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## Newsletter & Blog

Featuring updates on grizzly bear conservation activities,  
and the latest *Grizzly Times* Blog  
from [Louisa Willcox and David Mattson, PhD.](#)  
Co-Founders of *Grizzly Times*.

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*Dear Friend of the Grizzly,*

Even though grizzlies are safe and snug in their dens, we need to roll up our sleeves and improve their prospects when they wake up in the spring. This year's record-breaking grizzly bear mortalities in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem reminds us of the challenges ahead.

### **Patagonia Matches Donations to *Grizzly Times*!**

'Tis the season of giving, and now is a great time to donate to our work at *Grizzly Times*. From now until the end of the year, donations will be matched by our friends at Patagonia! You can make a donation through *Grizzly Times*'s Patagonia Action Works portal at the link below.



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### **NEW BLOG:**

***Grizzly Cost of Coexistence, Part One***

By Louisa Willcox

Louisa's new blog is the first of two essays on coexistence – the ingredients for success and the steep costs involved if we are to reconnect long-isolated grizzly bear populations. This goal is achievable, but not if we continue to kill grizzlies at such excessive rates.

She concludes: "It is time to move away from wasteful, polarizing, and unjustified government campaigns to delist grizzlies. Instead, we need to focus on efforts that bring communities together to foster coexistence. Our major challenges inescapably involve finding enough funding, building support for coexistence, and enforcing laws that help keep grizzlies alive. This is a tall order, but so too are the rewards: ensuring that future generations can see a wild grizzly in the American West."

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2019/12/01/The-Grizzly-Cost-of-Coexistence-Part-One>

#### **IN THE NEWS:**

##### **Grizzly Bear Scientists Outline Recovery Challenges and Solutions**

The Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force recently released a compilation of statements from leading grizzly bear and conservation scientists on the status of the grizzly bear. Experts included conservation geneticist Dr. Fred Allendorf, population ecologist Dr. Lee Metzgar, Canadian biologist and forester Dr. Brian Horesji, wildlife ecologist Dr. David Mattson, and wildlife biologist Dr. Lance Craighead. The task force also convened these experts in Missoula to discuss the reasons why they believe that grizzlies are not yet recovered and what is needed to expand and reconnect long-isolated populations.

A few quotes from the public event:

David Mattson: "Most grizzly deaths are happening on the edge of recovery zones. State and federal officials say that's because the number of bears on the landscape is increasing, but it's the lack of food sources like seeds from whitebark pine and cutthroat trout that are driving bears to roam. So the population isn't thriving as much as agency managers have said."

Lee Metzgar: "Grizzly bears are not recovered. No existing population includes sufficient numbers to be considered recovered, no recovery zone is large enough to accommodate a recovered population and there is no evidence for natural genetic exchange among grizzly bears in all five U.S. subpopulations."

Fred Allendorf: "Five hundred bears are not enough to avoid the harmful effects of inbreeding depression."

Brian Horesji: "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs to make sure U.S. populations are truly recovered before delisting instead of assuming that they can fall back on Canadian populations if something goes wrong. "

Lance Craighead: "A lot of people will complain, saying, 'You are moving the goal posts; we said get 50 bears in the Cabinet-Yaak and now you're moving that.' But it's not a football game. It isn't a game at all, really. It's real-time science on a changing landscape with changing climate with

changing human and wildlife populations, and we need to have flexibility and change the recovery plan as we move forward.”

- <http://www.montanaforestplan.org/images/in-the-news/FLB-Grizzly-Expert-Statements.pdf>
- <https://www.missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2019/11/grizzly-bear-delisting-2>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/meetings-highlight-disconnect-over-grizzly-connectivity>
- <https://missoulia.com/news/local/scientists-call-for-updated-grizzly-recovery-plans/article>

### **Bad News for Bears: Climate Change Expected to Harm Huckleberries, Buffaloberries**

A recent study published in the journal “Agricultural and Forest Meteorology” predicts that climate change will likely decrease habitat suitability for huckleberries across much of its current range, while shifting the plant’s flowering and fruiting forward by more than a month by the end of the 21st century.

