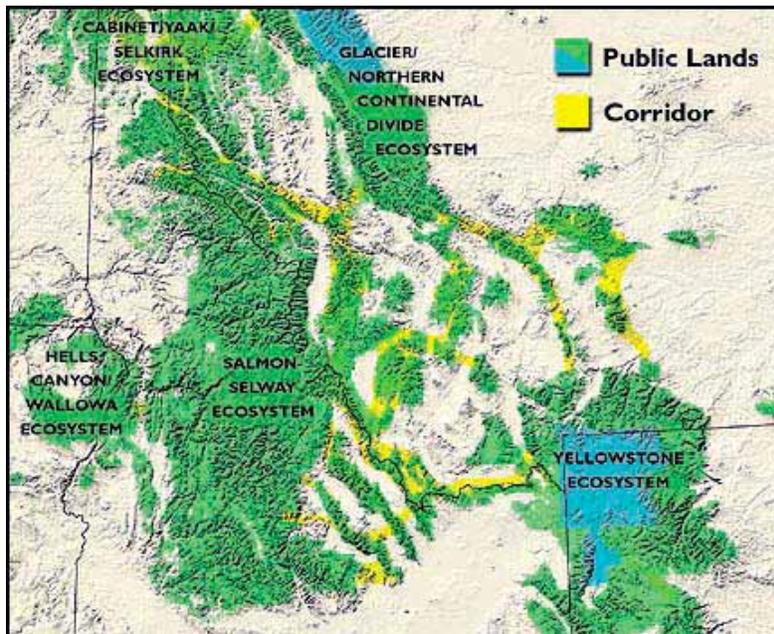
Contrast this with FWS wanting to de-list the Yellowstone population, even though it is currently isolated from the other ecosystems and male bears would have to be shipped in to maintain genetic diversity. Or with FWS's draft NCDE Conservation Strategy, which claims grizzly bears would

disperse from the NCDE to other Lower 48 recovery zones even though it would not protect any intervening habitat and would simultaneously decrease the number of NCDE bears through sport hunting and relaxed grizzly bear mortality quotas.

Recovery of the Lower 48 grizzly bear will require the continued intervention of grizzly bear specialists working under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act to carefully remove only bears they are certain are causing problems that cannot otherwise

be corrected. Sport hunting of grizzly bear in the NCDE, before being stopped by a Swan View Coalition lawsuit in 1991, was instead removing largely reclusive, non-problem bears from the heart of the ecosystem.

We hope the NCDE Conservation



Reconnecting ecosystems!

Alliance for the Wild Rockies graphic

Strategy is correct and that habitat security measures like limits on motorized vehicles and logging roads have helped the population increase to nearly 950. But only with continued ESA protection and continued habitat security improvements can we remain hopeful that bears will truly be able to expand their numbers and range enough to bridge the gap between remnant ecosystems.

What You Can Do: Write an eMail or Letter to FWS by August 1!

Please write a short comment on the Draft NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy by August 1! FWS needs to hear loud and clear the public wants continued Endangered Species Act protection for all Lower 48 grizzly bears, not piecemeal "conservation strategies!"

WHERE TO WRITE:

Send an email to: NCDECS@fws.gov - or
Send a letter to:
NDCE Conservation Strategy
USFWS
University Hall, Room 309
Missoula, MT 59812

POINTS TO CONSIDER MAKING:

1. Do not attempt to de-list one little ecosystem at a time! A conservation strategy must, at a minimum, legally protect enough secure habitat so both male and female bears occupy all six remaining recovery zones and travel freely between them.



Griz in autumn berry patch.

MDFWP photo

2. Long term conservation requires at least 5,000 grizzly bears well connected with one another, not 950 in the NCDE and 600 isolated in Yellowstone!

3. The NCDE population must continue to increase if it is to survive increased human pressures and reconnect with other bear populations. This means habitat security must continue to be increased through limits on logging roads, motor vehicles and other human developments.

