



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

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## **2019 ANNUAL REPORT**



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](mailto:brian.debolt@wyo.gov)

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Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
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## Introduction

In Wyoming, *bear conflicts* are defined as “interactions between bears, people and their property, resulting in damage to pets, livestock or bees, non-natural food rewards, animal caused human injury or death, and human caused injury or death to an animal other than legal hunting or a management action.” 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. Proactive prevention is the goal of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) in minimizing conflicts. However, 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. For purposes of this report, we will be referring directly to grizzly bears in regards to any management actions and numbers provided therein.

The management technique of capturing bears 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 Department relocates and removes 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. The decision to relocate or remove a grizzly bear is made after considering a number of variables including the 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 2019.

### **Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals**

During 2019, the Department captured 33 individual grizzly bears in 34 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts; meaning 1 bear was captured twice (Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2). Most captures were adult males (Table 1).

Of the 34 capture events, 20 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (primarily cattle), 10 were captures involving bears that obtained food rewards (pet, livestock food, garbage, fruit trees), or were frequenting developed sites or human populated areas unsuitable for grizzly bear occupancy. Three events were non-target captures at livestock depredation sites, and 1 bear was captured and relocated from the Cody landfill. Of the 34 capture events, 18 (53%) were in Park County, 8 (23%) were in Sublette County, 4 (12%) were in Fremont County, 3 (9%) were in Hot Springs County and 1 (3%) was in Teton County (Figure 1 and Table 2).

Of the 34 capture events, there were 15 relocation events (Figure 2). All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area (Figure 2). Of the 15 relocation events, 9 were conducted in Park County (60%), 5 (33%) were in Teton County, and 1 (8%) was in Fremont County (Figure 2 and Table 2).

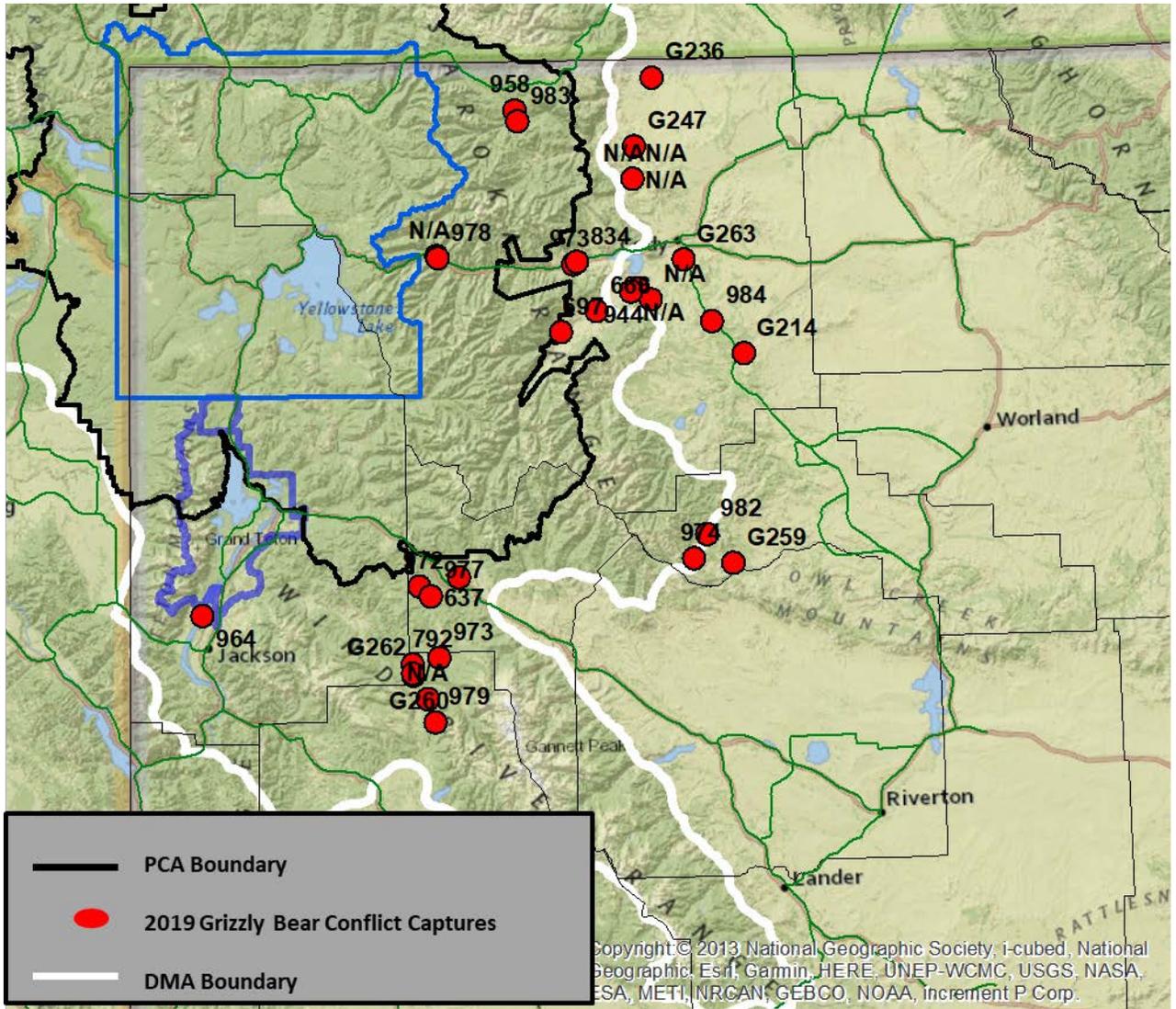
Grizzly bears are removed (lethally or through live placement in an approved facility) from the population due to a history of previous conflicts, a known history of close association with humans, or they were deemed unsuitable for release into the wild (e.g. orphaned cubs, poor physical condition, or human safety concern). Of the 33 bears captured, 18 bears were removed from the population, and 1 bear died during capture. Of these 19 human-caused mortalities associated with management captures, 10 were outside of the Demographic Monitoring Area. Removal of grizzly bears in Wyoming is dependent upon authorization from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after careful and thorough deliberation taking into account multiple factors unique to each conflict situation.