Another study by University of Calgary geographer Greg McDermid shows similar results for buffaloberry, which are expected to ripen berries as much as three weeks earlier as a result of warming temperatures.

To make up for the shortfall during the grizzly's late summer feeding frenzy, scientists expect that grizzlies will seek food closer to humans, resulting in more conflicts.

- <https://www.calgaryjournal.ca/news/4836-the-grizzly-truth-about-climate-change>
- <https://flatheadbeacon.com/2019/11/21/impacts-climate-change-huckleberries>

David Mattson has long been concerned about this problem, adding: “Projected changes in fire regimes in the Northern Rockies will likely aggravate, rather than alleviate, the projected effects of a warmer drier climate on fruit-producing species. Even though species such as buffaloberry and huckleberry are fire-adapted, and most prolific, fruit-wise, at around 25-years post-fire, the projected frequency and extent of wildfires is such that even these species will not be able to keep pace with fire-caused mortality.”

<https://www.mostlynaturalgrizzlies.org/future-prospects-1>

### **Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Committee: Trouble Ahead**

Montana officials are confirming suspicions that they intend to use the Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council to advance their delisting agenda, while shrugging off record-breaking grizzly bear mortalities over the last two years in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. At the outset, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP) Director Martha Williams made clear the goal of the process was: “to better set us up for delisting.”

Recently Cecily Costello of MTFWP argued that delisting wouldn’t increase grizzly mortalities – human-caused or otherwise – when, in fact, the state plans to allow hunting, liberalize killing of bears on the periphery of their ecosystems, and otherwise manage to prevent any increase in the population.

At a recent council meeting in Bozeman, Costello also said: "grizzlies from the two populations are separated by less than 50 miles. This is one metric federal managers will use to argue both sets of bears are ready for state management." But, because of

Montana's policies to allow more bears to be killed after delisting, especially where bears are most likely to connect, that goal will likely never be achieved if protections are removed.

Needless to say, the deck is stacked against bears on this rancher-dominated committee.

- <https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2019-11-25/endangered-species-and-wildlife/co-existing-with-iconic-species-among-topics-for-mt-grizzly-council>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/meetings-highlight-disconnect-over-grizzly-connectivity>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/grizzly-bear-mortalities-reach-record-high-nw-montana>

#### **Update on Grizzlies in the Selway Bitterroot**

The grizzly that had wandered into Idaho's Clearwater country this spring has recently wandered back to the Cabinet Mountains where he had been moved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) last year. Wayne Kasworm of FWS offered this tongue-in-cheek remark: "The bear was taken to the Cabinets but wasn't given the memo."

Meanwhile, other grizzlies have been confirmed in the Selway Bitterroot, prompting agencies to begin developing new management protocols. Chuck Mark, Supervisor of the Salmon-Challis National Forest, who chairs the Bitterroot Grizzly Bear Subcommittee, said: "We need to get out ahead of this as best we can because the bears are here."

Good news: Jamie Jonkel of MTFWP will be convening educational programs about grizzlies in the Bitterroot area in upcoming months.

<https://bitterrootstar.com/2019/11/living-with-grizzly-bears-in-the-bitterroot/>

#### **Of Bikers and Hikers**

Two recent articles underscore the threats posed by mountain bikers and in some cases, hikers.

At a recent mountain bike symposium in Whistler, British Columbia, grizzly bear researcher Dr. Lana Ciarniello explained that mountain biking can have negative impacts on bear birth rates, as females expend more energy to avoid bikers.

Ciarniello also notes that a grizzly is far more likely to attack when alerted to a human's presence within 50 m, and a study of conflicts discovered that 85 percent of mountain bike riders weren't aware of the grizzly's presence until they were within that distance. In the study, 29 of the 33 bears, or 88 percent, charged.

