

# A Primer on Grizzly Bear Advocacy

by Louisa Willcox and David Mattson



*Opening and unpacking the black box of grizzly bear advocacy*

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This primer offers background and context for people who want to protect grizzlies. We often hear from advocates: “How can I help save grizzlies?” We hope here to provide guidance and advice that is informed by our years of experience trying to do precisely that.

Importantly, no one action will succeed by itself. Because the management landscape is complex, protecting bears depends on many complementary actions. Federal, state, and local managers, as well as elected officials and even private individuals, shape the conservation arena and determine whether grizzlies live or die. And each individual operates in a different context, within a particular legal framework.

At its most basic, recovering grizzly bear populations requires that we keep grizzlies alive and protect habitat they depend on. Advancing these goals depends upon caring people speaking up. By voicing your concerns – via social media or, better yet, directly to your elected officials – you send a message that you care about grizzlies and wild nature. Don’t forget: officials often do difficult things only because their constituents make them.

## Being an Effective Advocate



Effecting positive change depends on where you are from, your interests and passion, and which landscapes you personally know.

Each of us also has a different temperament. For those who are comfortable with conflict, you may opt to engage directly with government decision processes and with managers in state and federal agencies. For those who don’t like to be involved directly in contentious situations, support of groups working to protect private lands or promote coexistence might be a better option.

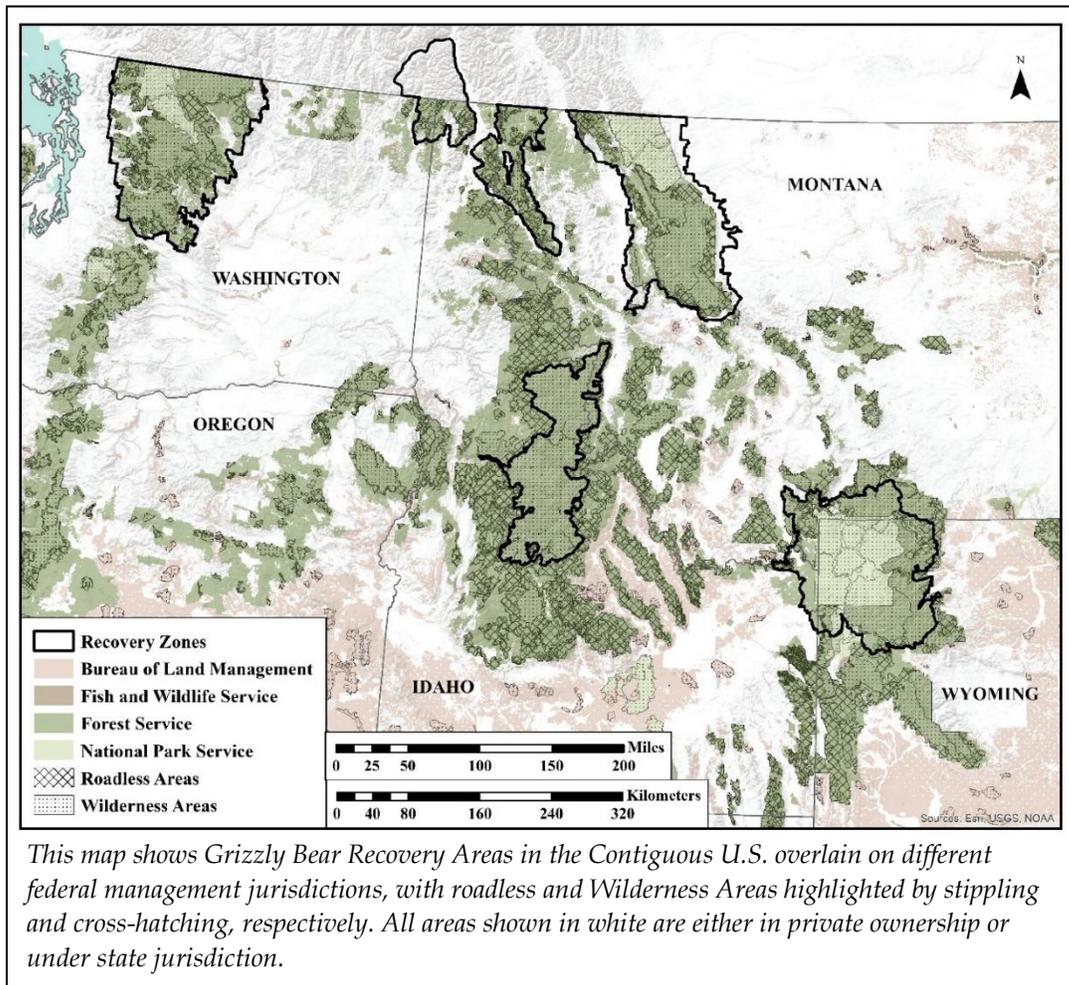
The point is to find an area, arena, or issue that suits your personality and style. Grizzly bear conservation is a huge canvas, with plenty of room for each of us to make our mark.

