



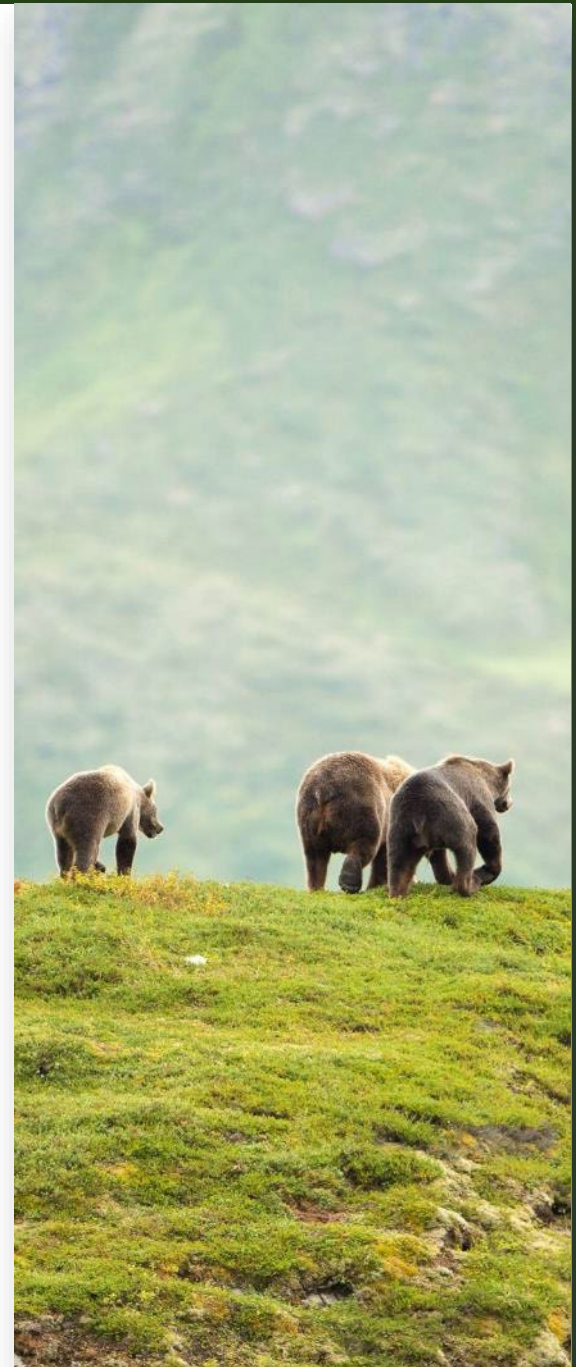
North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Restoration

September 2024



Overview

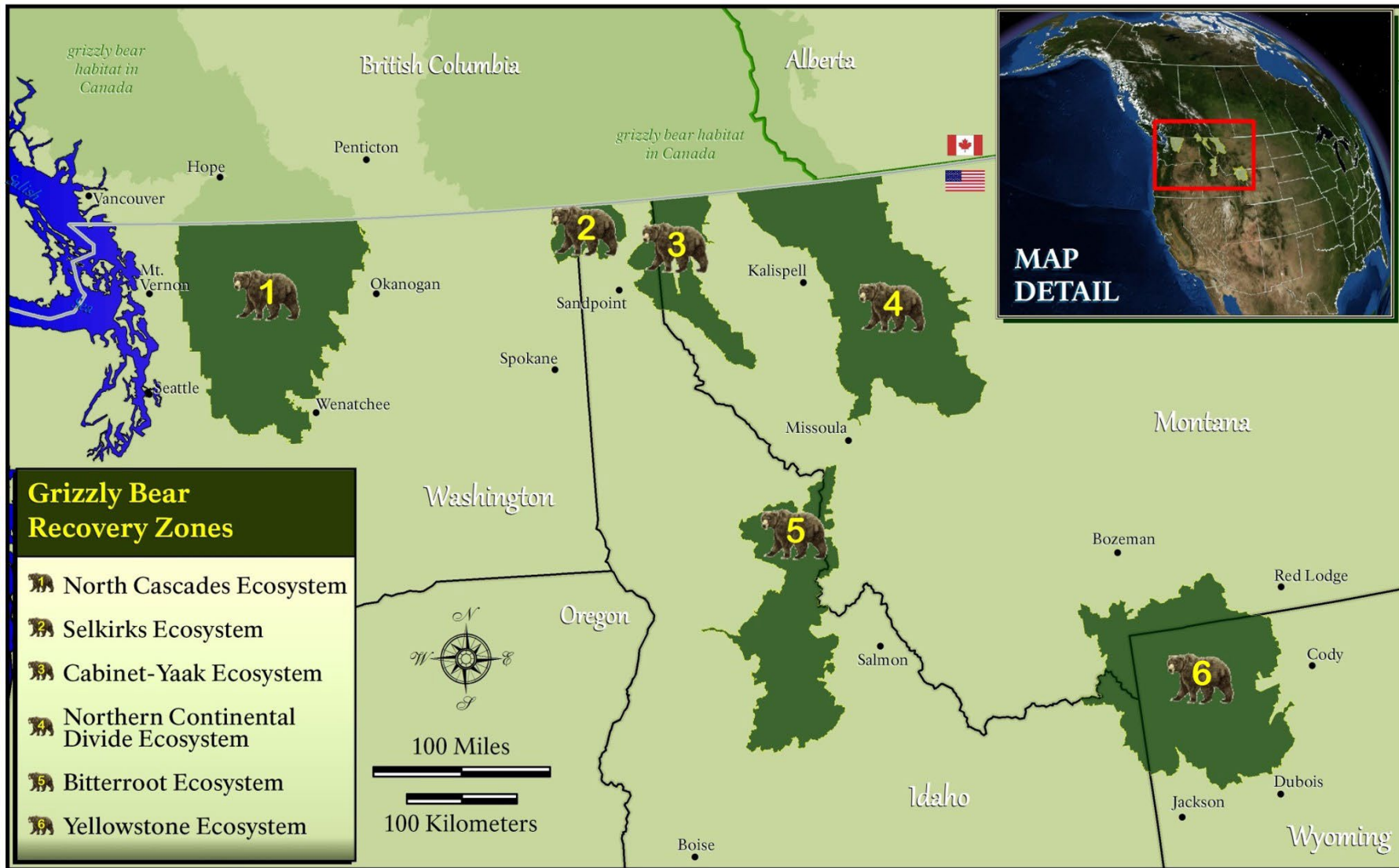
- Background on NCE
- Restoration decision
- Next steps