Ciarniello expressed concerns too about the rise of e-bikes in grizzly bear habitat.

<https://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/whistler/mountain-bikings-winding-road-to-sustainability/Content?oid=14625952>

Sierra Magazine recently ran a good story on the proposed high-use trail through the heart of the Yaak, which could harm the last few grizzlies hanging on there. "We don't have any bears left to spare," says nature writer and advocate Rick Bass.

Wayne Kasworm of FWS concedes: "We've got a ways to go to recovering this population...Sheer numbers of people in bear habitat can basically push bears off a trail."

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/few-hikers-do-pacific-northwest-trail-should-it-stay-way>

### **The Power of Language, Images to Define the Debate**

Several recent articles remind us to be careful of the language and images we use to describe bears and bear management.

In a powerful opinion piece, Blake Nicolazzo challenged the agencies' use of "euthanasia" rather than "killing" when managers, in fact, kill a bear, saying: "Euthanasia is defined as a painless death, an act of compassion. In contrast, trapping a healthy animal and killing it for being itself is not euthanasia. It is killing...Face the truth."

<https://helenair.com/opinion/letters/use-responsible-language-in-wildlife-mgmt-reporting>

This Outside Magazine image of a grizzly with a gaping mouth reinforces a wrongheaded view of grizzlies as man-killers, when in fact the featured story involved a mountain biker moving quietly and at high speeds – essentially asking for trouble.

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2405597/bear-attack-pocket-knife-canada-colin-dowler>

And this misleading photo of a model in a bikini posing with a grizzly:

<https://www.inquisitr.com/5743185/dana-hamm-bikini-grizzly/>

### **GOOD NEWS:**

#### **New Research Could Reduce Collisions with Trains**

In a [paper published earlier this year](#) in "Proceedings of the Royal Society," University of Alberta researcher Colleen Cassady St. Clair noted that a warning system of even just 30 seconds could give bears enough time to get off the tracks when a train is approaching. The hope is that grizzlies could learn to avoid train collisions just like humans do at railroad crossings.

The system involves a bell that rings and lights that flash when a train is about 30 seconds away. Preliminary results suggest the warning system does cause animals, not just bears, to leave the track a few seconds earlier than they otherwise would.

- [https://ravallirepublic.com/outdoors/article\\_66f5e50d-0bc0-54d3-9019-95f07ed7f860.html](https://ravallirepublic.com/outdoors/article_66f5e50d-0bc0-54d3-9019-95f07ed7f860.html)
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/grizzly-bear-train-banff-jasper-u-of-a-research-1.5358433>

#### **How Resurgence in Indigenous Governance is Leading to Better Conservation**

A fascinating paper describes how Canadian indigenous peoples play a key role in conservation of land and wildlife, including the grizzly. The paper, "Supporting resurgent Indigenous-led governance: A nascent mechanism for just and effective conservation," concludes that, worldwide "increases in conservation in some of the most globally significant areas of conservation interest will increasingly not only be unjust, but also impossible without Indigenous consent and leadership."

In an interview, lead author Kyle Artelle says: "The crises we collectively face due to colonialism, capitalism, and climate change are too urgent for us to work in silos, and I think this paper represents an opportunity to break our silos down."

<https://thenarwhal.ca/how-a-resurgence-in-indigenous-gover.../>

#### **Nature Conservancy of Canada Saves Key Habitat**

After a decade of planning, Nature Conservancy of Canada recently sealed a deal that saves the last unprotected piece of private property on an estuary near Bella Coola known as Tidal Flats. The parcel boasts critical habitat for salmon, grizzly bear, marbled murrelet, trumpeter swan, and many other species. Congratulations!

