

GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT CAPTURES, RELOCATIONS, AND REMOVALS IN NORTHWEST WYOMING

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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Submitted to the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Interim Committee. This report is available to the public at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Headquarters Office, Regional Offices and on the Department website at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov>. This report is in fulfillment of the requirements in Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001(c). Questions about this report or its content can be directed to Brian DeBolt, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 260 Buena Vista, Lander, WY 82520, (307) 332-2688, Brian.DeBolt@wyo.gov

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Wyoming Game and Fish Department
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Introduction

Human-bear interactions and conflicts in Wyoming are a result of an abundance of bears seeking unnatural foods in association with people and property, close encounters with humans, or when bears kill livestock. The number and location of human-bear conflicts is influenced by the availability of unsecured unnatural attractants (e.g. human foods and garbage), natural food distribution and abundance, bear numbers and distribution, and human and livestock use patterns on the landscape.

The management technique of capturing bears (grizzly and black) in areas where they may come into conflict with people and relocating them to remote locations is common throughout the world. Relocation achieves several social and conservation functions: (a) it reduces the chance of property damage, livestock damage, or human interactions in areas where the potential for conflict is high; (b) it reduces the potential for bears to become food conditioned and/or human habituated which often results in destructive and/or dangerous behaviors; (c) it allows bears the opportunity to forage on natural foods and remain wary of people; and (d) it could prevent removing bears from the population which may be beneficial in maintaining recovery criteria and population management objectives.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) relocates and removes black and grizzly bears as part of routine management operations. All grizzly bear management actions were conducted in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, when applicable. As of July 31, 2017, grizzly bears were removed from the Endangered Species List in Wyoming. At that time, Wyoming assumed management authority and coordination of Department management activities with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was not required. The decision to relocate or remove a bear is made after considering a number of variables including age and sex of the animal, behavioral traits, health status, physical injuries or abnormalities, type of conflict, severity of conflict, known history of the animal, human safety concerns, availability of suitable relocation sites, and population management objectives. Grizzly bears are relocated in accordance with Federal and State law, regulation, and policy.

In 2005, the Wyoming Legislature enacted House Bill 203, which created Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001 which requires the Department to:

- (a) Upon relocating a grizzly bear or upon receiving notification that a grizzly bear is being relocated, the Department shall provide notification to the county sheriff of the county to which the grizzly bear is relocated within five (5) days of each grizzly bear relocation and shall issue a press release to the media and sheriff in the county where each grizzly bear is relocated;
- (b) The notice and press release shall provide the following information:
 - (i) The date of the grizzly bear relocation;
 - (ii) The number of grizzly bears relocated; and
 - (iii) The location of the grizzly bear relocation, as provided by commission rule and regulation;
- (c) No later than January 15 of each year the Department shall submit an annual report to the Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Interim committee. The annual report shall include the total number and relocation area of each grizzly bear relocated during

the previous calendar year. The Department shall also make available the annual report to the public.

Subsequently, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission promulgated Chapter 58 Notification of Grizzly Bear Relocation Regulation (Appendix I) to further direct the implementation of Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001.

This report satisfies the requirements set forth in Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001(c) and provides additional information on grizzly bear captures, relocations, and removals in Wyoming during 2017.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2017, the Department captured 30 grizzly bears in 31 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Most captures were lone grizzly bears of all age classes, including 7 females and 23 males (one male caught in two separate conflicts). Nineteen (61%) of the 31 capture events were in Park County, 8 (26%) occurred in Sublette County, 2 (6%) in Fremont County, 1 (3%) in Teton county, and 1 (3%) in Hot Springs County.

Of the 31 capture events, 12 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (primarily cattle), 6 were captured for obtaining pet, livestock food, or damaging fruit trees. Two bears were non-target captures, and 11 bears were captured for frequenting developed sites or livestock production areas. Of the 31 capture events, there were 15 relocation events, 3 bears were released on site because they were non-target captures or part of a family group, and 13 bears were removed from the population. All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) (Figure 2). Of the 15 relocation events, 8 (53%) bears were released in Park County, 2 in Fremont County (13%), and 5 (33%) were released in Teton County (Table 1).

Eleven of the 13 bears removed from the population were lethally removed, and 2 orphaned yearling grizzly bears that became habituated to human activities were placed into a zoo facility (Table 1). These bears were removed due to a history of previous conflicts, a known history of close association with humans, or they were deemed unsuitable for release into the wild (e.g. orphaned cubs, poor physical condition, or human safety concern). Removals occur after much deliberation and ultimate decisions take into account multiple factors unique to each conflict situation.