Status in NCE

- Population in the North Cascades was decimated primarily by direct killing, not habitat loss
- Last U.S. sighting in 1996, last female with young in 1991
- Currently listed as a threatened under the Endangered Species Act





North Cascades Recovery Zone

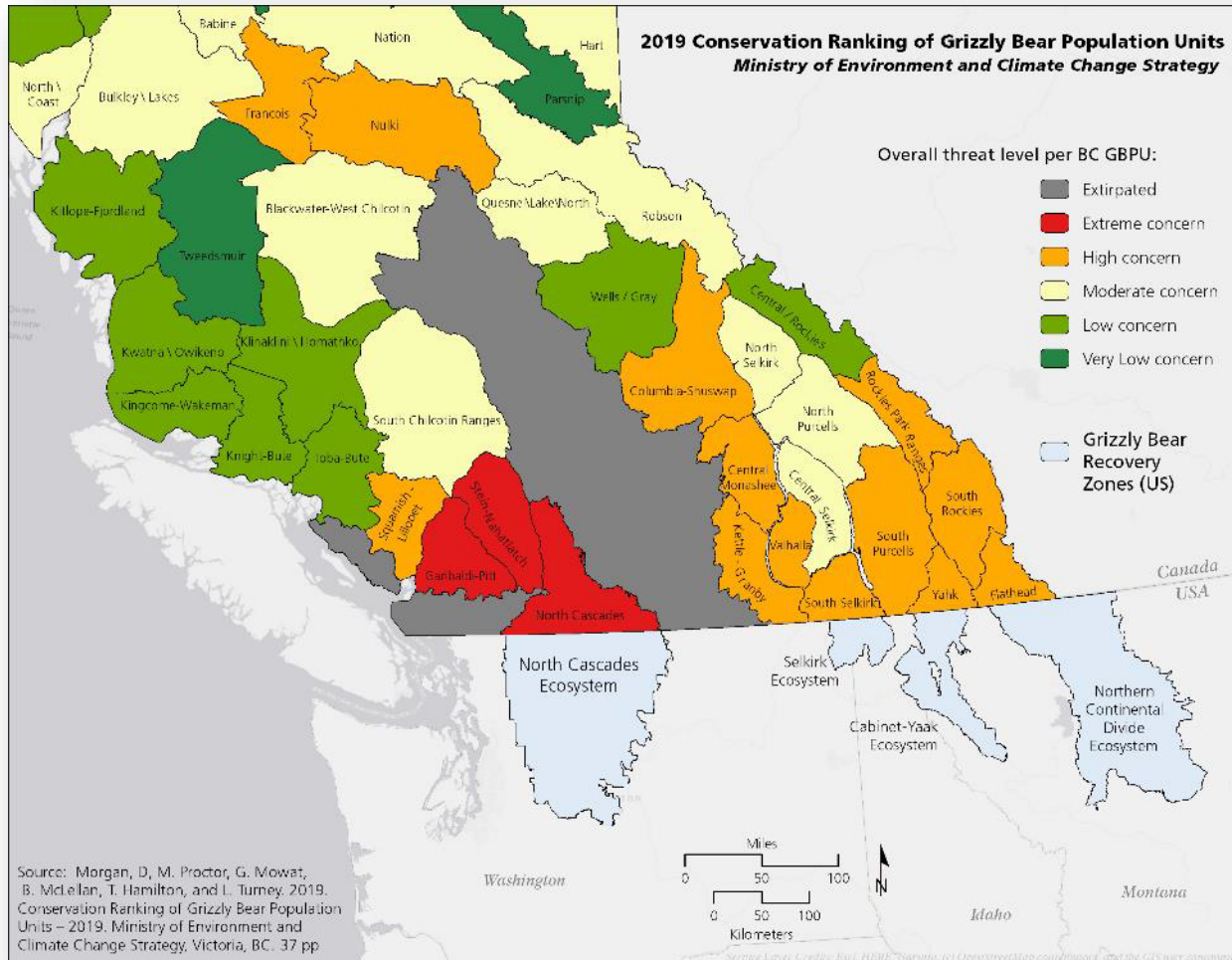


13,500 square miles

- US: 9,777 mi²
- Canada: 3,745 mi²

U.S. portion alone
is larger than the state
of New Jersey

Grizzly Bear Population Status



British Columbia and First Nations are exploring options for translocating bears to the Canadian portion of the NCE.