Also, where you are from matters. If you live outside states in the Northern Rockies, engaging with state wildlife managers has less of an impact than if you engage with managers in federal agencies such as the Fish and Wildlife Service or Forest Service. Federal managers answer to all American citizens, not just to those living in a particular state.

With these considerations in mind, there are seven arenas within which you can help grizzlies, each of which we describe below.

But, before we get into potential action items, we thought it might be beneficial to briefly describe the domains over which different government agencies and managers have authority, along with our take on how well each agency is doing its job. You can find contact information by clicking on the following links: for your [elected representative](#) and for [key agency officials](#).

## Getting Oriented: The Grizzly Lay of the Land



## US Fish and Wildlife Service: Conservator of Endangered Species

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) gives the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) ultimate authority over grizzly bear recovery, although more concrete actions affecting grizzly bears or their habitat are undertaken by a number of different wildlife and wildlands management agencies that the FWS oversees. All grizzlies in the lower 48 are listed as threatened under the Act.

The Act has greatly benefited grizzlies by requiring that management of this species on public and even private lands be guided by the precautionary principle and informed by the best available science. Indeed, we may have lost the grizzly entirely were it not for the ESA.

The ESA prohibits people from killing grizzlies except in cases of self-defense. The ESA also requires that the FWS ensure that decisions by other agencies such as the Forest Service do not directly or indirectly jeopardize grizzlies.

Although these requirements may sound clear-cut, in reality they are not because pressure from politicians and those invested in exploitation of natural resources chronically distorts the decision-making of land and wildlife managers, typically to the detriment of grizzly bears. And, as we discuss below, the FWS chronically neglects its legal duties in response to bullying by politicians and wildlife managers from Northern Rockies states. In the process, the FWS tends to neglect the best available science and contravene other ESA mandates, which is why many FWS decisions, including several attempts at removing ESA protections and routine approvals of destructive logging projects, have been overturned in court.

### **Punting to Pro-Development Committees**

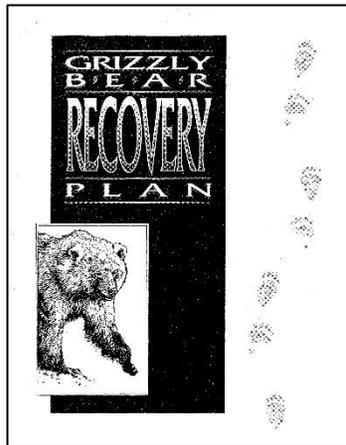
In contrast to recovery efforts for other endangered species, the FWS has not appointed a grizzly bear recovery team comprised of diverse stakeholders and topical experts. Instead, it relies on the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) and its ecosystem-specific subcommittees comprised of representatives from government agencies, augmented by regressive representatives of county governments. Conservation voices have been explicitly excluded, and Tribes have not been afforded a meaningful role.



These committees strongly favor exploitive land uses that favor status quo interests. They also disproportionately represent those who are interested in hunting – potentially including grizzly bears. Because the FWS tends to dodge controversial actions that contest status quo arrangements, the agency often hides behind and otherwise defers to decisions made by the IGBC and the inbuilt bias towards exploitive and harmful actions.

### **Outdated Recovery Plan**

The FWS has been reluctant to revise an outdated and defective Recovery Plan for grizzly bears that was last updated in 1993 – nearly 30 years ago. Since then, there has been an exponential [increase in scientific information relevant to managing and recovering grizzly bears](#), none of which has been incorporated into the authoritative guidance that the Recovery Plan is supposed to provide.