**Table 1.** Gender and age class for all 2019 grizzly bear conflict management captures ( $n = 34$ ) in Wyoming. Subadults are those bears under 5 years of age not part of the breeding population, and adults are those animals 5 years of age or older.

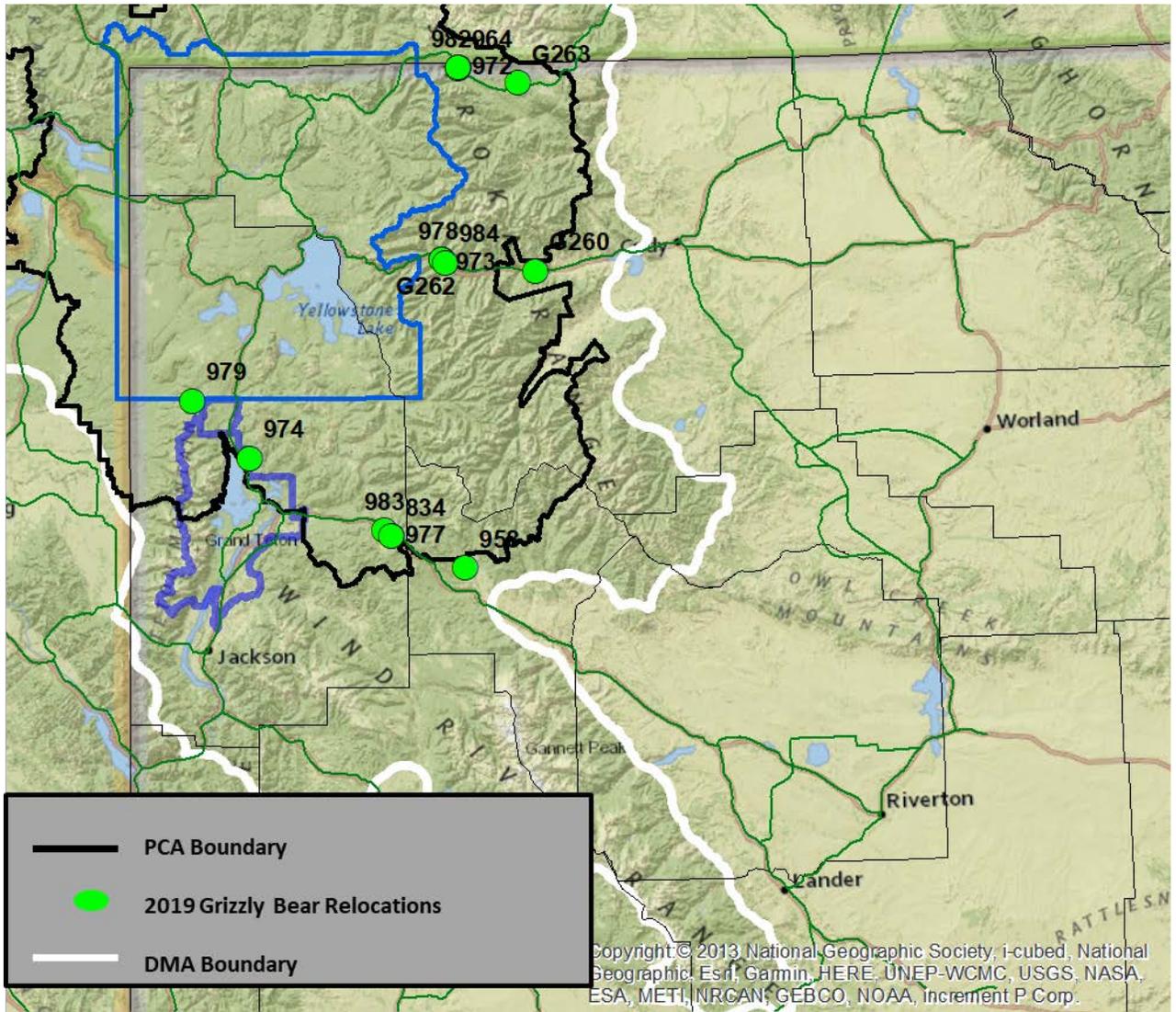
<b>Reproductive Status</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>MALE CUB OF THE YEAR</b>	1
<b>FEMALE CUB OF THE YEAR</b>	1
<b>MALE YEARLING</b>	2
<b>FEMALE ADULT</b>	3
<b>FEMALE SUBADULT</b>	5
<b>MALE SUBADULT</b>	6
<b>MALE ADULT</b>	16
<b>Total</b>	34