Grizzly Bear Diet

- Recent modeling suggests the likely carrying capacity for the NCE is approximately 280 grizzly bears.
- Omnivores, primarily vegetation
- Hundreds of plant and fungi species in the NCE that are potential grizzly bear foods
- Also carrion, insects, small mammals, may take kills from other predators, and occasionally kill large animals



Grizzly Bear Diet

- Grizzly bears can occasionally attack livestock; and in some cases, depredations can become chronic.
- A quick management response can minimize these, which is in part why the 10(j) rule from FWS is important.
- The number of grizzly bear livestock depredations is expected to be low while the population of bears is small. However, depredations could increase as the population grows.



In an Ecosystem

- Keystone species, play an important role in biodiversity
- Seed dispersers, within and across elevations
- Aerate soil through digging
- Keep other wildlife populations in balance
- Are culturally significant to some Tribes and First Nations



EIS Process

- To "evaluate various approaches for the restoration of a grizzly bear population to the NCE."
- Completion of EIS process was identified as an action in 1997 national grizzly bear recovery plan



Announced April 25:

- Decision to actively restore grizzly bears to the ecosystem through translocation from other ecosystems
- Several bears per year for 5-10 years to reach initial population of 25 bears
- “10(j)” designation from FWS, which provides additional tools for management



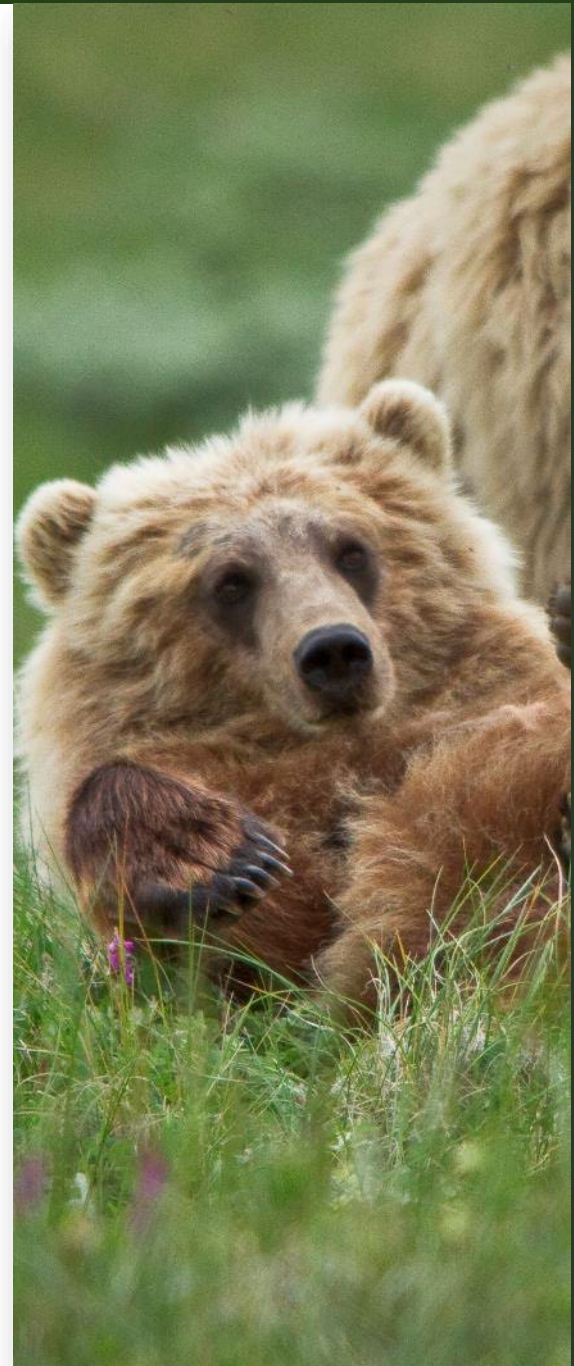
Announced April 25:

- Population of 200 bears expected within 60 to 100 years
- Source populations from similar food economies
 - Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem
 - Interior British Columbia
 - Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem



