



# WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT CAPTURES, RELOCATIONS, AND REMOVALS IN NORTHWEST WYOMING

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## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



*Photo of sedated adult grizzly bear in a culvert/box style trap (WGFD).*

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  
January 2023

## Introduction

In Wyoming, *grizzly bear conflicts* are defined as “interactions between grizzly 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-grizzly 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-grizzly bear conflicts is influenced by the availability of unsecured unnatural attractants (e.g. human foods and garbage), seasonal distribution and abundance of natural foods, grizzly bear density 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.

Management techniques utilized globally to reduce human-grizzly bear conflicts are employed by the Department, including the capture and relocation of problem individuals. While proactive outreach and education efforts coupled with preventative measures are the foundation of grizzly bear conflict management, hands-on management is also requisite as part of the options to mitigate conflict. 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 grizzly bears to become food conditioned and/or human habituated which often results in destructive and/or dangerous behaviors; (c) it allows grizzly bears the opportunity to forage on natural foods and remain wary of people; and (d) it could prevent removing grizzly bears from the population which may be beneficial in maintaining recovery criteria and population management objectives.

In addition to capture and relocation, the Department also removes grizzly bears, (lethally or by live placement in a zoo or other facility) in response to human-grizzly bear conflicts, when necessary, 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 factors 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 or removed 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 that 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 by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in Wyoming during 2022.

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

During 2022, the Department captured 21 individual grizzly bears in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Table 1, Figure 1). Of the 21 individual captures, 4 were female (3 adults and 1 two-year old) and 17 were male (9 adults, 6 sub-adult, and 2 cubs) grizzly bears.

Of the 21 capture events, 10 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (cattle, sheep, and chickens), and 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. One bear was captured at a cattle depredation site that was not implicated in the specific conflict (we label these “non-target” captures). Some non-target bears are relocated in order to focus trapping efforts toward the “target” individual, or for human safety, and some are released on site. Of the 21 capture events, 10 (48%) were in Park County, 5 (23%) were in Hot Springs County, 4 (19%) were in Sublette County, and 1 (5%) each were in Fremont County and Teton County (Table 1).

Of the 21 capture events, there were 6 relocation events (Table 1, Figure 2). All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area/Recovery Zone. Of the 6 relocation events, 4 were conducted in Park County (66%), 1 (17%) in Teton County, and 1 (17%) in Sublette County (Table 1). The Sublette County relocation, bear 1086 was relocated a short distance from the capture site due to the lack of adequate relocation sites elsewhere.

Grizzly bears are removed from the population due to a history of previous conflicts, a known history of close association with humans, or if they are deemed unsuitable for release into the wild (e.g. orphaned cubs, poor physical condition, or human safety concern). Of the 21 grizzly bears captured, 15 bears were removed from the population. Of these 15, nine (60%) were outside of the Demographic Monitoring Area, which is the area considered suitable for the long term viability of grizzly bears in the GYE. 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.

