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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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Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

As grizzlies near the end of their fall feeding frenzy, the death toll is mounting. But there is good news for Cabinet-Yaak, Selkirk and Northern Continental Divide grizzlies -- mostly the result of litigation. We are reminded, again, of how important the courts are to correcting abuses of the Executive Branch, at least for now...

NEW BLOG:

Inviting the Chief of the Grizzlies to Our Feast

By Louisa Willcox

Louisa's essay this week (which follows below) centers on notions of love and a Tlingit tale that emphasizes the rewards that come from showing kindness to those who are different -- even enemies. She highlights the uplifting stories of Karl Rappold, John Robinett and David Stalling, who are among a growing number of people welcoming grizzlies in their midst. In fact, we would not be seeing the recent expansion of the grizzly's range if most people, whether resident and transient, were not fundamentally tolerant.

Citing works of Aldo Leopold and William Shakespeare, she notes that: "The very act of love engenders more of the same, creating ever expanding bounty. Life continually reminds us how compassion, curiosity, and respect can be progenerative. Similarly, in recent decades we have seen how widening circles of love have meant extending rights to minorities, children, women, those with different sexual and religious orientations, and even other species -- including grizzlies."

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2019/10/20/Inviting-the-Chief-of-the-Grizzlies-to-Our-Feast>

IN THE NEWS:

Death Toll Mounts

So far, 28 grizzlies are known to be dead in the Greater Yellowstone, while 44 are dead in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), where last year's record may be broken again. Using a government formula that estimates unknown and unreported grizzly bear

deaths, 88 grizzlies have likely died so far this year in the NCDE, equaling roughly 11% of the population of roughly 800 animals. (Agencies' claims of 1,000 bears is inflated and unlikely). Some of the details are particularly disturbing, including 6 deaths under investigation for possible poaching, 8 killed by trains (a record high for one year), and 5 killed by vehicles.

Managers are vigorously denying any problems, claiming that such deaths can be absorbed by population growth, when in fact the NCDE population has likely stopped growing and could be shrinking. They also assert that recovery levels have been reached -- even though the tacit recovery target of 800 grizzlies in a mostly isolated ecosystem is not viable over the long-term. <https://missoulian.com/news/local/two-dead-griz-cubs-poached-moose-found-in-western-montana>

Interior Secretary Bernhardt, Montana Congressman Gianforte Boost Delisting

Montana's Republican congressman Greg Gianforte (also candidate for Governor) recently convened a meeting in Choteau, Montana, to lobby Interior Secretary David Bernhardt to remove federal Endangered Species Act protections for grizzly bears.

Gianforte invited a hand-picked group of anti-bear ranchers, hunting organizations, and elected officials to push the Secretary to expedite delisting. All other members of the public were excluded.

"We need to act," Gianforte said, asking Bernhardt to "do everything in your power" to delist the bear and bring management to the state. Director of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Martha Williams agreed, saying "I'd like to see bears delisted tomorrow, frankly."

Ranchers also asked that the federal government take a more active role in dealing with "problem bears," and advocated increased funding for Wildlife Services, an agency within the Department of Agriculture whose mission is to kill animals that farmers and ranchers don't want. Jason Suckow of Wildlife Services said this: "We are in crisis mode...we need the state to get hard on management rather than recovery." ("Management" here is a euphemism for killing.)

Johnathan Hettinger of MT Free Press reported that donors associated with the livestock industry contributed more than \$275,000 to Gianforte's 2018 re-election campaign, the most of any single industry. This makes the meeting, in essence, about a favor by Gianforte to his biggest backers -- and grizzlies yet again pawns of partisan politics.

- <https://montanafreepress.org/.../gianforte-lobbies-interior-.../>
- <https://www.greatfallstribune.com/.../interior-ch.../3881941002/>
- <https://helenair.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/interior-secretary-hears-concerns-about-grizzlies-along-the-front>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/montana-interior-secretary-hears-concerns-over-grizzly-bears>

Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Also Sets the Stage for Delisting

Just a few days prior to the Bernhardt meeting, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP) convened the first of a series of meetings to be held over the next year comprised of the Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council, a citizens' group convened by MTFWP. Agency Director Williams made clear the goal of the process was: "to better set us up for delisting."

Eighteen people were selected out of a pool of 150 applicants -- a number that demonstrates the enthusiasm and interest of citizens across the state in the fate of the Great Bear. But given that nearly half of the council members selected are ranchers, the handful of conservationists on the council have their work cut out for them. Hang in there!