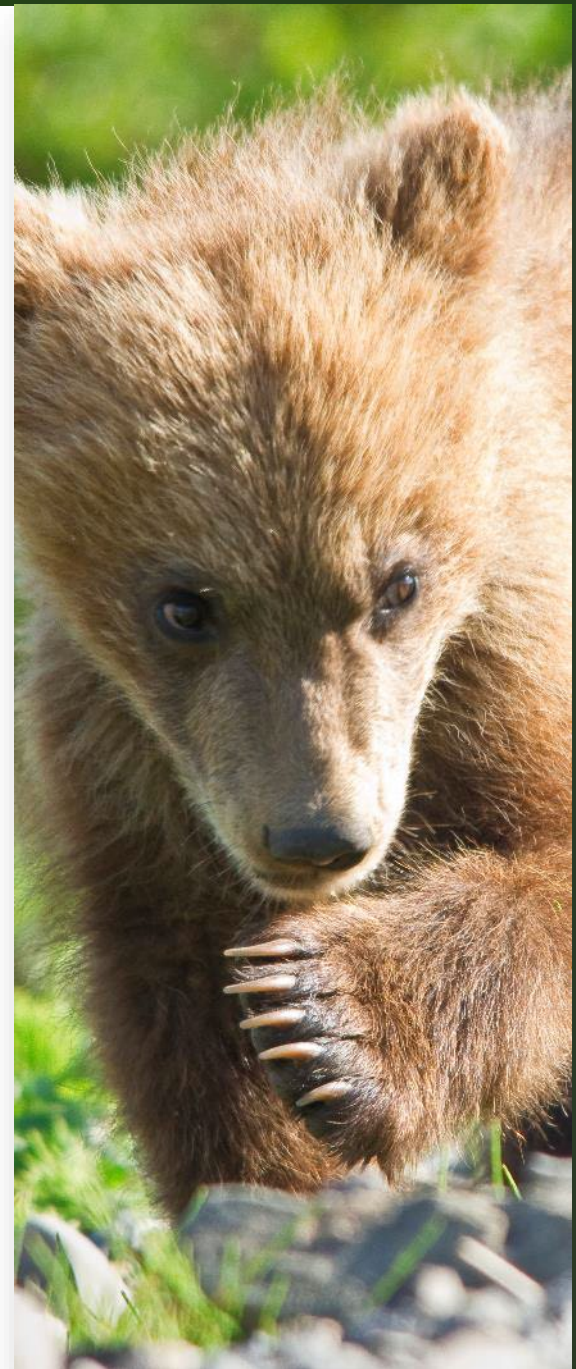
Announced April 25:

- Subadult bears, 2-5 years old
- Without a history of conflict
- All bears involved in the translocation will be radio collared