<https://www.coastmountainnews.com/news/nature-conservancy-of-canada-purchases-tidal-flats/>

#### **New York Times on Bear Hibernation and Implications for Human Health**

The miracles of bear hibernation never cease to amaze. Researchers at Washington State University were surprised to find that bears' fat contains a large number of genes that change their level of expression over the course of the year. "It's in the thousands," said Dr. Heiko T. Jansen. In contrast, when dwarf lemurs in Madagascar hibernate, only a few hundred genes in their fat tissues change their level of expression seasonally.

Much is to be learned about how hibernation works in bears and other animals. Dr. Hansen concludes: "We are all better off having these animals in the wild."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/15/science/hibernation-bears-winter-health.html>

Stay tuned for the second part of The Grizzly Cost of Coexistence, and a delightful interview on the Grizzly Times podcast with Lou Bruno, a grassroots champion for the wild and sacred landscapes of the Rocky Mountain Front!

We wish you peace and joy in this magical time of hibernation and holidays.

*For the Bears,  
Louisa and David*

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### ***The Grizzly Cost of Coexistence, Part One***

**November 30, 2019**

[Louisa Willcox](#)



*This is the first of a two-part essay that delves into the complexities of grizzly bear coexistence, why we need more resources, and some options for generating new funds.*

Airedales to deter grizzly bears from coming into camp? This was one of several novel recommendations made at a [recent meeting of Yellowstone grizzly bear managers](#) in Cody, Wyoming, during a lively brainstorming session about ways to reduce human-bear conflicts. Another was establishing an academy where citizens could learn from each other by exchanging stories about successful coexistence with grizzly bears.

Indeed, despite often polarized views about grizzly bear management at this and other meetings, people have tended to agree on the need to reduce conflicts and the means of going about it, including obvious measures such as being mindful in bear country and making sure that human foods are unavailable. Even as consensus emerged regarding methods for coexisting with grizzlies, the conversation inevitably turned to funding. Everyone agreed that living with bears tends to cost money – for dumpsters, electric fence, education, and more.

During the nearly 40 years that I have observed and participated in grizzly bear management, I have heard the need for increased funding of coexistence efforts voiced time and time again, bringing together people on all sides of the grizzly bear debate. When discussions turn to real places and problems, people holding conflicting ideologies often agree on commonsense on-the-ground solutions.

### **Why Coexist?**

It is important to remember why we are obliged to coexist with grizzlies in the first place. If nothing else, we owe it to the bears as atonement for the past lethal excesses of our European ancestors. We white people killed off nearly all the grizzly bears that once lived in the western United States in a mere blink of the eye, between 1850 and 1950. We justified this atrocity with the toxic rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. Even though our modern counterparts of autoclaving ancestors may be in a minority, they are no less deadly.

Despite growing fascination and sympathy for grizzlies among people worldwide, we humans still cause nearly 90% of all grizzly bear deaths – even under protection offered by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We literally hold the future of the Great Bear in our hands.

Indeed, who we are as humans can be measured by our willingness to share a landscape with a mere 3% of the grizzlies that once roamed at mid-latitudes of the United States. And at a time when feelings of loneliness increasingly define modern society, wild animals provide us with the opportunity to feel less isolated and self-absorbed.

Perhaps more than any other animal, grizzly bears can provide us with an unparalleled gift by commanding our attention and concentrating us in the moment. Who doesn't hear the snap of every twig when hiking through grizzly country?

Fortunately, the vast majority of people who currently live near or among our few remaining grizzlies feel pride and curiosity rather than the venomous hostility harbored by a small minority. Moreover, figuring out how to live with these magnificent animals can be hugely gratifying.

### **Trash Talk in Cooke City**

The tiny hamlet of Cooke City, Montana, provides [an instructive example](#). Cooke City is on the doorstep of Yellowstone Park, and a microcosm of people with wildly different views about everything but the dates of our major holidays. Yet these people came together to solve the community's chronic conflicts with grizzlies that had become used to foraging for garbage in their backyards.

