

Meeting Date: November 16, 2023

Agenda Item No.17

Agenda Item: Grizzly bear update

Bureau Chief Approval: SR

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Background:

Grizzly bear populations continue to grow and thrive in the Greater Yellowstone Area and the Selkirk and Cabinet ranges in Idaho's Panhandle. Grizzly bears in Idaho are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act, with grizzly bears in the "lower 48" states listed as a threatened species.

Grizzly bears in western Canada and Alaska are not part of this listing. In 2022, Idaho petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to delist the "lower-48" on the basis this listing does not meet the ESA definition of a species. The Service denied Idaho's petition, and Idaho has challenged this decision in federal court. The Commission may wish to defer discussion of litigation with legal counsel to the executive session portion of its agenda.

The Department continues to work with our sister states and federal agencies to address and reduce bear-human conflicts and to monitor grizzly bear populations. Director Fredericks represents Idaho on the long-standing Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee.

There are several administrative processes underway related to grizzly bear management in recovery areas identified in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1993 recovery plan. These include revision of the Tri-State (Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming) Memorandum of Agreement and Conservation Strategy for management of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Area following delisting. They also include development of a conservation strategy for grizzly bears in the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak ranges (Idaho, Montana, and Washington). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is also preparing environmental impact statements related to currently unoccupied areas including the North Cascades (Washington) and Bitterroot (Idaho and Montana).

Justification/Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is a status update.