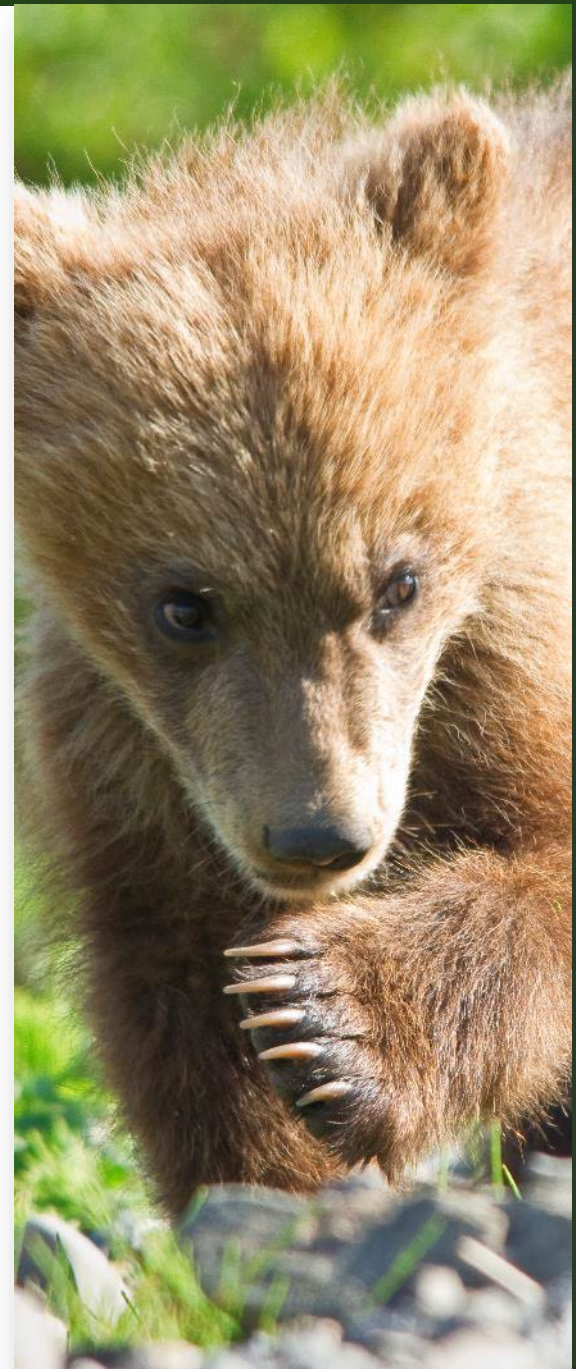
Release Sites

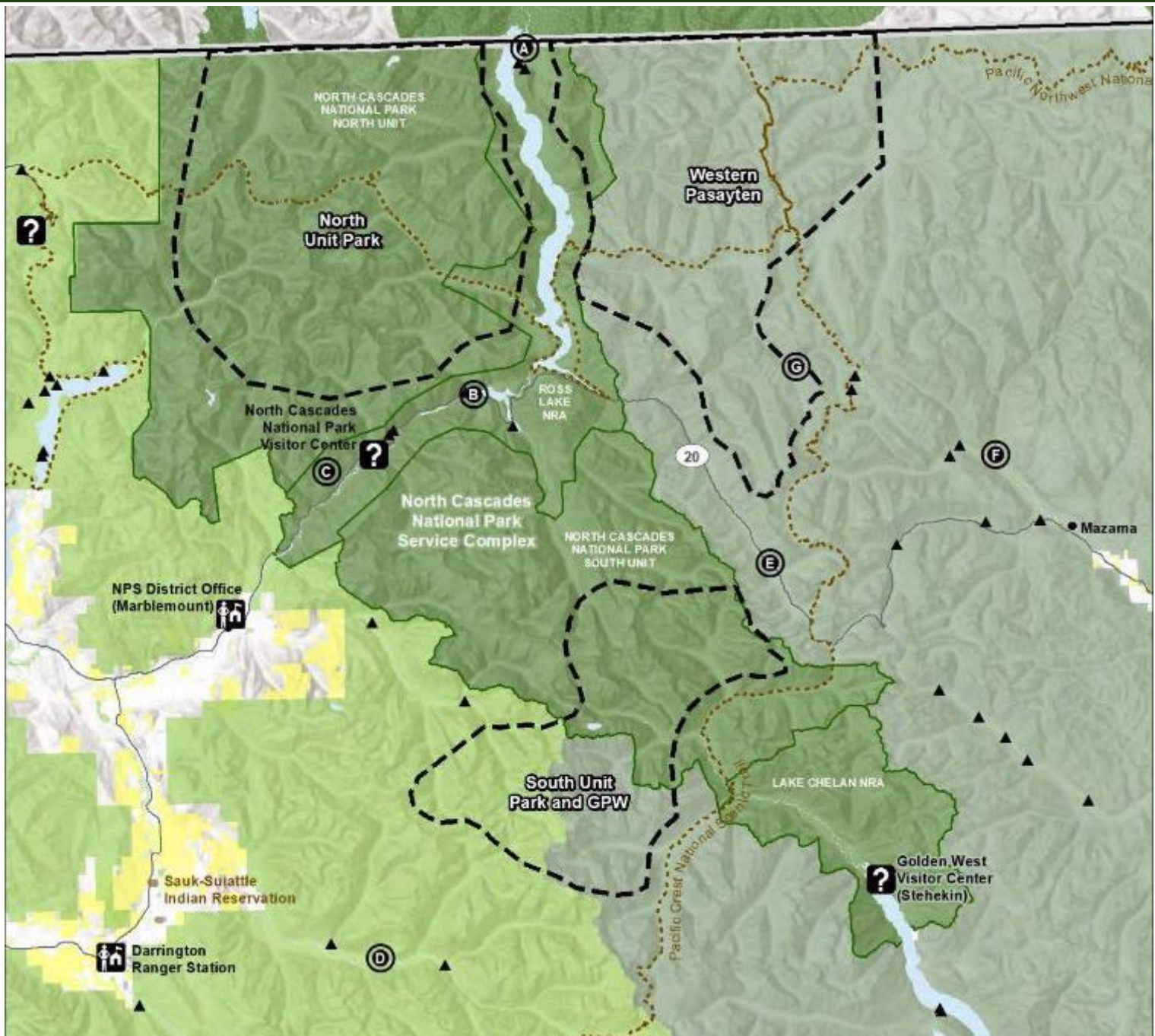
- Would be transported to the region in ground transport, then brought to remote release sites via helicopter
- Wilderness areas on NPS or USFS lands, including areas within the Stephen Mather, Pasayten, and Glacier Peak wilderness areas



Release Sites

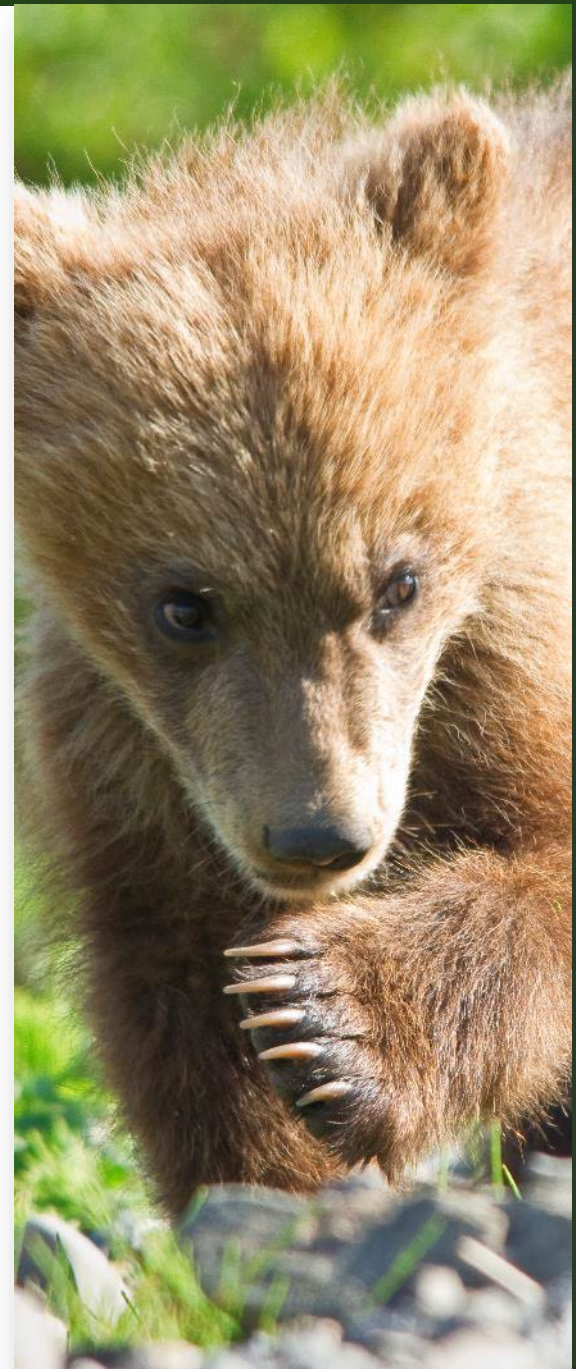
- **Criteria for acceptable release sites would include the following:**
 - The area would largely consist of high-quality seasonal habitat.
 - The area would be largely roadless.
 - An adequate distance from points of high visitor use.
 - The area would have a suitable helicopter landing site.