I recall a packed meeting convened by grizzly bear managers years ago at the town's fire hall. It began badly, with many leaning back in their chairs, arms crossed. But when a state biologist put up a map showing where he and other bear managers had killed scores of food-conditioned grizzlies bears during previous years, he was peppered with questions about particulars. People leaned forward. While everyone had stories about grizzlies in the back of garbage-filled pickups or doing backflips over a half-broken-down fence to feast in the town landfill, most did not fully appreciate the scale of the problem.

Or that a relatively simple step, such as constructing a trash compacter inside a fully enclosed building, could reduce grizzly bear deaths. Within months of the meeting, a bear-proof garbage transfer station was constructed. Clever fundraising was central. (More on the genius who figured out the funding later.) Bear conflicts plummeted.

But no one could have predicted that the facility would evolve into a community gathering place, an informal art gallery, lending library, and Good Will store. In the end, a facility that cost only \$125,000 continues to save grizzly bear lives while at the same time bringing the community together on Saturday mornings to drink coffee, socialize, and look at the art on the walls.

Here and elsewhere, I have seen that when people are offered a clearly defined problem, rather than an opportunity to vent, their creative ability will be harnessed in figuring out a solution. But there is no denying that money not only helps, but is often even critical.

### **The Growing Money Problem**

The demand for more funding to reduce conflicts with grizzlies in the Northern Rockies is mounting even as the budgets of wildlife management agencies shrink. Exacerbating current problems, grizzly bears are expanding their range in response to deteriorating habitat conditions catalyzed by climate warming, invasive species, and burgeoning numbers of people.

Moreover, shortfalls in funding to support coexistence work have been aggravated largely because managers prefer to dump most of their available budgets into efforts to simply count bears, with the somewhat cynical motive of ginning up an argument to remove federal protections for grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE).

In fact, inadequate funding for coexistence work threatens to undermine hard-fought gains made during the last 40 plus years. Even officials in Yellowstone Park, which has long been the gold standard for coexistence excellence, are struggling to meet today's challenges. At the Cody meeting, Park Service managers admitted that it will be at least



another decade before they can afford to have bear-proof food safes at every campground within Park borders.

The funding needed to support coexistence work in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) is outlined in an obscure [appendix to the 2017 Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy](#), a plan for managing grizzlies when federal protections are removed – as happened briefly during 2017-2018 before a federal judge reversed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s delisting decision. The price tag for post-delisting management was estimated at roughly \$5 million per year, most to support coexistence education and infrastructure. Importantly, these costs will remain the same regardless of whether the grizzly bear is listed under the Endangered Species Act or not.

A tiny footnote in the appendix shows a shortfall of roughly half a million dollars annually for conflict reduction efforts on National Forest lands alone. And the actual shortfall is almost certainly far worse, given the Forest Service’s current severe fiscal crisis.

Remarkably, an [appendix outlining funding needs](#) was dropped from the final version of the Conservation Strategy for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. This appendix that was included in a draft version of the plan showed major discrepancies between the money needed to implement the plan and any realistic assessment of available funds. Could the government be concerned that admissions of funding shortfalls might cast doubt on the wisdom of delisting?

A wiser course would be to confess these budget problems – problems that agency officials agree will worsen if grizzlies are delisted in the GYE or NCDE. Admitting the need for more money is a first step to finding creative solutions. No matter where people stands on the topic of delisting, most agree that avoiding conflicts with grizzlies is a good idea – and that coexistence costs money.

But before diving into the nitty gritty of funding needs, it is worth taking a detour to examine a critical ingredient of successful coexistence that cannot be paid for: our attitudes and capacity for empathy.

### **What’s Between Your Ears**

Although it’s easy to get caught up in the technology and gadgetry of coexistence, I’ve found that just about all successful coexistence efforts are fundamentally rooted in curiosity about, even compassion for, grizzlies. This gets to the stories we tell about grizzlies and ourselves – “what goes on between your ears,” as my husband, bear biologist Dr. David Mattson, likes to say.

