



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Montana Ecological Services Field Office  
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1  
Helena, Montana 59601-6287



In Reply Refer to:  
FWS/IR05/IR07 GB 5YR RVW

January 28, 2020

Dear Interested Tribal Partners:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is in the process of conducting a 5-year status review for the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) in the conterminous United States (lower-48 States) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). Section 4(c)(2)(A) of the Act requires us to review each listed species' status at least once every 5 years. We announced the initiation of this 5-year status review in the Federal Register on January 14, 2020 (85 FR 2143) and we expect to complete this 5-year status review by March 31, 2021.

The Service recognizes that Tribes may have deep spiritual, historical, and cultural connections with the grizzly bear and we believe that Indigenous knowledge is important when we evaluate the status of a species under the Act. Long-standing Tribal stewardship of natural resources gives Tribes deep and unique perspectives on information important to species conservation, such as the species' distribution; the species' relationship with other plants, animals, and the land; and potential threats to the continued existence of a species. With this letter, we request your assistance submitting any new information that has become available since our last review and the scientific expertise of you or your staff as we develop a biological report for this species.

Grizzly bears are long-lived mammals, generally living to be around 25 years old. Grizzly bears have one of the slowest reproductive rates among terrestrial mammals, due primarily to the late age of first reproduction, small average litter sizes, and long intervals of time between litters. Annual home ranges of adult male grizzly bears average 350 square miles (mi<sup>2</sup>) (906 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>)), while female ranges are typically smaller, average 200 mi<sup>2</sup> (518 km<sup>2</sup>). Grizzly bears use a wide array of habitat and food types, from grasslands to conifer forests to subalpine and alpine meadows. The grizzly bear in the lower-48 States is currently distributed across parts of the northern Rocky Mountains in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, and the North Cascades in Washington. More information for the grizzly bear can be found on our regional webpage: <https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/grizzlyBear.php>.

For this review of the grizzly bear, we will prepare a biological report, which will provide the biological foundation to inform our 5-year status review. The biological report will house information on the species' biology, ecology, and threats. It will likely use our Species Status Assessment (SSA) framework, specifically the conservation biology principles of resiliency, redundancy, and representation, to help guide an evaluation of the grizzly bear.

## INTERIOR REGION 5 MISSOURI BASIN

KANSAS, MONTANA\*, NEBRASKA, NORTH DAKOTA,  
SOUTH DAKOTA

\*PARTIAL

## INTERIOR REGION 7 UPPER COLORADO RIVER BASIN

COLORADO, NEW MEXICO, UTAH, WYOMING

The biological report will house the foundational, biological information on the species to help guide conservation and to inform our 5-year status review recommendation, which will be a shorter, separate document. Because we will complete the biological report before we apply any policies or make any decisions under the Act, we have greater flexibility to engage with our partners during the development of the biological report, which will include peer and partner review. We have recently developed biological reports for the Colorado butterfly plant and the gray wolf to inform a variety of our decisions under the Act.

As we develop the biological report, we encourage our conservation partners and all interested parties to provide any new information regarding the status of the grizzly bear since we completed our last 5-year status review of the grizzly bear in 2011. Additionally, we may contact your species experts directly for additional information on the species, request reviews of draft documents, including the biological report, and if needed, ask for their participation in coordination meetings or expert workshops. We greatly appreciate the expertise, involvement, and time of your staff.

With this letter, we are initiating the 5-year status review process for grizzly bear in the lower-48 States and seek your input to ensure that we have the best available information upon which to inform this review. At this time, we seek new information and data made available since our last 5-year status review completed in 2011. Specifically, we seek new information regarding the following items:

- General information concerning the taxonomy, biology, ecology, genetics, and status of the grizzly bear;
- Specific information on the conservation status of the grizzly bear, including information on distribution, abundance, and population trends;
- Specific information on threats to the grizzly bear, including: (i) the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; (ii) overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (iii) disease or predation; (iv) the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and (v) other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence;

We will accept new information throughout this process; however, we respectfully request that you provide any pertinent information as soon as possible, and not later than March 27, 2020, to ensure that we have adequate time to consider it during our 5-year status review.

In keeping with our trust responsibility, we shall protect, to the maximum extent practicable, Tribal information that has been disclosed to or collected by us. However, please be aware that any information kept in our files is subject to public disclosure under specific circumstances (e.g., through a Freedom of Information Act request). Please let us know if there are any other considerations for safeguarding sensitive Tribal information. If the Tribe prefers to maintain certain information exclusively in your files, we would like to explore options for reviewing and referencing that information in our status review or any listing document that may result.

Information should be submitted to Hilary Cooley, Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by email to [grizzly\\_review@fws.gov](mailto:grizzly_review@fws.gov) or by mail to:

Grizzly Bear Recovery Program  
University of Montana, UH #309  
Missoula, MT 59812

Additionally, we will be holding a webinar to discuss the 5 year review process, the information we are looking for, expectations for your involvement and review and the timeline for a 5 year recommendation. We will host two opportunities for the webinar on Feb. 24 and 28, 2020 to provide scheduling alternatives. The same information will be presented on both webinars (see link below).

- 3:30 PM on Feb. 24, 2020
- 2:00 PM on Feb. 28, 2020.

Please use conference line: 866.822.7385, passcode: 5396168 for both times.

To join either WEBINAR, click link below:

<http://www.mymeetings.com/nc/join.php?sigKey=mymeetings&i=744807809&p=WEBINAR&t≡c>

We look forward to working with you to promote the conservation of the grizzly bear while ensuring the protection of tribal lands, trust resources, rights, and cultural and religious values. If you would like additional information or have questions about the species or our 5-year status review, please contact, Hilary Cooley at 406-243-4903, extension 1, or by email to [Hilary\\_Cooley@fws.gov](mailto:Hilary_Cooley@fws.gov).

Sincerely,



Jodi Bush  
Office Supervisor