4. The NCDE population cannot expand if mortality quotas are relaxed to allow sport hunting and increased agency trapping! Recovery will require the continued intervention of grizzly bear specialists working under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act to carefully remove only bears they are certain are causing problems that cannot otherwise be corrected.

5. By law, recovery must be based on habitat-based criteria, not on arbitrary population numbers that then assume adequate habitat security exists!

FURTHER BACKGROUND:

The Draft NCDE Conservation Strategy is available at:

<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/grizzly/>

Our comments to FWS will be posted by August 1 on our web site at:

<http://www.swanview.org>

Click on Newsletter and Alerts in the left-hand side-bar menu.

Swan Rangers' to Celebrate 400th Outing July 27!

The Swan Rangers hiking club will celebrate its 400th outing on July 27, 2013! The first every-Saturday outing was November 12, 2005.

Since 2005, 395 people have been introduced to northern Swan Range conservation by hiking, snowshoeing or skiing there after a nice breakfast at the nearby Echo Lake Cafe. Many friendships and more than one romance have been sparked by these fun, informal outings!

Swan View Coalition helps keep the club on the path by posting weekly outing reports to email subscribers and to its Swan Range web site. The Swan Rangers in Service program was launched in September 2011 and has thus far resulted in 318 hours of volunteer maintenance of Swan Range trails!

The Swan Rangers meet every Saturday at the Echo Lake Cafe for breakfast at 7:30, leaving at 8:30 for a partial day outing in the northern Swan Mountains and foothills. They carpool from the Swan River School parking lot next to the Cafe.

Visit <http://www.swanrange.org> to view or subscribe to the Swan Ranger photo reports or to get details about the outings and volunteer work!

"I had a fantastic experience with your hikers. Thanks for including me!"

K. Alley

"Even though my husband and I are not able to make it to your hikes, we enjoy hearing about them and continue to support your work to protect the wilderness."

C. Payne

"I hiked to Peter's Ridge yesterday, and felt deep gratitude for the work the Swan Rangers did to clear the trail."

L. Brett



Swan Rangers hike Elk Springs on May 25, 2013 - Outing #391! Keith Hammer Photo

Your Donations Will Again be Doubled By Cinnabar Foundation!

We've again been issued a \$4,000 Challenge Grant by Cinnabar Foundation, meaning \$4,000 in our members' individual **donations will be matched by Cinnabar. So be among the first to donate and see your money doubled!**

Swan View Coalition relies in large part on member donations to fund its work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. ! It's easy to join others in supporting our work:



1. Send a check to Swan View Coalition at 3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 - or -
2. Use your credit card securely on-line at www.swanview.org or www.swanrange.org, by clicking on the Donate Now button!

Network for Good handles your transaction securely for us and informs us immediately via email of your donation by credit card. You can also choose to give monthly, quarterly or yearly there to make it easier or more affordable (or change your mind anytime)! If you have other info you want to get to us, such as Gift Membership info, simply email it to keith@swanview.org or mail them to the address in #1, above.



If there is pink on your mailing label, it means you haven't donated in nearly a year or more. Please make a donation so we can keep sending you our newsletter and continue our work!

- [] Here's \$25 to cover my minimum dues, newsletters, alerts, and Swan Ranger Reports.
- [] Here's \$50 to help restore a bit of peace and quiet to America's public lands.
- [] Here's \$100 to help keep forest roads from ending up in America's bull trout streams.
- [] Here's \$500 to help secure grizzly, lynx and wolverine habitat for future generations.
- [] Here's \$_____ to help save the world, one mountain range and one river at a time!
- [] Here's \$_____ for _____ Gift Memberships at a minimum of \$25 each. I've included each recipient's name, mailing address, email address, and my greeting on separate paper.
- [] As a gift of appreciation for my donation, please send me [] the Swan/Flathead history booklet "The Lineage of Chief Aeneas: A History of People and Place" and/or [] a Swan Ranger patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
- [] Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

Swan View Coalition, Inc.
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

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Grizzly Bears to be Stripped of ESA Protection!

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