Clearly, people who are benevolent, willing to share space, and genuinely curious about bears – what they are doing and why – are more willing to explore ways to solve problems. I have extolled the virtues of such people in a number of essays on our website.

But too many outdoor and hunting magazines try to boost sales by hyping grizzlies as “Monsters of God,” invariably accompanied by pictures of grizzlies with gaping mouths. Yet this crass fear-based exploitation of bears to make a profit is relatively new. Long before printing presses, cultures across the Northern Hemisphere told stories about our kinship with bears. One oft-told story in circumpolar cultures is about [The Woman who](#)

[Married a Bear](#) – a story, at root, about the power of love and co-creation between humans and grizzlies.

Nonetheless, even a relatively few well-armed and hostile people can kill lots of grizzlies in short order. That is why we need laws like the Endangered Species Act to prevent an anti-bear minority from depriving the rest of us our legitimate desire to have thriving grizzly bear populations. Strong and vigorously-enforced laws are often the only way to curb bad actors.

Returning to Cooke City, I saw one particularly problematic restaurant owner there who fed leftovers to grizzlies to thrill tourists finally stop this deadly practice only after a federal law enforcement officer threatened to impose a stiff fine. There is often no substitute for laws like the ESA to change the behaviors of a recalcitrant few.

Moreover, ESA protections bring other benefits. For one, more funding is available to government managers as well as to private individuals to support proactive measures that promote coexistence.

### **Not a Subway Franchise**

Last summer, Wyoming Senator John Barrasso, a conservative, and New Jersey Senator Cory Booker, a liberal, cosponsored the [“Promoting Resourceful and Effective Deterrents Against Threats Or Risks Involving Species \(PREDATORS\) Act”](#) (S. 2194). This legislation would award prizes for technological innovations that foster coexistence between people and carnivores – another example of bipartisan appeal. In his [submitted testimony](#), David provided a helpful framework for thinking about grizzly bear coexistence.

David broke down the challenge according to types of landscapes and types of involved people. For example, residents in the booming Flathead Valley can avoid conflicts by carefully storing food and attractants, including keeping domestic animals indoors at night, using bear-resistant dumpsters, deploying electric fencing around chicken coops, and removing bird feeders during summer. Since a sloppy neighbor can lure bears into a neighborhood with garbage and create trouble next door, coexistence efforts are more effective if undertaken at the scale of a watershed or a broader landscape.

Similar principles apply to managing attractants on private agricultural lands. One of the most successful examples of coexistence on ranchlands is the oft-featured Blackfoot Challenge in Montana. Here ranchers reduced conflicts by over 80% using a combination of measures that included prompt removal of dead livestock, disposal of carcasses in a composting facility, and widespread deployment of electric fencing around calving areas and residences.

On public rangelands, proven practices include close monitoring and low-stress management of livestock to avoid attracting grizzlies to the anxious bawling of agitated cattle. In some cases, as with the helpless domestic sheep that grizzlies find to be irresistibly attractive, conflicts are intractable and the only feasible solution is closure of the allotment. Nonetheless, during recent years conflicts in the GYE over cattle on grazing allotments have been on the rise. Most of this [increase can be attributed to collapse of important native grizzly bear foods](#) such as whitebark pine and Yellowstone cutthroat trout. To compensate, grizzlies are turning to eating more meat, unfortunately including

cows. As a consequence, proactive and vigilant husbandry practices are more important than ever.

Roads can also escalate conflicts between bears and people by facilitating access for poachers, as well as people who are just simply unprepared to encounter a grizzly bear. Moreover, roads fragment habitat by displacing bears, which is why the Forest Service moved to limit the extent of road networks. But off-road vehicle users can easily circumvent often poorly designed road closures. And as mountain bike use increases, so can dangerous encounters between bears and bikers moving silently at high speeds.