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/montanas-grizzly-bear-advisory-council-looks-ahead-delisting>

Mountain Bike Impacts on Grizzlies Grab Headlines

Recent articles in the New York Times and Outside Online highlight the mounting conflicts between grizzlies and a growing number of mountain bikers. The Trump administration recently exacerbated the problem by allowing e-bikes, or electric bikes, to be used on trails on which leg-powered bikes are already permitted within the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior. Top experts in the field argue that mountain bikes and e-bikes are incompatible with conservation of sensitive wildlife such as grizzlies.

After 40 years of promoting delisting and the status quo, retired Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator Chris Servheen is stepping up to champion the grizzly bear -- at last playing the hero rather than the villain. A few excerpts here: "We tell people not to run in grizzly bear habitat, to make noise and to be aware of their surroundings. Agencies are permitting the very activities we are telling people not to do."

And: "When a bear attacks someone, officials nearly always feel pressure to trap and kill that bear. Gruesome grizzly attacks also feed public resistance to bears, meaning the more people are killed by bears, the less likely communities are to tolerate living near them as bruin populations expand."

Wildlife Biologist David Mattson has recently completed a report entitled Effects of Pedestrians on Grizzly Bears, which includes the most comprehensive synthesis of research on the topic of how people on foot -- and on bicycles -- affect grizzly bears. You will hear more about this groundbreaking analysis soon!

- <https://www.outsideonline.com/.../grizzly-bears-habitat-humans>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/.../.../bears-biking-national-parks.html>

Grizzly Climate Tales

The Bozeman Chronicle reports on recent climate research in Greater Yellowstone showing significant increases in fire frequency and major losses in forest cover -- in the future, as much as 35% in northern portions of Grand Teton. We have already lost roughly 80% of the ecosystem's whitebark pine from an unprecedented climate-driven outbreak of mountain pine beetles -- which has harmed grizzlies, nutcrackers, and other species. And more is in store.

<https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/environment/what-will-we-lose-tracking-climate-change-in-yellowstone>

Disturbing photos of emaciated grizzlies on the British Columbia coast underscore the devastating impacts of warming ocean temperatures on salmon. The declines of salmon throughout the province are likely exacerbated by logging, roadbuilding, and the practice of fish farming that can spread disease to wild salmon.

- <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/b-c/grizzly-experts-want-research-into-emaciated-bears-photographed-in-knight-inlet-1.23971347>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/sockeye-returns-plunge-in-b-c-official-calls-2019-extremely-challenging-1.5256443>

Grizzly Recovery in the North Cascades?

After fits and starts, the debate over reintroduction of grizzlies in the North Cascades is on again. The National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service have reopened a public comment process until October 24 over the future of grizzlies in an ecosystem that could support hundreds of bears, but now boasts only a handful. The government's proposal would augment the population by bringing in 25 grizzlies over 5-10 years.

Last year, the plan gained [backing from former Interior Department Secretary Ryan Zinke](#), a Montana native, who said he was a “supporter of the Great Bear” that can return harmony to the ecosystem.

Because there are so few grizzlies in the ecosystem on both sides of the US/Canada border, Forest Service scientist Bill Gaines maintains that: “The likelihood of the (grizzly) bears recovering in the North Cascades on their own is very, very small. In fact it probably isn’t going to happen.” Gaines, who has researched grizzlies in the North Cascades during the last two decades, also said: “Sometimes I’ve thought maybe what I’m documenting here is a species going extinct in an ecosystem... maybe slipping through our fingers.”

- <https://www.opb.org/news/article/grizzly-bears-cascades-washington-proposal-public-comment/>
- <https://komonews.com/news/local/feds-again-look-for-comment-on-north-cascades-grizzly-bear-plans-09-28-2019>
- <https://methowvalleynews.com/2019/10/03/grizzly-bears-have-a-natural-place-in-the-north-cascades/>

Listen to the Grizzly Times podcast with Jack Oeflke of the National Park Service who articulates why grizzlies should be restored in the North Cascades:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_KsGGh3iQI

PLEASE ACT!

You can submit comments here:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?documentID=77025>

GOOD NEWS:

Big Win for Bears, Wildlife: Oil and Gas Leases Retired in the Badger Two Medicine!