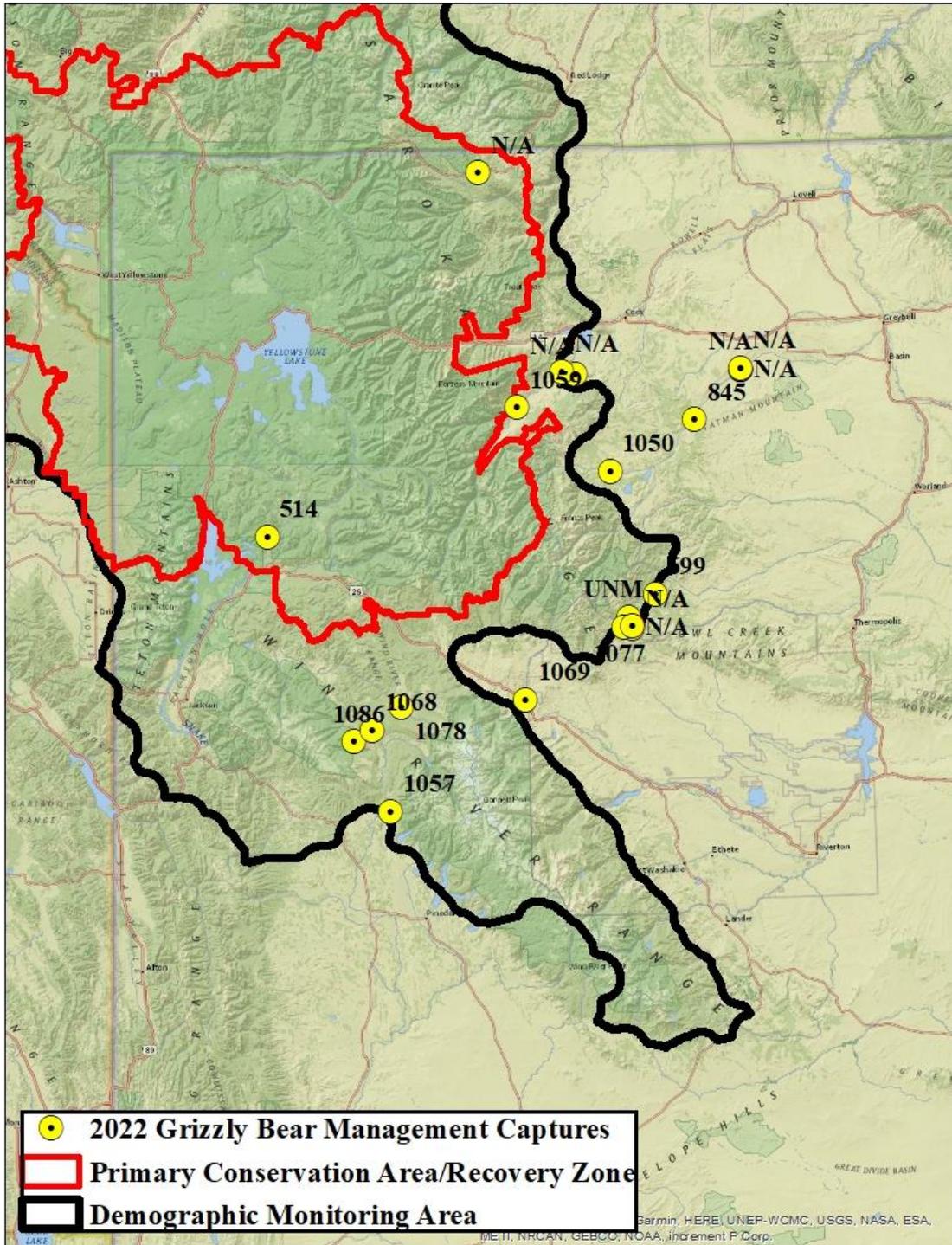


Figure 1. Locations ( $n = 21$ ) for grizzly bears captured in conflict management efforts in the Wyoming portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, 2022. Because of the mapping scale, some locations are combined at one symbol. A complete list is provided in Table 1.