Notification to the County Sheriff and the Media

Within 5-days of releasing a grizzly bear, the county sheriff was notified by e-mail and a press release was distributed to all local media contacts in the county where the grizzly bear was released. The media release contained information on the location of the grizzly bear release, the number of grizzly bears relocated, the date of the relocation and the reason the grizzly bear was relocated.

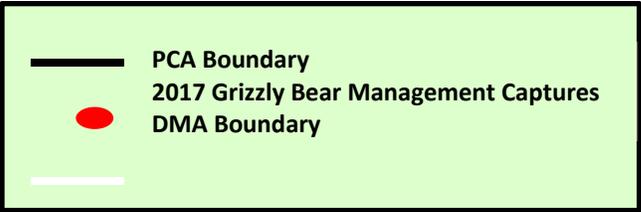
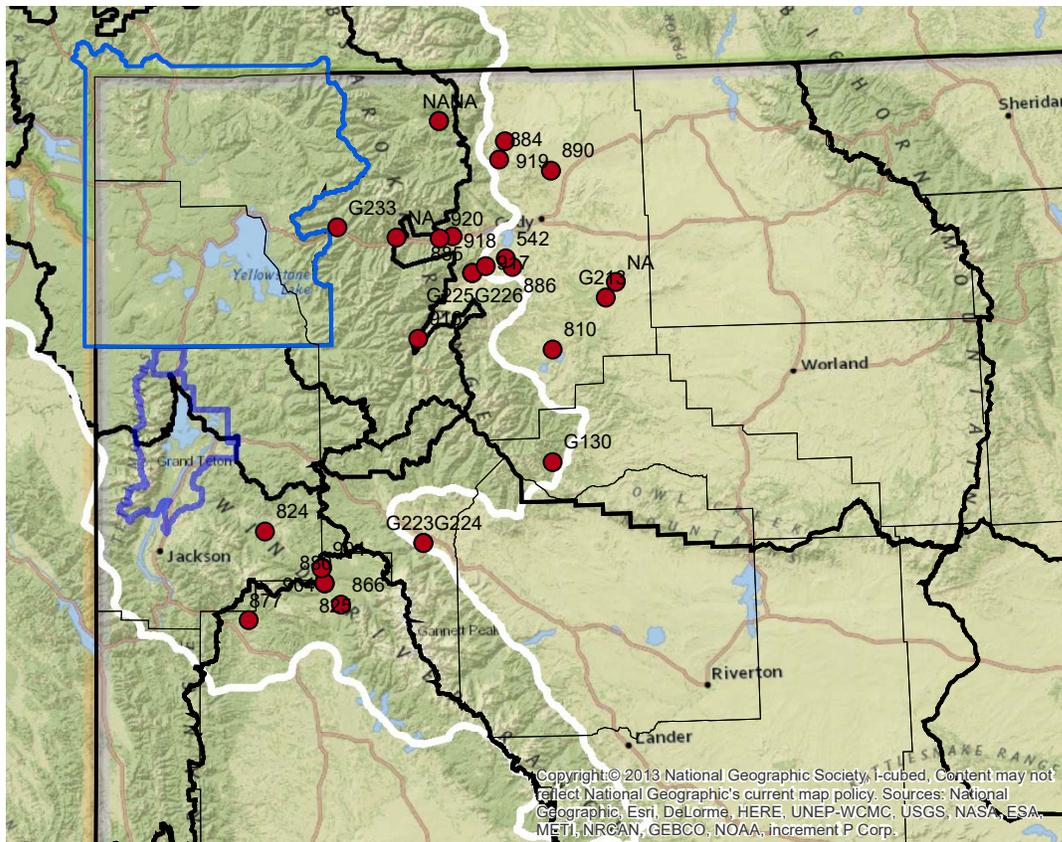


Figure 1. Management capture locations ($n = 31$) for grizzly bears in 2017. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not fitted with radio collars (typically because they were too young to be collared). Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number. PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2016 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. DMA is the grizzly bear Demographic Monitoring Area as defined in “Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. 2012. Updating and Evaluating Approaches to estimate population size and sustainable mortality limits for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.” Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT, USA. Please note that the mapping software combines some locations at this scale. Therefore, locations/bear numbers at or very near the same coordinates are not always distinct on the map, but are listed in Table 1.

