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Newsletter and 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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REVISED NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of the Grizzly,

Lots of news on the grizzly front, with the long-delayed Federal Register notice restoring endangered species protections to Yellowstone grizzlies, a federal decision to reopen a public debate about restoring grizzlies to the North Cascades, and the potentially catastrophic death of an adult female grizzly in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem.

NEW BLOG:

Through the Climate Looking Glass into Grizzly Wonderland
By David Mattson, PhD

David has this scathing critique of the government's denial of the devastating impacts of climate change on grizzlies (and indeed the planet). In a blog supported by a beefy list of references, he argues that the future will undoubtedly worsen, but we have already seen that:

"...rates and causes of bear deaths have [changed dramatically](#) in the Yellowstone ecosystem as a direct result of shifts in distributions and diets, driven by changes in food availability (e.g., [whitebark pine](#), [cutthroat trout](#), [army cutworm moths](#), [elk](#), [and bison](#))—driven in turn by wildfires ([whitebark pine](#)), drought ([elk](#)), pathogens ([whitebark pine](#) and trout), sport harvests ([elk](#)), perverse politics ([bison](#)), and invasions of non-native species ([whitebark pine](#) and [trout](#), again)."

David likens current environmental trends to those that happened prior to and during the Permian-Triassic extinctions around 252-million years ago, which "are the most catastrophic of any since the emergence of multi-cellular life, accounting for the demise of an estimated 80-95% of species that existed at that time..."

What is happening now “is comparable to what happened during end-Permian times, but at a rate >500 times faster. A heating of this combined magnitude and rapidity has never before been recorded in Earth history.”

David calls for “management and conservation of our threatened grizzly bears in a more enlightened, responsible, and humble manner. As Bob Dylan so eloquently sang in *All Along the Watch Tower*, “...let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late.”

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2019/07/20/Through-the-Climate-Looking-Glass-into-Grizzly-Wonderland>

Of Grizzlies, Conflicts and Climate Change: the PREDATORS Act

Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee contacted David asking him to submit testimony regarding the effects of climate change on grizzlies as context for deliberations during a hearing for the bill “Promoting Resourceful and Effective Deterrents Against Threats Or Risks involving Species (PREDATORS) Act” (S. 2194), sponsored by Senators John Barrasso (R-WY) and Cory Booker (D-NJ).

David provides a useful framework for thinking about conflicts and coexistence between grizzly bears and people, which will be worsened by the effects of climate change. He breaks down human-grizzly bear conflicts into six domains typified by shared drivers and common solutions:

- (1) Attractants such as garbage and small domestic animals associated with private residences;
- (2) Collisions with vehicles and trains travelling along heavily-trafficked transportation corridors;
- (3) Attractants and depredations on private agricultural lands;
- (4) Depredations and scavenging of domestic livestock on public land grazing allotments;
- (5) Competition and close encounters with big game hunters on public lands; and
- (6) Displacement and poaching associated with secondary road systems—also on public lands.

David’s testimony here:

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/d2beb3_9c5e77f3345b409bb8fb43ca1e0759a4.pdf

By contrast, the testimony of Brad Hovinga of WGF predictably emphasized a military-style approach to dealing with increased coexistence challenges, including tazers, drones and helicopters—all tacitly part of Wyoming’s ramped up lethal response to grizzly bears:

https://trib.com/outdoors/wyoming-game-and-fish-rep-testifies-before-congress-on-reducing/article_23896edd-355a-5e64-9a2d-8dfdd2581afc.html

IN THE NEWS:

Fish and Wildlife Service Formally Relists Yellowstone Grizzlies: Liz Cheney is Rebutted by Tribal Leaders

More than 10 months after federal Judge Dana Christensen's order restored endangered species protections for Yellowstone grizzlies, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) finally published a notice in the Federal Register formally relisting the population. Yellowstone grizzlies have been protected in the meantime.

Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney wasted no time in blasting the decision, arguing the decision was based on "excessive litigation by radical environmentalists" rather than on "data." "The court-ordered relisting of the grizzly was not based on science or facts, but was rather the result of excessive litigation pursued by radical environmentalists intent on destroying our Western way of life," she said. Cheney has also introduced a bill to legislatively delist Yellowstone grizzlies.

<https://thehill.com/homenews/house/455399-cheney-blasts-court-decision-to-place-grizzly-bears-back-on-endangered-species>

Tom Rodgers, senior adviser to the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leadership Conference responded to Cheney in *Native News Online* with this:

"So, in striving to protect our culture, our religious and spiritual freedoms, our sovereignty, and our treaty rights—all of which are encapsulated in the grizzly issue—we are 'destroying' Cheney's idea of the 'Western way of life'?"

"I would remind the congresswoman that at the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition an estimated 100,000 grizzly bears roamed from the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast," he added. "That was all Indian Country. Now there are fewer than 2,000 grizzly bears and our people live in Third World conditions on meager reservations in the poorest counties in the U.S. Does she really want to talk about 'destroying' a 'way of life'?"

Spot on!

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/08/03/indigenous-groups-applaud-protection-grizzly-bear-liz-cheney-claims-rule-harms>

MT Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Members Announced

Montana Governor Steve Bullock recently announced the members of a new statewide grizzly bear advisory council. As predicted, most members are from ranching or logging industries, or conservative pro-delisting conservation groups such as the Greater Yellowstone Coalition.

