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The Facts About Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Delisting

Bears Will Receive Significant New Set of Protections

The pending U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decision to recommend that Yellowstone grizzly bears be taken off the list of threatened species under the Endangered Species Act is a major wildlife story. It is also controversial.

The National Wildlife Federation has been deeply involved with and is highly supportive of the work that has gone into seeing that the Endangered Species Act has achieved its goal of recovering the Yellowstone grizzly bear population to the point that the act's emergency room care is no longer needed.

The Endangered Species Act is *intended* to lead to recovery and delisting, so long as adequate plans exist to assure recovery continues.

The Endangered Species Act requires that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepare a recovery plan for species that are listed as threatened or endangered. For many years now, all of the recovery criteria established for Yellowstone grizzlies have been met or exceeded.



What does this mean for Yellowstone grizzlies?

FICTION: *Protections for Yellowstone grizzlies will disappear if they are taken off the list of the threatened and endangered species.*

FACT: Over a decade of work has gone into creating a conservation package for Yellowstone's grizzlies to ensure that the bears continue to thrive once taken off the list. Developed by federal and state natural resource management agencies, the Conservation Strategy provides an impressive set of protections. They include:

- **Designating a six million acre Primary Conservation Area where the needs of grizzlies come first.** This conservation area includes the vast majority of lands in the Yellowstone ecosystem where bears currently live and contains the highest density grizzly habitats. Oil and gas development, mining and logging are severely constrained in this area. The Conservation Strategy also identifies an additional six million acres, surrounding the Primary Conservation Area, where the needs of bears must receive careful consideration. Much of this land is currently unoccupied by bears.
- **Protection against excessive take.** State management plans include sustainable mortality limits that must not be exceeded.
- **Extensive monitoring.** Food supplies, threats to habitat, population numbers and mortality rates will all be closely watched.

FICTION: *Yellowstone grizzlies have nothing to gain from delisting.*

FACT: A solid framework is in place to ensure that continued grizzly bear conservation will follow delisting. As the needs of Yellowstone grizzlies change or increase, so will the tools and protections needed to meet them.

- Each state has identified potential habitat to accommodate continued grizzly population growth and expansion.
- On U.S. Forest lands, no new livestock grazing allotments will be allowed in the Primary Conservation Area, and plans call for phasing out existing sheep allotments as opportunities occur. Allotment retirement programs are identified in these plans as the preferred approach to eliminate chronic grizzly/livestock conflicts.
- The Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team will increase the area where it monitors for trends in grizzly numbers and mortalities.

FICTION: *Yellowstone grizzlies are not ready to be delisted.*

FACT: All of the recovery goals—population, distribution and mortality—needed to qualify bears for release from the Endangered Species Act’s emergency room care have been met or exceeded.

- **Population Recovery Goal:** The grizzly population must contain at least 15 adult females with cubs. *Fact on the ground:* The average over the past six years has been 40 female grizzlies with cubs. In 2002, 52 females with cubs were observed.
- **Distribution Recovery Goal :** Adult female grizzlies with young must occupy at least 16 of the 18 bear management units that comprise the Primary Conservation Area in the Yellowstone ecosystem. *Fact on the ground:* This goal has been met since 1998. In four of the last six years, adult females with young have occupied all 18 units, according to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team.
- **Mortality Recovery Goal:** Overall bear mortality must be limited to no more than 4 percent of the total population. *Fact on the ground:* This goal has been met since 1996 with the exception of one year when the female mortality subquota was exceeded by a fraction.

Please contact us for more details on this complex issue.

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