Among the plan's most critical deficiencies are complete disregard for the threats posed by climate change, and perpetuation of standards for judging recovery of grizzly bear populations that contravene the best available science. Even so, the FWS has refused thus far to update the plan, and instead relies on guidance provided by various unenforceable "strategies" that incorporate more recent science, but with the notable proviso that most of this science is cherry-picked to accommodate status quo exploitation of public lands and wildlife.

### **Inadequate Law Enforcement**

Curbing the illegal killing and harassment of grizzlies by people is critical to recovery. But law enforcement in the FWS and the Forest Service has been woefully inadequate. Over the years, staffing of law enforcement positions and the related capacity to investigate poaching cases has significantly declined due to budget cuts. Prosecution of suspect cases has also been chronically lax. These deficiencies matter because humans are responsible for nearly all grizzly bear deaths, and because many human-caused deaths involve suspect circumstances or are demonstrably caused by poachers. There is no doubt that poaching or questionable "self-defense" cases have increased during the last 10 years – but we do not know the actual extent of the problem.

### **What the FWS Should Do**

The FWS should keep grizzlies on the endangered species list; strengthen enforcement of the ESA's ban on harassing and killing grizzlies; update the recovery plan; and give Tribes and conservation voices a meaningful role in recovery. These imperatives are all the more pressing because the alternative to ESA protections and FWS management is devolution of management to the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming – and more dead bears.

### **What You Can Do**

Of the many agencies that are responsible for grizzly bears, the Department of Interior and Fish and Wildlife Service are the most important – and one place where you can make a positive difference. The key decisionmakers are Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (Interior oversees Fish and Wildlife Service), Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams, and Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator Hilary Cooley.

There are many ways that advocates can affect FWS's decision-making processes. If you are interested in and have the capacity to engage with policy-making arcana and scientific details, there is always a need for more people to make substantive comments on Biological Opinions that the FWS issues for specific projects and activities of other agencies, notably the Forest Service, that could harm grizzlies.

There is a similar need for comments when the FWS predictably makes yet another effort to remove ESA protections for grizzlies or revises plans for managing grizzlies after delisting.

And, there is always a need for comments supporting coexistence with grizzlies and opposing bad FWS decisions in Letters to the Editor or other opinion pieces in local media; on social media; or in comments to members of Congress who are engaged with grizzly bear conservation.

## The States: Of Killing and Domination

The Northern Rockies states of Idaho, Wyoming and Montana have enormous influence over grizzly bear management – even though they don't manage wildlife in National Parks, or have ultimate authority over grizzly bear management, which is the US Fish and Wildlife Service's purview. Unfortunately, these states are notoriously hostile to large carnivores, including grizzlies, wolves, mountain lions, and black bears.

This hostility arises for several reasons, including fiscal dependency on hunters and gun owners with deeply conservative attitudes, which, in turn, gives rise to management that prioritizes producing a "harvestable surplus" of big game such as deer and elk, and a related tendency to view predators as competitors for this "harvestable surplus." Notably, hunters account for only around 4% of adults in the US and are disproportionately comprised of less-well-educated non-Hispanic white men who live in rural areas.

State wildlife managers answer to commissions that are appointed by the governor of each state. As is the case with hunters, nearly all these wildlife agency commissioners are non-Hispanic white men who proudly proclaim their avid interest in hunting, if not membership in the National Rifle Association. Each state Commission conducts regular meetings – most now on zoom – that theoretically provide members of the public with limited opportunity to comment.



*Greg Gianforte at right, who illegally shot a collared wolf in a trap, and was elected as Governor of Montana.*

But, be forewarned, if you are not a resident of the state in question, you will be disregarded – even if you do have a chance to comment. And even if you are an in-state resident, commission meetings can be intimidating, especially if you are a woman, don't hunt, or are a person of color. Odds are, if you fall into any of these categories, you will likewise be dismissed.

On a more positive note, state wildlife agencies do have dedicated and skilled people in positions devoted to non-lethally preventing and resolving human-grizzly bear conflicts. But the success of these specialists and the coexistence programs they implement is

intrinsically limited by anti-carnivore polices promulgated by those who run state wildlife management agencies.

### **Problematic Mission and Orientation**

The primary goal of state wildlife agencies is not to conserve all species and ecosystems, but, as we noted above, to produce a “harvestable surplus” of game animals comprised largely of large hooved herbivores with antlers or horns. States seek to minimize populations of large carnivores that they wrongly see as competing with hunters for game animals or as threats to livestock. Above all, they work to protect the interests of a minority of hunters, anglers, and trappers over the much larger majority of people who appreciate wildlife for aesthetic, scientific, and other reasons that involve respect of other sentient beings.



