

SUMMARY OF YELLOWSTONE BEAR PROTECTION
AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The primary purpose of Yellowstone National Park is to provide present and future visitors with the opportunity to see and appreciate the natural scenery and native plant and animal life as it occurred in primitive America.

Yellowstone has an estimated population of about 650 black bear. The grizzly population for the park and adjacent lands is estimated at 350. Protection and management goals are summarized as follows:

1. To maintain representative populations of grizzly and black bear under natural conditions as part of the native wildlife of Yellowstone National Park.
2. To regulate human use so as to avoid incidents and the need to destroy problem bears.

Management action for the protection of both bears and park visitors is based upon an established reporting system. It provides for recording all sightings and cases of property damage, personal injury and control actions. Management procedures include distribution of a bear information leaflet to all visitors, restricting foot travel or camping, transplanting problem animals, and finally, destroying individual animals that persist in causing damage or represent a high risk to visitor safety. Animals removed by limited control operations are rapidly replaced by natural increases from the bear population.

Since 1894 Yellowstone National Park has preserved representative grizzly and black bear populations that have provided many millions of visitors a memorable outdoor experience. Unfortunately, all visitors do not comply with regulations prohibiting feeding bear and do not heed instructions on how to camp in bear country. Property damage to tents, food lockers, etc., and personal injuries almost universally result from the failure of someone to comply with regulations against feeding bear, or sloppy camping habits. The visitor who obeys regulations and respects bear as wild animals will actually be much safer in Yellowstone National Park than on the highways, or while engaged in such sports as boating or mountain climbing.

Bear Management Policy

I. Objectives

Preserve and maintain natural populations of bears as part of the park's native fauna and provide for safety of park visitors.

II. Education and Enforcement

Objective is an informed public, with appreciation of the ecological and esthetic value of bears, and an awareness that exposing bears to unnatural food sources may lead to human injury or to the bear's destruction, or both.

- A. An active information program will be directed at both visitors and employees to inform them of policies and goals of bear management, and the reasons for these.
- B. Review bear warning literature annually for pertinence to objectives. Incinerate all old literature after preserving an example of each in the research library.
- C. The dispensing of warning literature pertinent to entrances, campgrounds and to backcountry campers will be the responsibility of the District Ranger, delegated to those in direct contact with the public.
- D. Direct warning signs will be used at entrances, campgrounds, cabin and trailer areas and trailheads.
- E. Regulations concerning bear feeding and/or bear molesting and the improper disposal of trash or garbage will be strictly enforced.
- F. Campground visitors will be contacted each evening regarding bear danger and food storage, and walk through contacts will be made in any campground loop where bears have been active within the past week.
- G. When Backcountry Use Permits are issued, each backpacker or horseback party will be given a copy of Beyond Road's End, In Grizzly Country, and/or other material relating to travel and camping in grizzly country. Backpackers will be notified of areas that are restricted or closed to travel because of potential for human/bear conflicts or for adverse effect on the bear population or habitat.

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III. Reduction of Unnatural Visitor Bear Contacts

Objective is to eliminate unnatural attractants to bears before control actions are required and before contacts occur.

- A. All outdoor trash cans will be of a bear-resistant design and equipped with a removable plastic liner.
- B. All trash cans that are not of the bear-resistant design, whether located at employee residences, administrative offices, concessioner food services, stores, lodges, cabins, or other concessioner facilities, will be located inside the building served.
- C. Roadsides, campgrounds, and all other areas of concentrated visitor use will be maintained litter-free.
- D. Garbage pickup will be carefully scheduled to prevent overflow of cans and leave as little garbage as possible overnight. Campground garbage pickup will be as late in the day as possible. Plastic can liners will be changed at every pickup. Schedule for pickup at roadside pullouts will be dictated by public use level. Overflow of cans is to be prevented. Garbage cans are to be cleaned every two to three weeks.
- E. When loaded, trash collection vehicles will proceed directly to the appropriate transfer station, except that after late evening pickups, trash may be stored on the collection vehicle inside a closed utility building within a fenced utility area.
- F. Mishandling of garbage by park residents will be reported to the responsible employee's supervisor for remedial action. Repetition of mishandling, or any case of deliberate feeding, will result in a citation and will be grounds for dismissal or loss of in-park residence privileges.

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- G. Any area may be closed to human use and/or specific types of visitor activities for the purpose of human safety and/or where the impact of man has a demonstrated adverse effect on the bear population or bear habitat. In this regard, campground opening and closing dates will be manipulated to provide for human safety. Where the potential for human/bear conflicts is extreme during the on-going visitor use season, areas will be closed by posting. Use of campgrounds located in or adjacent to areas of high grizzly bear density may be restricted at times to hardsided trailer units, pickup campers, and self-contained recreation vehicle use only. Entry into closed areas on official business shall be coordinated through the District Ranger.
- H. Leaving food unprotected overnight in campgrounds is prohibited. See Special Regulations 7.13 (g) (3).
- I. Backcountry campsites will be frequently monitored and maintained litter-free. Rotation of backcountry campsites will be judiciously utilized to prevent the degree of concentrated use that may result in a garbage or odor buildup attractive to bears.
- J. Backcountry campsites and/or trails being frequented by bears may be closed to public use until the bear is no longer an apparent hazard. Through travel may be restricted to large (four people or more) parties or to parties on horseback, at the District Rangers' discretion. Closed campsites will not be reopened until the site has been inspected, all identifiable attractions removed or neutralized and the bear(s) have apparently left the area.
- K. Camping in unauthorized sites and/or with improper equipment is prohibited. Violators will be cited.
- L. The "pack-in, pack-out" policy will be enforced in the backcountry.

IV. Control of Problem Bears

Objective is to effect prompt removal of bears from developed areas when elimination of attracting food sources has not deterred their entry.