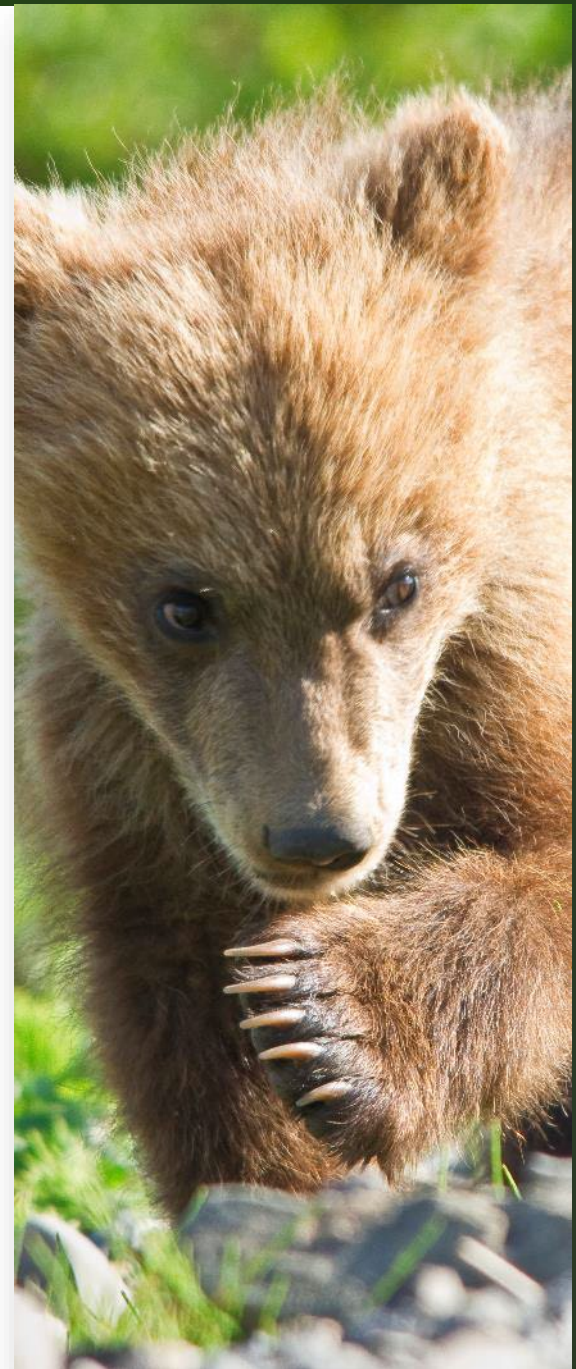
Closures?

- No long-term closures
- Short-term closures possible for release site areas
- Short-term closures in the future may be necessary for certain wildlife management activities (ex: bears on carcass)



Has Anything Like This Been Done Before?

Yes. Translocations to the
Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem
(Montana-Idaho) have been
taking place since the 1990's.



10(j) Rule

- FWS may designate an "experimental population" before reestablishing a federally listed species
- Allows for customized measures to reduce impacts to stakeholders while providing for the conservation of the species
- Different management flexibilities than in other ecosystems