### **Gunning for Grizzlies**

Since the early 1990s, state politicians and wildlife managers have pressed for removal of endangered species protections so they can fully control the fate of grizzlies, reduce the size of bear populations, and open a trophy hunt designed to give a handful of affluent white men the opportunity to hang a grizzly bear head on their wall. Environmental groups, including Grizzly Times, have fiercely opposed delisting because it would allow many more grizzlies to be killed and reverse the hard-fought progress towards recovery that has occurred during the last 40 plus years.

Even the celebrity grizzlies such as “399” of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, would not be spared. Recent petitions from the Governors of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho to the FWS to remove ESA protections for grizzlies and turn management over to the states underscore the continued hostility of state politicians towards bears and the people who care about their survival.

### **What the States Should Do**

State politicians and the managers who operate at their behest should expand efforts to promote existence between people and grizzly bears; give conservationists and others who do not hunt seats on Commissions; and stop agitating for removal of ESA protections.

### **What You Can Do**

This is an especially problematic arena to navigate if you are a grizzly bear advocate because of the biases built into the bones of state wildlife management, and the resistance by state officials to comments from people who live outside the state. For more background on the problem, see this [essay by David](#).

But there are things you can do. The watchword is creativity, which requires experience or a willingness to reach out to and learn from veterans who have long worked in the arena of state politics and state wildlife management.

If you are from Wyoming, Idaho or Montana, and know of any friendly members on your state's Commission, you can offer these Commissioners support in private or in opinion pieces in local media, and show up to testify in support of grizzlies at Commission meetings.

Connecting with and constructively supporting conflict management specialists who work for state agencies is also worthwhile, both as a means of encouraging their efforts, and also as a means of gaining information about what state managers are or are not doing.

There are numerous other creative ways that in-state residents have engaged in the past, including putting up pro-grizzly bear billboards, and buying up grizzly bear hunting licenses when they became available in Wyoming during the short-lived suspension of ESA protections during 2017.

In the long term, we need widespread public support of efforts to reform state wildlife management to make this institution more inclusive and representative. Perhaps the best way to do this is through involvement with and support of organizations such as [Wildlife for All](#) and [Project Coyote](#) that have made reform a centerpiece of their efforts.

Also, you can lend support to the courageous regional groups that are doing their best to improve carnivore management that include [Wolves of the Rockies](#), [Wyoming Untrapped](#), [Footloose Montana](#), [Trapfree Montana Public Lands](#), and [The Cougar Fund](#).

## National Park Service: The White Hats, Mostly



Many people think that grizzlies are managed primarily by the National Park Service within the confines of National Parks. But that is not true. Most critical grizzly bear habitat lies outside of National Parks. Even so, Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Glacier Parks have authority over an important but small portion of the landscape where grizzlies live – and where they need to live to flourish.

With a preservation mission, National Park managers often do a [great job](#) keeping grizzlies and humans safe. They have instituted strong rules and educational programs designed to keep grizzlies from having access to human foods – and from being killed as a consequence. But education and other conservation programs that promote prevention of human-grizzly bear conflicts and increased understanding of grizzly bears have suffered from budget cuts during recent years.

## Overuse

The Park Service has been overwhelmed by an influx of visitors during recent years. Rangers are increasingly challenged by stupid people doing stupid things around bears. In response, some rangers are hazing and harassing grizzlies rather than improving management of people. Hazing is only temporarily effective at best and harmful at worst ([see this Report by David](#)). And Park managers in the region have been loath to limit visitation, which is desperately needed not only to protect grizzly bears, but all other Park resources as well.

## Elk Hunting in a Park, Really?

Grand Teton Park allows elk to be hunted because of a politically-motivated clause in the law that expanded the park in the 1950s. This hunt is particularly problematic for grizzlies. During the fall, hungry grizzlies seek out the remains of elk shot by hunters, which lures them into areas overrun with well-armed men often ready to shoot a grizzly in presumed self-defense. Hunters have gunned down multitudes of grizzlies on National Forest lands under similar circumstances. In Teton Park, this dynamic puts celebrity bears such as 399 at grave risk. The threat is real – and incompatible with the Park Service mandate to “Preserve and Protect.”