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- A. Each spring an Annual Bear Management Plan will be prepared, which will detail specific management and reporting procedures.
- B. Thorough training in trapping techniques and use of firearms will be mandatory before employees are allowed to handle bears. Use of immobilizing drugs will be restricted to those qualified through additional specialized training. Drug Qualification Standards are documented, and enforcement of same will be the responsibility of the District Ranger.
- C. Condition of campgrounds and other high use areas will be maintained as in item III above coincidental with trapping programs to remove bears from these areas. Traps will not be baited or set in any area unless a bear is known to be present.
- D. Baited traps will be identified by conspicuous warning signs, and set traps shall not be left unattended in public use areas during busy, daylight hours. Only personnel with specific assignments on control action teams will be present at the site during capture and handling of bears. No bystander will be permitted.
- E. No bear will be captured for transplanting or destroyed in a backcountry area unless it has become unnaturally aggressive, or other alternative methods of providing for human safety cannot be employed.
- F. Necessity for trapping, trapping hours, and procedure will be the responsibility of the District Ranger. No experimental trapping or immobilizing will be permitted without his knowledge and approval.
- G. Experimental methods of fencing, repelling, trapping, or immobilizing bears will not be used until these projects are approved by the Superintendent.
- H. All bear transplants will be coordinated through the office of the Staff Specialist in charge of Bear Management.
- I. Bears will not be released outside the park except with the concurrence and cooperation of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Fish and Game Department, and the U.S. Forest Service in the receiving state.

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- J. Bears captured or transplanted shall be marked while immobile with a small, strap type ear tag.
- K. No other marks or tags will be permitted without the approval of the Superintendent.
- L. No bear is to be destroyed for exhibiting its natural behavior - such as the defense of natural food sources or its young.
- M. Bears being removed from the system may, with the approval of the Superintendent, be donated to public zoos or given to any requesting state for reestablishment of populations. If there are no requests for live specimens, or it is impractical at the time to fill the request, the bear may be dispatched. Carcasses of grizzly bears will be processed as scientific specimens:
 - (a) For in-park research, or if not needed for that purpose,
 - (b) Will be transferred to scientific collections or other recognized research or public display entities. Black bears may be returned to the ecosystem.
- N. Any bear killed in the park by any means will be reported by phone or radio as soon as possible to the Communications Center.
- O. Except in emergency situations involving human safety, the decision to destroy a bear will be made by the Superintendent pursuant to the provisions of 50 CFR 17.40 G (i) C. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Senior Resident Agent in Billings, Montana, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bear Recovery Plan Coordinator will be notified in accordance with a programmatic memorandum of agreement.
- P. Bears captured on adjacent forests or the JDR Parkway may, with the approval of the Superintendent or his delegate, and after consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Coordinator, be released inside the park. Bears adapted to dumps or garbage will not be considered for such release. Each proposal for accepting a bear from outside the park will be considered on its own merits and in light of the current park situation.

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V. Protection from Claims

A. In event of injury or serious property damage:

1. Follow procedural instructions for possible tort claims. Obtain photographs, interviews with victims and witnesses, statements by all concerned National Park Service personnel.
2. Document all "pre-suppression" procedures prior to incident - i.e. statements from Campground and/or Patrol Rangers, Garbagemen, other Maintenance men, Interpreters, etc., - anyone who talked to the victim and precisely what was said. If the victim himself/herself was warned directly, it is very important to be able to document this fact.
3. Document all bear sightings, patrols, campground "walk throughs," garbage collection schedules, other damage or injuries in the immediate area.

VI. Statistics and Monitoring

A. The following information will be reported by radio or telephone to the Communications Center immediately:

1. Sightings of grizzly and black bears - description of bear(s), location, activity. This includes any occurrence of a bear in a developed area.
2. Any bear incident or management action which will later be reported on a Case Incident Record.
3. Confrontations with bears, in which evasive action was required to avoid contact.
4. Any known death of a bear, regardless of cause.
5. Any closure or restriction of trails or areas because of bear activity.

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- B. In addition to the above, additional bear information as directed in current memoranda will be reported to the Communications Center on a daily basis. The Communications Center will assemble a parkwide bear log from this information. The Resource Management Office will maintain the permanent park bear log records.
- C. The special Case Incident Record form (10-343), overtyped for bear reports, will be used to report all cases of property damage by bears. It is also used to report all cases of human injury inflicted by bears and all Management Actions concerning bears.
- D. All handling of grizzly bears marked for research purposes is to be coordinated with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team.

VII. Continue Bear Research

Research and monitoring are integral parts of bear management. The objective of this program is to provide management with comprehensive factual knowledge of bear distribution, population dynamics, behavior, ecology of human-bear interrelations, and to evaluate the effectiveness of management programs affecting or affected by the grizzly bear population.

A vigorous integrated research program will be continued, including:

- A. The development of census techniques that will provide realistic population estimates of wild, free-ranging black bears and grizzly bears within and adjacent to the national park.
- B. Determining population dynamics, seasonal and annual distribution patterns, and movement of grizzly bears within national park and adjacent national forest lands.
- C. Determining habitat requirements and the ecological relationships of the grizzly bear to other fauna and to plants of the national park and adjacent national forest ecosystems.

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- D. Determining immediate and probable long-term stresses and impacts on bears caused by various land use practices within and adjacent to the park. This will include an evaluation of the various types and intensities of visitor use activities, resource use, land development, and other management actions.

- E. In carrying out the above general research objectives, the efforts of National Park Service scientists and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team will be supplemented by encouraging outside scientists from the diverse disciplines of physical, biological, and behavioral sciences to undertake studies within the national park and to contribute to the understanding of park ecosystems. Such additional research efforts will, of course, be coordinated and regulated under a permit system.