On heavily-trafficked transportation corridors we are seeing a sharp increase in deadly bear collisions involving both cars and trains. Train collisions in particular have mounted along the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe railroad in the NCDE, where a record 8 grizzlies were killed by trains during 2019. Much more needs to be done to develop a system of wildlife overpasses and underpasses, expanding on [pioneering work along Highway 93](#) in the Mission Valley by the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes and Montana Department of Transportation.

Today, conflicts with big game hunters on public lands are a leading cause of mortality in the GYE. Equipped with exceptional noses, grizzlies can smell animals killed by hunters many miles away and are even orienting towards gunshots as figurative dinner bells. Conflicts with hunters have predictable ingredients, including surprise encounters, contestation of carcasses, and availability of attractants at camps. Also, in Wyoming and Idaho, black bear hunters routinely misidentify and kill grizzlies. Carrying bear pepper spray, quickly removing big game from the field, and keeping clean camps are a sampler of proven ways to reduce these conflicts.

In the end, no one size fits all. Different practices are appropriate to different landscapes, different participants, and different social contexts. In the words of a friend who specializes in coexistence with large carnivores: “coexistence is not a Subway franchise.”

### **Coexistence Midwives**

People tend to gravitate toward technofixes, but there is no substitute for specialists who can navigate the sometimes fraught arena between people and bears. In the case of Cooke City, Dan Tyers of the Gallatin National Forest was the creative genius who found the funding for the trash compactor. Of all places, he found the money in mitigation funds related to the reconstruction of the Beartooth Highway that runs through Cooke City, that were then matched by the local County and local donations. With roots in the community and an aw-shucks demeanor, Dan brought people along. In the end, they owned the project and had pride in the result. Indeed, all the coexistence successes I know of are born by an adept government “midwife.”

Yes, nonprofit organizations do what they can to educate the public and underwrite the costs of coexistence infrastructure, but they too lack adequate resources. Importantly, they lack the legal authority necessary to intervene in conflict situations.

As a grizzly bear advocate for several nonprofit organizations, I was most successful in advancing coexistence when partnering with skilled agency practitioners. Which gets to the meaning of “skill”, which here is more art than science, and necessarily honed on the

job. You simply can't study wildlife management and, from that, know much about resolving conflicts with large carnivores when you graduate. Many who study wildlife management prefer animals to people. These folks may make good researchers but are less likely to shine when trying to promote coexistence in an arena that is fundamentally defined by people skills.

A sense of humor also helps. When Jamie Jonkel, bear specialist with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, called a year beset by conflicts "Bear-Mageddon," people in the neighborhood smiled as they double-checked their dumpsters.

Skilled practitioners are gems who can be as endangered as the species they are trying to save. And the work can be thankless. Even the best can burn out, exhausted from long days, panicked phone calls from landowners, lack of support from higher-ups, and grief over killing bears because people behaved badly.

Today, agency coexistence practitioners often rely on "soft money" that is discretionary and less assured than funds supporting researchers who merely count bears – an activity seen by agency higher-ups as essential to serving the political agenda of delisting. Shortfalls in funding are most pronounced in the vast Selway-Bitterroot region where grizzlies have started to reappear after being extirpated over 60 years ago and in the landscapes between these ecosystems that are vital to reconnecting our long-isolated Northern Rockies grizzly bear populations. Clearly more funding for coexistence in these landscapes is urgently needed.

It is time to move away from wasteful, polarizing, and unjustified government campaigns to delist grizzlies. Instead, we need to focus on efforts that bring communities together to foster coexistence. Our major challenges inescapably involve finding enough funding, building support for coexistence, and enforcing laws that help keep grizzlies alive. This is a tall order, but so too are the rewards: ensuring that future generations can see a wild grizzly in the American West.

Fortunately, there is no shortage of intriguing ideas, from an academy for those interested in learning more about coexistence to using Airedale dogs to deter grizzlies.

*Stay tuned for Part Two of this essay in which I provide a breakdown of some costs associated with fostering coexistence as well as some options for generating new funds.*

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