*Elk hunters in Grand Teton National Park  
Photo by Tom Mangelsen*

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## What the Parks Should Do

The National Park Service should expand naturalist programs to better educate visitors; establish limits on use in parks; stop hazing grizzlies; and stop the elk hunt in Grand Teton Park.

## What You Can Do

The National Park Service is a friend of the bear, but needs support to tackle today’s challenges, especially overuse. Three national parks with grizzly bears are ground zero for this challenge: Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park.

You can help by asking the Park Service to hire more ranger naturalists to better educate visitors. And you can ask Grand Teton Park to expand its volunteer Bear Brigade that helps the agency educate park visitors about bears and ensure that visitors behave appropriately. Managing people is a more effective and compassionate means of preventing human-bear conflicts than is hazing grizzlies. (See [this Report by David](#) for more details). If you have visited these parks recently, you will have seen the problems of overcrowding firsthand,

and perhaps even grizzlies being hazed. It is helpful to include details of your experience in your letter to park superintendents, or in letters to the editor and social media.

The idea of setting limits on park use is a political hot potato. Park Service officials need to know that you have their backs and support the idea of limiting park visitation to protect the parks and the wildlife these landscapes support.

Developing personal relations with park officials can also be helpful. The Park Service employs a lot of good-hearted people who are trying to do the right thing under difficult circumstances. They need your support.

## Forest Service: Not So Green Giant



*Leanne Marten, the pro-logging  
Region 1 Regional Forester*

The Forest Service (FS) manages the lion's share of grizzly bear habitat, putatively on behalf of all Americans. Unlike the Park Service, the FS is required by law to manage for "multiple uses," meaning energy development, logging, grazing, wilderness, and recreation of all sorts. But unfortunately, the agency has been captured by the logging industry it was set up to regulate – and now increasingly by mountain bikers and users of off-road vehicles. The agency's culture of exploiting forests contributes to a schizophrenic approach to grizzly bear management. And too often, the FWS gives the FS a green light to destroy habitat, precipitating litigation by conservation groups.

More positively, on forests that have long been occupied by grizzlies, managers have implemented policies to keep human attractants away from grizzlies, much as the National Parks have done. Even so, food storage orders have not been uniformly applied in areas occupied by grizzlies, which sets the stage for on-going human-bear conflicts. The agency is also extremely short staffed, and law enforcement is spotty, as exemplified by a situation on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest where a single officer covers well over one-million acres.

### The Problem of Roads

Roads and logging on National Forests have been enormously controversial as the Forest Service churns out decision after decision authorizing construction of more roads and projects to log the last secure refuges of grizzly bears, even on forests such as the Kootenai where grizzlies are acutely threatened. Roads harm bears by fragmenting habitat and facilitating access by poachers. Although the Forest Service has put in place



standards to limit the number and density of roads – some better, some worse – the agency continually seeks to weaken these standards. Perhaps surprisingly, this is still true under the Biden administration. Harmful logging projects continue to be promoted on the [Kootenai](#), Nez Perce-Clearwater, [Custer-Gallatin](#) and other forests.

### **The Problem of Cows**

Grazing by livestock on national forests has similarly been problematic for grizzlies. In the wake of losing key native foods, grizzlies have been increasingly seeking out livestock to compensate. Although some ranchers work hard to accommodate grizzlies ([see this essay](#)), others do not. Wyoming's [Upper Green River allotments](#) on the Bridger-Teton NF are witness to the greatest concentration of grizzly bear deaths in Greater Yellowstone – almost all because of notoriously anti-carnivore ranchers in the area who see grazing on public lands as a “right” rather than a privilege.

### **What the Forest Service Should Do**

The Forest Service should protect all roadless lands; establish strong limits on road densities elsewhere; put in place food storage policies throughout areas occupied by grizzlies; eliminate grazing allotments in areas with high levels of grizzly bear-rancher conflict; and increase law enforcement and other field staff.

### **What You Can Do**

The Forest Service is a massive, sprawling bureaucracy that is hard for a lay person to navigate. Its planning documents are typically long and often impenetrable. Unfortunately, the agency has largely abandoned any conservation ethic it might have had and routinely promotes terrible timber sales, grazing policies, and forest plans. In this bleak arena, litigation is increasingly the name of the game.

Many conservation-oriented rangers and supervisors have been purged or have left in recent years, and few champions for wild nature remain in leadership positions. But, on the positive side, the agency does have good people on the ground and considerable expertise in coexistence.