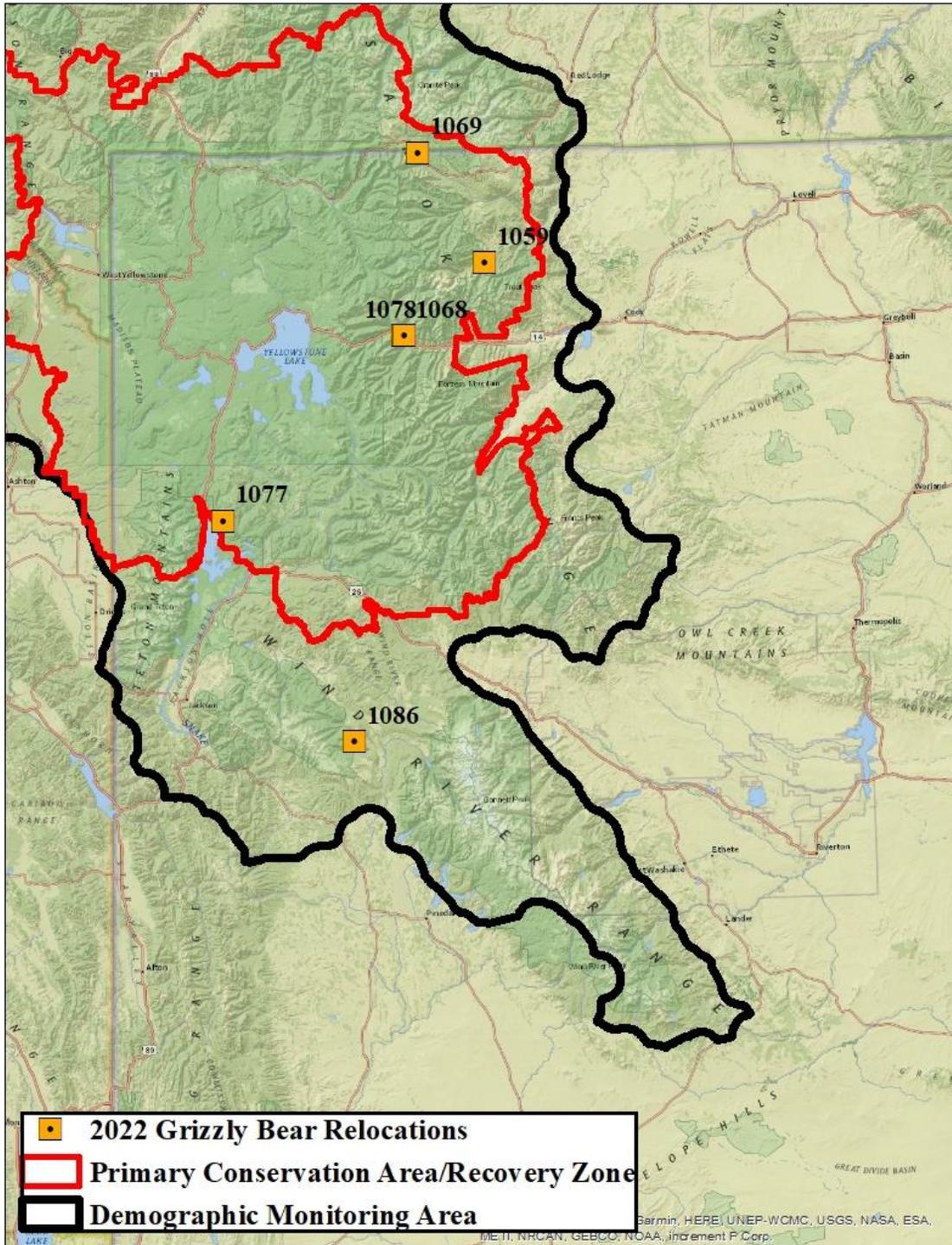


Figure 2. Release locations ( $n = 6$ ) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in conflict management efforts in Wyoming portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, 2022. A complete list is provided in Table 1.

**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: the date of the relocation; the number of grizzly bears relocated; the location of the grizzly bear relocation; the reason the grizzly bear was relocated, and additional bear safety and conflict avoidance information.

**Table 1.** Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2022 grizzly bear conflict management captures ( $n = 21$ ) in Wyoming. Grizzly bear ID labeled as “N/A” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given a chronological capture number.

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
4/25/2022	1050	Park			Captured and removed for cattle depredation
5/4/2022	1059	Park	Gravel Bar Creek	Park	Captured and relocated for cattle depredation
6/21/2022	N/A	Park			Captured and removed for extreme habituation and food conditioned behavior
6/24/2022	N/A	Park			Captured and removed for cattle depredation
7/8/2022	1068	Sublette	Five Mile Creek	Park	Captured and relocated for cattle depredation
7/12/2022	1057	Sublette			Captured and removed for exhibiting very bold behavior, frequenting residential areas, actively gaining access too/seeking human foods, food conditioned behavior. These behaviors began in 2021 while still a dependent cub, removed due to human safety concerns
7/13/2022	N/A	Hot Springs			Captured and removed for sheep depredation
7/16/2022	1069	Fremont	Fox Creek	Park	Captured and relocated for obtaining unsecured garbage and pig slop
7/27/2022	N/A	Hot Springs			Captured and removed for sheep depredation
7/31/2022	1077	Hot Springs	Bailey Creek	Teton	Captured and relocated for sheep depredation

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
8/1/2022	1078	Sublette	Five Mile Creek	Park	Captured and relocated for cattle depredation
8/12/2022	N/A	Hot Springs			Captured and removed for sheep depredation
8/30/2022	699	Hot Springs			Captured and removed for cattle depredation
9/10/2022	514	Teton			Captured and removed for obtaining horse grain and dog food, failed prior relocation attempt from same location
9/2/2022	1086	Sublette	Teepee Creek	Sublette	Captured for cattle depredation, fit with GPS collar and released near site due to limited relocation options
9/27/2022	G190	Park			Captured and removed with two offspring for frequenting corn and bean field, human safety concerns
9/27/2022	N/A	Park			Captured and removed with maternal female and sibling for frequenting corn and bean field, human safety concerns
9/27/2022	N/A	Park			Captured and removed with maternal female and sibling for frequenting corn and bean field, human safety concerns
10/5/2022	N/A	Park			Captured and removed for breaking into multiple chicken coops and obtaining food rewards
10/8/2022	N/A	Park			Captured and removed for frequenting agricultural areas and crop damage
12/5/2022	845	Park			Captured and removed for repeated crop damage, beehive damage, frequenting agricultural areas and prior failed relocation attempt

**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 Sheriff's 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