



YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE INTERAGENCY GRIZZLY BEAR COMMITTEE



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## **AGENCY REPORTS AT MEETING PRESENT UNANIMOUSLY GOOD NEWS ABOUT YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY**

**BOZEMAN** – Managers from the state, tribal, and federal agencies responsible for recovery of the grizzly bear in the Yellowstone Ecosystem heard good news at their recent meeting in Bozeman, Montana. Despite being a poor cone production year for the already beleaguered whitebark pine trees (WBP), managers heard reports of surprisingly few conflicts between humans and grizzly bears, even though a record count of 58 unduplicated females with cubs were observed in the ecosystem this year. Especially promising was that a female with cub was documented in each of the 18 bear management units used to keep track of the bear population.

In addition to reports of minimal conflicts from all of the states and national parks, managers also heard a report on the annual population status from the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST). Utilizing existing statistical methods the population estimate for the Yellowstone Ecosystem in 2013 is 629. Because grizzly bears have yet to enter their dens for hibernation, all of the information presented regarding conflicts was labeled as “Draft,” but current data shows 25 known grizzly mortalities recorded so far, which represents less than half the mortalities in 2012.

The IGBST also presented a synthesis of information on the effects of changes in bear foods on the health of the Yellowstone grizzly population. The IGBST had been tasked in the spring of 2012 to do this work so the YES managers would have the best available information on which to make a recommendation to the USFWS on whether a new proposed delisting rule should be prepared or not.

According to van Manen, “Our extensive analysis of existing research and monitoring has shown us that grizzly bears are resilient and resourceful in the face of changing food resources.” Additionally he said, “Our findings indicate that the decline in WBP due mostly to mountain pine beetles is not a major threat to the future of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population. Data show the observed slowing of population growth since 2002 is a result of increased grizzly bear population density and resulting declines in subadult survival.”

The food synthesis research was presented to the YES members who then voted to conditionally support the findings, pending completion of a final section of the report and having all the research peer reviewed and published in professional journals. The IGBST will be presenting the same information to the IGBC at their December meeting in Missoula, Montana. Both the YES and the IGBC will make recommendations of the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the agency responsible for deciding on whether a new proposed rule proposing to again delist Yellowstone bears would be developed and published for public

comment. USFWS will likely make a final decision in late December or early January on whether to produce a new proposed rule or not.

According to Recovery Coordinator Chris Servheen, "If delisting were to occur it wouldn't be until later in 2014." Careful monitoring and management would continue if delisting were to occur. According to van Manen, "Our team will continue to monitor how grizzly bears respond over time and keep a close eye on the thresholds established to ensure a sustainable population."

To learn more about grizzly bear recovery visit: [www.igbconline.org](http://www.igbconline.org). To view reports by the IGBST regarding the Yellowstone grizzly bear population visit: <http://www.nrmssc.usgs.gov/research/igbsthme>