If you are interested in and have the capacity to engage with policy-making arcana and scientific details, there is always a need for more people to make substantive comments on site specific projects and plans – mostly to help environmental lawyers in their litigation efforts. This is especially valuable if you are familiar with the landscape.

There is also a need for comments on harmful Forest Service projects and plans in Letters to the Editor or other opinion pieces in local media; on social media; or in communications to members of Congress who are engaged with grizzly bear conservation. And, if you know of conservation-minded forest officials, they need your support.

Because forest issues tend to be very complex, you might consider supporting one of the organizations that specialize in National Forest policy and fight for grizzly bears. You can find a list in this Action Alert.

## Other Public Lands Agencies

The Bureau of Land Management also manages some grizzly bear habitat, as does the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Refuge System. Like the Forest Service, these agencies have multiple use mandates, although the refuge system is more conservation oriented. The states also have jurisdiction over some public lands, but do a characteristically terrible job of managing them, especially in northwest Montana where extracting timber is paramount.

## Railroad Companies & Highway Departments



*Young grizzly killed on the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe tracks in Montana.*

With increased vehicular traffic in the region, more and more bears are being killed by collisions. Highways also fragment habitat and fracture grizzly bear ecosystems by impeding the free movement of grizzlies. But state highway departments can help reduce deaths by lowering speed limits and by building highway overpasses and underpasses in areas where wildlife tend to cross. Effective crossings have been constructed in [Banff Park](#) in Alberta. A collaborative effort involving the Federal Highway Administration, Montana Department of Transportation and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes has also

installed [numerous crossing structures on Highway 93 in Montana's Flathead Valley](#). But much more needs to be done.

Similarly, trains routinely kill grizzlies for a number of reasons ([see this Report by David](#)). Trains accidentally kill elk and deer that, in turn, attract bears to railways where they too are killed. Hopper cars transporting grain during the fall also accidentally spill grain on the tracks and draw bears to their death. The Santa Fe-Burlington Northern Railroad running along the south boundary of Glacier Park through the Middle Fork of the Flathead River is a particular concern. Here, increased train traffic increasingly disrupts movement of grizzlies from Glacier Park into areas farther south. Slowing train speeds, reducing night-time train traffic, and assiduous removal of attractants along railways can help prevent grizzly bear deaths.

### What Railroad Companies & Highway Departments Should Do

Railroad companies need to work with researchers to nail down where and under what circumstances grizzlies are being killed; collaborate with agencies, conservation groups and Tribes to facilitate wildlife crossings; invest more resources in the removal of attractants; and reduce speed limits.

## What You Can Do

Transportation systems are enormously complex, as are the decision-making processes of highway departments and agencies that oversee railway operations. Building wildlife-friendly crossings is hugely expensive and can take years. But the recently passed infrastructure bill should provide more resources for, in turn, creating more structures to make highways and railways less lethal to bears and other wildlife.

There is always a need for comments supporting wildlife-friendly crossings in Letters to the Editor or other opinion pieces in local media; on social media; or in comments to members of Congress and the Administration who are engaged with grizzly bear conservation and infrastructure issues.

There are several groups that specialize in making transportation systems safer for wildlife that deserve your support, including [Center for Large Landscape Conservation](#), [Western Transportation Institute](#), and the [Craighead Institute](#).

## Of Tribes: A Powerful Voice for the Bear

Native peoples have ancient connections with grizzlies who they still view as relatives, healers, and guides. Grizzly bears were not systematically hunted anywhere in what was to become the contiguous United States prior to the widespread slaughter of large carnivores that began with the arrival of Europeans, many of whom saw killing grizzlies as the pinnacle of hunting success. Today, Tribes almost universally oppose hunting grizzlies for trophies.



*Tribal representatives meeting with Representative Grijalva in Washington, D.C.*

Sovereign Tribes have long-standing legal claims to enormous tracts of grizzly bear habitat. Indeed, through treaty rights, claims, and reservation lands, Tribes are key to connecting our currently isolated grizzly bear populations to achieve meaningful recovery in the lower 48 states.

Grizzlies already occupy several reservations, including those of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Blackfoot, Northern Arapaho, and Eastern Shoshone Tribes. Many more Tribes without grizzly bears on their lands have expressed concern about the plight of grizzlies, as well as interest in supporting recolonization and recovery of the species on suitable habitat in their treaty lands and current reservations.