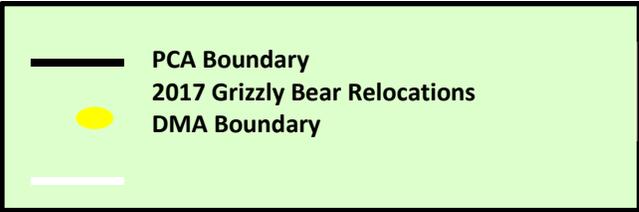
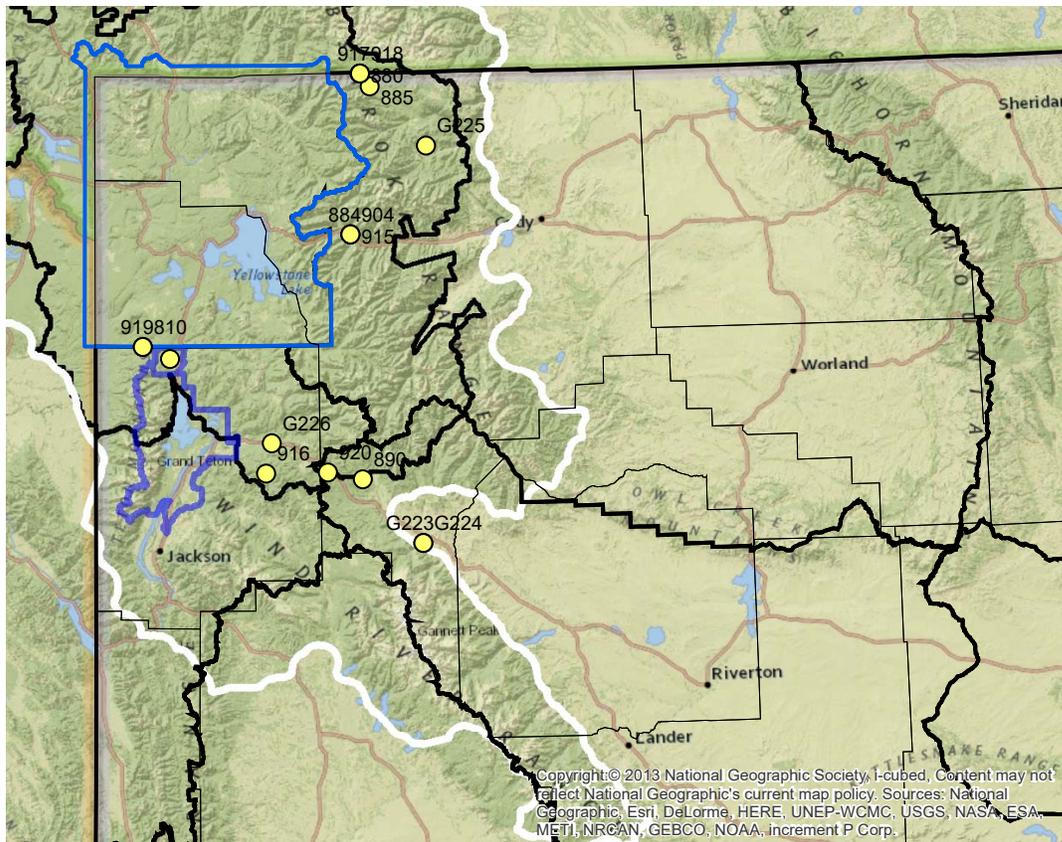


Figure 2. Release locations ($n = 18$; 15 relocated, and 3 released on site) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in conflict management efforts 2017. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not fitted with radio collars (typically because they were too young to be collared). PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2016 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. The DMA is the grizzly bear Demographic Monitoring Area as defined in “Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. 2012. Updating and Evaluating Approaches to estimate population size and sustainable mortality limits for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.” Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT, USA. Please note that the mapping software combines some locations at this scale. Therefore, locations/bear numbers at or very near the same coordinates are not always distinct on the map, but are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2017 grizzly bear conflict management captures ($n = 31$) in Wyoming. Grizzly bears identified with “N/A” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number.