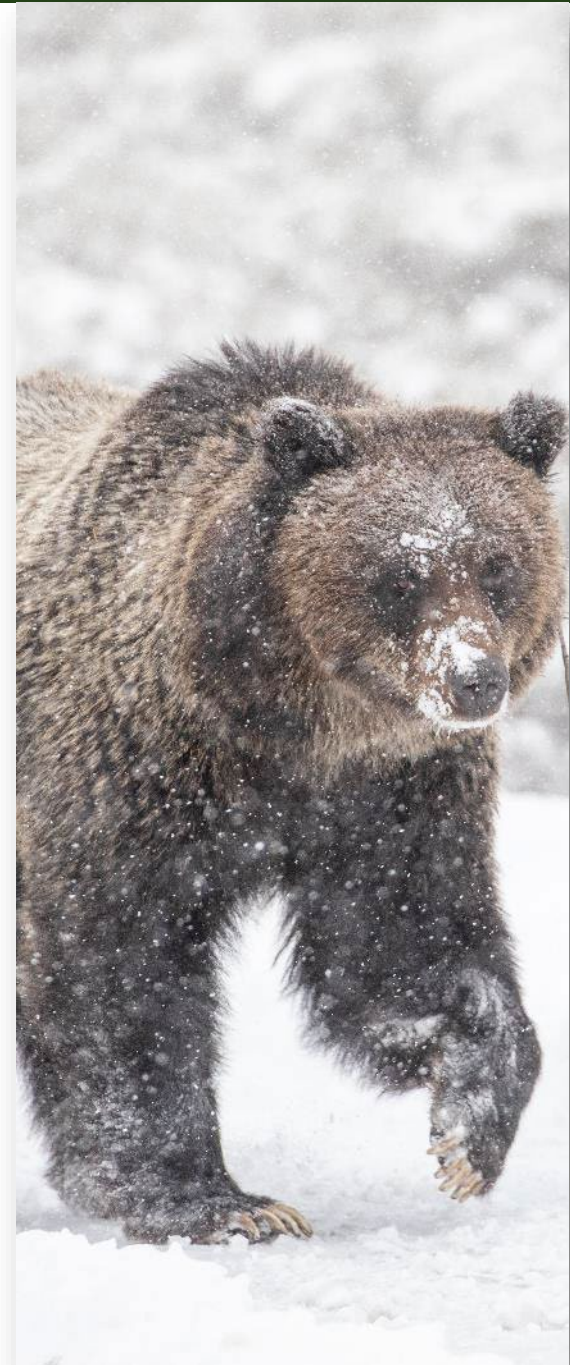
10(j) Rule

- “Larger toolbox” that can be deployed earlier
- Aims to provide for the maximum management flexibility on non-federal lands



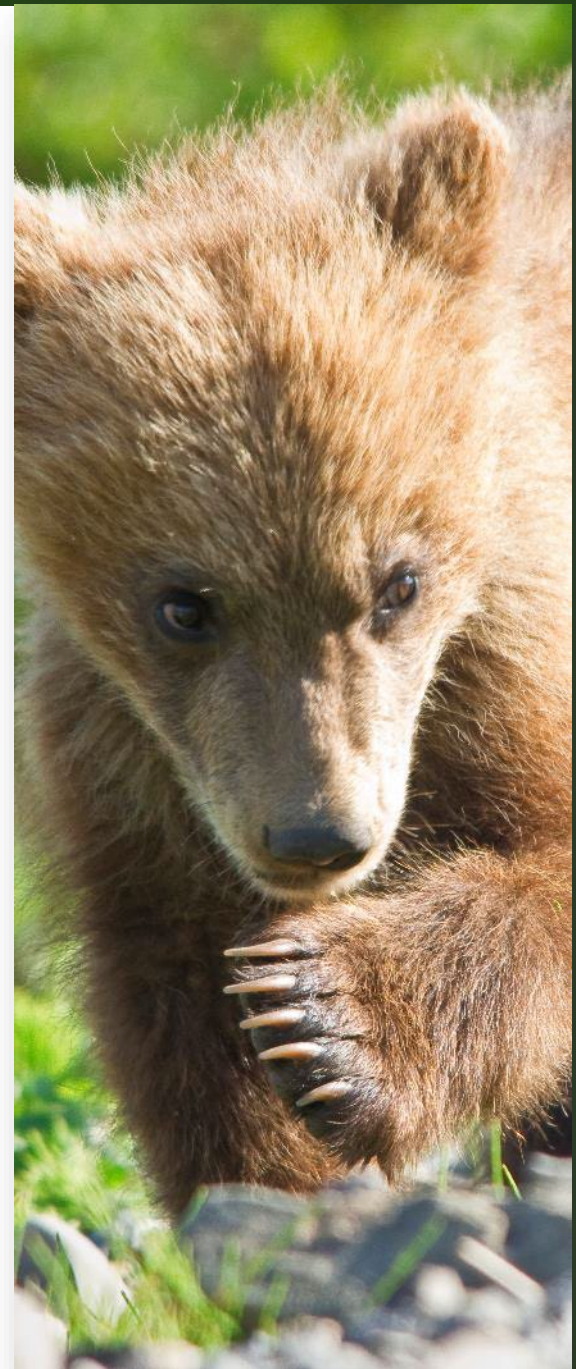
10(j) Rule

- The ability to relocate grizzly bears as a preemptive action to prevent a conflict that appears imminent or to prevent habituation of bears.
- The ability for FWS to authorize, with conditions, an individual to kill a bear if a livestock depredation has been confirmed, or if a grizzly bear presents a demonstrable, ongoing threat.
- Any individual may take (injure or kill) a grizzly bear in the act of attacking livestock or working dogs on private land, under certain conditions.
- The regulatory workload for federal agencies such as the USFS is significantly reduced.