In 2016, an unprecedented 270 Tribes, traditional societies and tribal elders signed a treaty entitled "[The Grizzly: A Treaty of Cooperation, Cultural Revitalization and Restoration](#)" that called for banning trophy hunting of grizzlies and for providing Tribes with a meaningful role in grizzly bear management. Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) later introduced [this treaty as a bill in Congress](#). Numerous Tribes also challenged the US Fish

and Wildlife Service's 2017 decision to remove ESA protections for grizzlies and allow a trophy hunt.

### Seeking Respect, Enforcement of Treaty Rights and a Seat at the Table



*Tribal representatives presenting the Grizzly Bear Treaty to a Yellowstone National Park official.*

Grizzly bear managers in state and federal agencies are often dismissive of native peoples and their deep connection with grizzlies. But Tribes are not just another "interest group." They are sovereign nations that have special government-to-government relationships based on legal long-standing treaties. Increasingly, Tribes are asserting their treaty rights and demanding to be more involved in managing grizzlies. These demands need to be recognized and meaningfully addressed.

### What You Can Do

Tribes offer a vitally important voice for the bear. Their reverential and respectful view of grizzlies and nature stands in stark contrast to the control-oriented and violent approach of the state wildlife agencies.

A number of Tribes manage grizzly bears on their reservations but need more staff and resources to support coexistence efforts. And, Tribes such as the Nez Perce are poised to play a role in recovery of grizzlies in the Selway Bitterroot, but lack needed resources as well.

Importantly, Tribes currently do not have a meaningful role in public lands or wildlife management, despite legal rights afforded to them by treaties and other government policies. You can support Tribes' demands for more resources to manage bears and for a meaningful seat at the table in Letters to the Editor or other opinion pieces in local media; on social media; or in comments to members of Congress who are engaged with tribal matters and grizzly bear conservation.

And, you can write your members of Congress urging them to support [the Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act](#).

## Private Lands: Conservation Opportunity or Mortality Sink?

Private landowners manage a small portion of grizzly bear habitat, but their lands often contain ecologically rich riparian areas and other important spring bear habitats. Not surprisingly, grizzlies die at disproportionately higher numbers on private lands because of poorly managed livestock, readily available attractants, and the intolerance of many landowners.



Commissioners and administrators in roughly 100 regional counties have responsibility for matters such as garbage management and availability of attractants on private lands in currently occupied or potential grizzly bear habitat. Unfortunately, only a few counties have strong ordinances limiting the availability of attractants, and fewer yet have the capacity to enforce the ordinances that do exist.

Even under the best of circumstances, county governments have a difficult time curbing the destructive behavior of landowners given the religious fervor with which many Americans assert private property rights. Even more problematic, for a host of political reasons the



*Members of the Blackfoot Challenge on a field trip.*

FWS is reluctant to enforce the ESA's mandate to prohibit the harming of protected species that applies as much to private landowners as to public land managers.

Even so, numerous private landowners, land trusts, and private lands conservation groups are trying to do the right thing for grizzlies and other wildlife. Among these are truly inspiring collaboratives such as the Blackfoot Challenge, High Divide Initiative, and Tom Miner Basin Association that are working to improve coexistence between grizzlies and ranchers as well as other private land owners.

### What Landowners & County Commissions Should Do

County Commissions need to enact more well-crafted ordinances to limit availability of garbage and other attractants and, moreover, provide resources to enforce and implement coexistence programs. Private landowners should ideally educate themselves about living in grizzly bear habitat, improve livestock husbandry, develop collaborative coexistence efforts, and take other precautions to keep attractants away from bears.

## What You Can Do

Conservation of private lands is a delicate and often fraught arena because of sensitivities about private property rights. But there are several ways you can help.

If you live in a county that is considering food storage ordinances such Teton County in Wyoming or Flathead County in Montana, you should consider supporting their efforts.

There is always a need to speak out in support of efforts to coexist with bears and properly manage food and attractants by writing a Letter to the Editor or other opinion pieces in local media and on social media.

In addition, numerous groups specialize in private lands conservation and coexistence – and deserve your support, including [Vital Ground](#), [People and Carnivores](#), [Defenders of Wildlife](#), [Western Landowners Alliance](#), [International Wildlife Coexistence Network](#), [Heart of the Rockies Initiative](#), [Blackfoot Challenge](#), and [Tom Miner Basin Association](#).