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
3/24/2017	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR GOAT DEPREDATION AND FREQUENTING RANCH BUILDINGS.
4/12/2017	877	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS AND MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS
4/22/2017	G223	FREMONT	ON SITE (WIND RIVER)	FREMONT	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION-RELEASED ON-SITE TO JOIN FAMILY GROUP
4/23/2017	G224	FREMONT	ON SITE (WIND RIVER)	FREMONT	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION-RELEASED ON-SITE TO JOIN FAMILY GROUP
4/29/2017	884	PARK	MORMON CREEK	PARK	NON-TARGET CAPTURE AT A GARBAGE CONFLICT.
5/9/2017	G225	PARK	PAINTER GULCH	PARK	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
5/10/2017	885	PARK	PILOT CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
5/10/2017	G226	PARK	BLACKROCK CREEK	TETON	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS.
5/22/2017	886	PARK	JDR PARKWAY	TETON	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING CALVING PASTURE AND HARASSING CATTLE.
6/2/2017	890	PARK	LONG CREEK	FREMONT	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING AGRICULTURAL AREAS AND DEVELOPED SITES.
7/9/2017	824	TETON			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS.
7/19/2017	904	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
7/21/2017	825	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS.
7/21/2017	880	SUBLETTE	FOX CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/2/2017	G130	HOT SPRINGS			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS.
8/5/2017	866	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS.
8/11/2017	810	PARK	GRASSY LAKE AREA	TETON	CAPTURED FOR BREAKING INTO GRAIN SHED.

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
8/11/2017	UNM4	PARK			LIVE REMOVAL (ZOO) FOR HUMAN HABITUATION AND BOLD BEHAVIOR.
8/11/2017	UNM5	PARK			LIVE REMOVAL (ZOO) FOR HUMAN HABITUATION AND BOLD BEHAVIOR
9/9/2017	G213	PARK			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CONFLICT HISTORY.
9/12/2017	904	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS.
9/14/2017	915	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION.
9/24/2017	UNM6	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS.
9/27/2017	916	PARK	SOUTH FORK SPREAD CREEK	TETON	CAPTURED FOR BREAKING INTO CHICKEN COOP.
9/30/2017	917	PARK	FOX CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS.
9/30/2017	G233	PARK	ON SITE (NORTH FORK SHOSHONE)	PARK	NON-TARGET CAPTURE.
10/3/2017	918	PARK	FOX CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING RESIDENTIAL AREAS.
10/17/2017	919	PARK	GRASSY LAKE	TETON	CAUGHT FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS.
10/25/2017	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR BOLD BEHAVIOR AND ATTEMPTING TO ACQUIRE GRAIN FROM HORSE TRAILERS.
11/2/2017	542	PARK			REMOVED FOR ACQUIRING GRAIN AND PRIOR CONFLICT HISTORY.
11/3/2017	920	PARK	WIND RIVER	FREMONT	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS AND ACQUIRING LIVESTOCK FEED.

Appendix I. Wyoming Game and Fish Commission's Notification of Grizzly Bear Relocation Regulation

WYOMING GAME AND FISH

COMMISSION CHAPTER 58

NOTIFICATION OF GRIZZLY BEAR RELOCATION REGULATION

Section 1. Authority. This regulation is promulgated by authority of W.S. §23-1-1001.

Section 2. Definitions. Definitions shall be as set forth in Title 23, Wyoming Statutes, Commission regulations, and the Commission also adopts the following definitions:

(a) "County Sheriff" means the County Sheriffs Office in the county where a grizzly bear is relocated.

(b) "Location of the grizzly bear relocation" means the proper name of the drainage in which a grizzly bear is relocated and the estimated number of miles from the relocation site to the nearest municipality, topographical feature or geographic location.

(c) "Provide a press release" means the Department shall provide to the County Sheriff and the media in the county in which a grizzly bear is relocated, a press release including the location of the grizzly bear relocation, number of grizzly bears relocated, date of the relocation and the reason the grizzly bear was relocated.

Section 3. Notification of relocation. Upon relocating a grizzly bear or upon receiving notification that a grizzly bear is being relocated, the Department shall notify the County Sheriff of the date, number of grizzly bears relocated, the location of the grizzly bear relocation and the reason of the relocation via direct telephone conversation, written or electronic correspondence, or personal contact within five (5) days of the date of the relocation. The Department shall provide a press release to the County Sheriff and the media in the county where a grizzly bear is relocated of the date, number of grizzly bears relocated, the location of the grizzly bear relocation and the reason of the relocation within five (5) days of the date of relocation of any grizzly bear.

WYOMING GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

By: 
Mike Healy, President

Dated: January 22, 2014