**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, the reason the grizzly bear was relocated, and additional bear safety and conflict avoidance information.



**Figure 1.** Management capture locations ( $n = 34$ ) for grizzly bears in 2019. 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 2.



**Figure 2.** Release locations ( $n = 15$ ) for grizzly bears captured and relocated in conflict management efforts for 2019. 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 2.

**Table 2.** Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2019 grizzly bear conflict management captures ( $n = 34$ ) 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
3/31/2019	697	PARK			CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION. REMOVED FOR REPEATED CONFLICT HISTORY
4/16/2019	944	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE LIVESTOCK DEPREDATIONS
5/10/2019	G247	PARK			REMOVED FOR FREQUENTING RANCH HOUSES, FOOD REWARDS OF GRAIN, AND AGGRESSION TOWARDS HUMANS
5/11/2019	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
5/19/2019	958	PARK	LONG CREEK/BASIN CREEK	FREMONT	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS AND GETTING INTO BEAR RESISTANT TRASH CANS, PROPERTY DAMAGE , AND BIRD FEEDERS
6/17/2019	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
6/25/2019	816	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE GARBAGE CONFLICTS/FOOD REWARDS IN TOWN AND OTHER DEVELOPED AREAS AND A CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/19/2019	G259	HOT SPRINGS			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS AND ONGOING BOLD BEHAVIOR AT A SHEEP CAMP, HABITUATION AND FOOD CONDITIONED BEHAVIOR
7/21/2019	G229	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/21/2019	G260	SUBLETTE	CLOCKTOWER CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/28/2019	972	FREMONT	FOX CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/1/2019	973	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/8/2019	974	HOT SPRINGS	BAILEY CREEK	TETON	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATION
8/8/2019	N/A	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE LIVESTOCK/CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/12/2019	G262	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/24/2019	637	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/24/2019	977	FREMONT	LOST LAKE-BTNF	TETON	NON-TARGET CAPTURE AT CATTLE DEPREDATION SITE-RELOCATED

8/24/2019	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION (201916)
8/24/2019	N/A	PARK			REMOVED WITH MOTHER (201916) AND SIBLING (201918) FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/26/2019	N/A	PARK			REMOVED WITH MOTHER (201916) AND SIBLING (201917) FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/27/2019	792	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/28/2019	G214	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS OF GARBAGE AND PET FOOD
8/29/2019	978	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED DUE TO ASSOCIATION WITH MULTIPLE CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/13/2019	979	SUBLETTE	FALL CREEK	TETON	NON-TARGET CAPTURE AT DEPREDATION SITE-RELOCATED
9/19/2019	G236	PARK			REMOVED FOR AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY DAMAGE AND HUMAN SAFETY CONCERNS
9/20/2019	982	HOT SPRINGS	FOX CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/21/2019	983	PARK	TOGWOTEE PASS	TETON	RELOCATED FOR KILLING A PREVIOUSLY INJURED HORSE
9/22/2019	984	PARK	MORMON CREEK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING THE ROADSIDE SOUTH OF CODY, FEEDING ON ROADKILL
9/26/2019	G263	PARK	CLAY BUTTE	PARK	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING THE CODY LANDFILL
9/30/2019	N/A	PARK			CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING A GUEST LODGE, BOLD BEHAVIOR, AND FOOD REWARDS. DIED AS A RESULT OF CAPTURE MYOPOTHY
9/30/2019	964	TETON	FOX PARK	PARK	RELOCATED FOR FEQUENTING RESIDENTIAL AREAS. KNOWN TO HAVE DAMAGED BIRD FEEDERS. BEAR RELOCATED WITHOUT HANDLING
10/1/2019	834	PARK	BLACK ROCK CREEK	TETON	NON-TARGET CAPTURE-RELOCATED
10/13/2019	668	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS. INCREASINGLY BOLD BEHAVIOR AROUND PEOPLE
10/22/2019	973	PARK			CAPTURED FOR OBTAINING GARBAGE. REMOVED FOR CONFLICT HISTORY

**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 re location site to the nearest municipality, topographical feature or geographic location.

(c) "Provide a press release" mean s 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