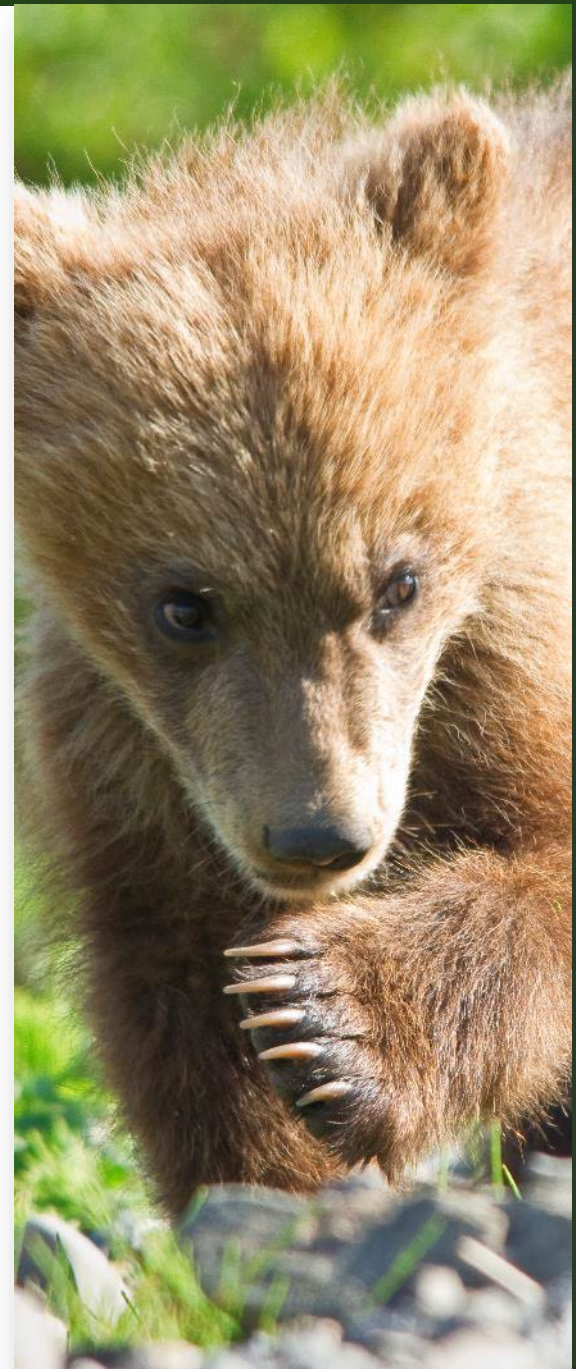
Next Steps

- No set timeline for when translocations will begin.
- NPS will publish updates on the park website and notify partners and the public of implementation plans as they develop.



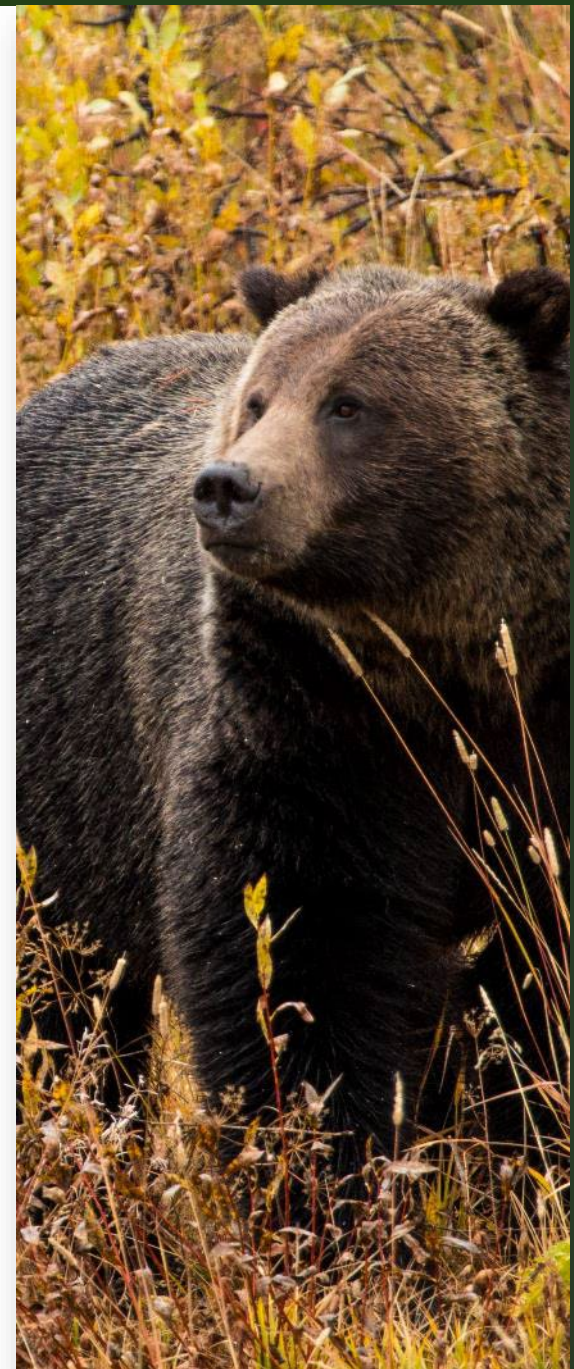
Next Steps

- Coordination with local, state, and federal partners
- Education & outreach
- Equipment acquisition, etc.



Safety and Conflict Prevention

- Adopting actions and behaviors to prevent conflict can begin now
- Getting used to being “bear aware” now will help long-term
- Similar precautions for animals already on the landscape (black bears, etc.) including the securing of attractants



Delisting Petitions

- FWS is currently reviewing three petitions to delist grizzly bears from the Endangered Species Act in the lower 48 states or parts of its range.
- Findings on those petitions have not yet been determined and it is too soon to say what the impact could be on NCE restoration.





Questions?