But stalwarts Robyn King, director of the Yaak Valley Forest Council and Michele Dieterich, wildlife advocate from the Bitterroot Valley, were also selected. They will have their work cut out for them tempering the reactionaries and sell-out environmental groups!

This announcement by Governor Bullock serves as a reminder, though, that grizzly bears are important to people nationwide, not just in this region. Although deliberations by a state-convened group could be helpful, the risk is that those who are part of the Advisory Council will forget that people nationwide deserve a voice as well.

But good luck Robyn and Michele, give bears your best!

- <https://missoulian.com/news/local/gov-appoints-grizzly-bear-advisory-council-members>
- https://www.thewesternnews.com/local_news/20190730/troy_woman_named_to_grizzly_bear_advisory_council

Shooting of Female Grizzly Could be Catastrophic for Cabinet Yaak Population

Two backpackers recently shot and killed an adult female grizzly in the Cabinet Mountains where grizzlies have long teetered on the brink of extinction. This killing, on top of another adult female killed under suspicious circumstances last year, could push critically imperiled grizzly bears in both the Yaak and Cabinet populations over the edge.

Both of the recent killers shot at the bear, claiming “self-defense.” Neither had bear spray. By all indications the female had been innocently feeding on huckleberries when surprised by the two hikers. The federal government is investigating the case.

In a recent comprehensive analysis of the status of grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem, David found that, using vital rate information provided by Fish and Wildlife Service, the death of even one additional female every two years could have catastrophic impacts on the population. Even though that threshold has been breached, the government has said nothing about the implications. Worse, the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service are barging ahead with permitting a high-use trail and huge destructive timber sale in the heart of the Yaak, and two hard rock mines that would almost literally sever what little connectivity is left in the Cabinet Mountains. The only thing standing between the bears and these projects is a small group of committed activists and skilled attorneys. Cumulatively these developments could hasten the demise of one of our most critically endangered grizzly bear populations.

Here is the relevant portion of David’s recent talk about his analysis:

<https://www.youtube.com/>

- https://www.dailyinterlake.com/local_news/20190808/backpackers_say_grizzly_shooting_was_self-defense
- <https://ftw.usatoday.com/2019/08/backpackers-killing-of-grizzly-bear-under-investigation>

Meanwhile, the Fish and Wildlife Service recently relocated two more grizzlies into the Cabinet Mountains from the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem to boost the small population in the Cabinets. Although 19 grizzlies have been reintroduced, there is evidence that only 3 grizzlies have successfully reproduced. Instead of working to protect habitat and stop poaching, the government is substituting a program that is tantamount to the “put and take” used by fish managers.

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/two-grizzlies-relocated-cabinet-mountains-boost-existing-population>

David’s comments on impacts of Black Ram timber sale and Montanore mine:

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/d2beb3_05f9a3cf211b4c9d8d5c8f520f2ccf71.pdf

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/d2beb3_e0b0066a4d0b4aefa76a8dc1523861fb.pdf

Feds Reopen Public Comment Period About North Cascades Grizzly Bear Reintroduction

In a move that surprised both bear supporters and opponents, the federal government recently announced that it was once again soliciting public comments on the proposed reintroduction of grizzly bears into the North Cascades of Washington state. After releasing a draft environmental impact statement during 2017, the Trump administration halted the process with no explanation.

Only a handful of grizzlies remain in the North Cascades population that straddles the border with British Columbia. Scientists maintain that perhaps 500 grizzlies could live in the North Cascades.

- <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/feds-look-again-at-reintroducing-grizzly-bears-to-north-cascades/>
- http://www.chronline.com/northwest_regional_news/process-that-would-bring-grizzly-bears-back-to-north-cascades/article_a2fd88ac-afdf-11e9-9525-6fdfa30db819.html

Grizzly Times will soon post background on the proposal. The deadline for comments on the EIS is October 24. Comments can be submitted here:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=44144>

Cool Video: Grizzly Slides on Glacier Park Snowfield

Jacob Hartman shot this video of a grizzly in Glacier Park running and sliding down snowfield: <https://missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2019/07/grizzly-bear-snowfield/>



Please Consider a Gift to *Grizzly Times*

We need your help! David and I have retired and are doing this full-time work pretty much gratis, and despite the gradual dissolution of our physical bodies.

If you were following the recent delisting court case, you know that David's role was vital to the litigation success that restored protections to Yellowstone's grizzly bears. The skilled attorneys could not have won the case without David's scientific expertise. There will be continued demands on David's time with the appeal of this case to the 9th Circuit Court, potential delisting of NCDE or even all lower-48 grizzlies, and mounting threats to the Cabinet Yaak population.

As we do not have our own nonprofit, Conservation Congress, a not-for-profit tax-deductible organization, has agreed to be our fiscal sponsor. (Thank you, Denise!)

You can make a one-time contribution or sign up for a monthly donation through the Conservation Congress link below.

<https://www.conservationcongress-ca.org/give>

Or, you can mail a donation to:

Conservation Congress
2234 Sierra Vista Circle
Billings, MT 59105

* Be sure to note that your contribution is for *Grizzly Times* (GT).

Thank you for your continued support - in any way - it is greatly appreciated!

*For the Bears,
Louisa and David*