Moncrief Oil and Gas recently abandoned its dreams of exploitations after agreeing to surrender leases to drill in the Badger-Two Medicine area near Montana's Glacier National Park. The company agreed to retire the leases in an out-of-court settlement with The Wilderness Society. This is a huge win for wildlife, including grizzlies. For three decades ranchers, conservationists, sportsmen, and the Blackfeet Nation have worked to preserve the 132,000-acre Badger-Two Medicine. Only one more lease to go...

At a time when the energy industry is being greenlighted at every turn, this victory is especially sweet. Congratulations!

https://www.dailyinterlake.com/.../moncrief_permanently_retir...



The high peaks of Marias Pass as seen from the Badger-Two Medicine region.

Alliance Wins Big for Cabinet Yaak, Selkirks Grizzlies

The Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR) recently won a precedent-setting legal victory that provides new hope for the recovery of grizzlies in the beleaguered Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems. The Court agreed with AWR that human activity on putatively closed roads together with illegal user-created roads poses a major threat to grizzlies and ordered the Forest Service to re-consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service to address the problem.

Bottom line: until the government commits to effectively closing or removing these roads, logging and road-building projects in grizzly bear habitat in these ecosystems must stop. Because there are dozens of logging projects already approved, AWR is challenging each one until the problem is fixed.

Way to go AWR!

- https://missoulain.com/.../article_096c17c6-b7c5-5ecd-a740-79...
- <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/10/11/how-the-alliance-for-the-wild-rockies-stopped-trump-from-bulldozing-cabinet-yaak-and-selkirk-grizzly-bears-into-extinction/>

Cabinet Mountains: Judge Wants Proof Mine Won't Harm Grizzlies, Bull Trout

A proposed mine that would tunnel beneath the Cabinet Mountains in northwest Montana – with catastrophic consequences for grizzlies, bull trout and other species – recently got another setback in court. Missoula federal district Judge Donald Molloy ruled the US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service and RC Resources, a subsidiary of Hecla Mining, will have to prove in court that they properly considered the mine's effects on threatened species, namely bull trout and grizzly bears.

The Ksanka Crazy Dog Society of the Kootenai Nation and six environmental organizations sued last January, asserting the US Fish and Wildlife Service cut a number of corners when it gave the Forest Service a nod to grant yet another permit to RC Resources in 2018.

This is the fourth round of litigation over the permit -- and underscores the incredible passion and staying power of the champions of grizzlies and the Cabinet Yaak ecosystem. Way to go!

<https://missoulacurrent.com/.../2019/10/cabinet-mountains-mine>

Grizzlies Continue to Expand

Grizzlies continue to expand their range in the Northern Rockies. More are showing up on the Washington side of the Selkirk ecosystem, including around the Schweitzer ski area.

Meanwhile grizzly tracks were documented near Butte, Montana, halfway between the NCDE and Greater Yellowstone. And while a much-watched grizzly that had wandered into Idaho's Clearwater country has moved back to Montana for now, rumors abound that other grizzlies are setting up shop in the Selway Bitterroot.

- <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2019/sep/29/as-grizzly-bears-increase-their-range-region-wide/>
- <https://lmtribune.com/outdoors/much-watched-grizzly-meanders-back-to-montana>
- <https://mtstandard.com/news/local/grizzly-tracks-confirmed-near-elk-park>

Discoveries about Genes of Hibernating Bears Could Help People with Diabetes

Washington State University researchers have found that grizzly bear's genes change more during hibernation than do the genes of other animals under any circumstances -- findings that may lead to better treatments for diabetes and muscle atrophy in humans.

Heiko Jansen, Professor of Integrative Neuroscience and Physiology, says that thousands of genes are expressed differently in bears both before and during hibernation than at other times of the year. Gene expression is like a light dimmer switch.

“What bears can do every year is they can turn that insulin resistance off and become insulin sensitive again,” Jansen said. “If we could learn what the secret to that switching is, we might be able to have novel treatments for human diabetes be developed.”

Another discovery about the miracles of hibernation!

<https://dailyevergreen.com/62637/news/grizzly-bear-genes-change-expression-in-hibernation>

Cool Videos

A grizzly trudging through snow near Babb, Montana, after the recent massive snowfall:

<https://www.kpax.com/news/video-big-grizzly-bear-trudging-through-snow-in-glacier-county>



And, a grizzly near Revelstoke, BC, crossing the train tracks (shudder):

<https://www.revelstokereview.com/community/youtube-video-of-revelstoke-grizzly-bear-goes-viral/>

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: <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*