

New Report: Metapopulation Approach the Only Way to Recover Grizzly Bears

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MISSOULA— A new report, *"Spatiotemporal Dimensions of Grizzly Bear Recovery,"* (attached) shows that grizzly bears cannot survive in the isolated Recovery Areas. For long term viability the populations must be unified through demographic connectivity into a metapopulation.

Authored by independent consultant Mike Bader, Missoula, MT and Paul Sieracki, geospatial analyst and wildlife biologist, Priest River, ID shows that even under the most optimistic scenario the Grizzly Bear Recovery Areas do not provide enough habitat area for a viable grizzly bear population. The report was peer-reviewed by three experts in grizzly bear conservation genetics, habitat and behavior.

"Grizzly bears in the northern Rockies are currently managed to perpetuate their confinement to politically expedient areas rather than be allowed to freely expand into ample existing suitable habitat. If not corrected, this arbitrary truncation will leave grizzly bears imperiled by rapidly changing environments and rampant human exploitation of our wildlands," said Dr. David Mattson, former supervisor of Yellowstone grizzly bear field research and retired senior scientist with the US Geological Survey. "A new report by Mike Bader and Paul Sieracki offers a corrective for this perilous situation by marshaling the best available science to produce a vision that is not only unshackled from arbitrary bureaucratic boundaries, but also a blueprint for sustaining grizzlies in the predictably turbulent centuries that await us," Mattson said.

"The report 'Spatiotemporal Dimensions of Grizzly Bear Recovery' by Michael Bäder and Paul Sieracki pulls together the best available scientific data and understanding of a complex ecological problem - what is needed to maintain a viable population of a species - to present a logical roadmap of how to achieve that solution. The solution, however, will do more than maintain grizzly bears into the future. It will maintain the ecological integrity of the core of our continent," said Dr. Frank Lance Craighead, Director Emeritus, Craighead Institute. "Biological diversity, ecosystem function, climate change mitigation, all 'buzzwords' to many of us; are actually real things that are encompassed in this report and which are important to our survival as well as that of the great bear. If we are incapable of living alongside grizzly bears, we are incapable of keeping our planet healthy; for us and for the rest of our fellow species. This roadmap shows us the things that are needed to keep bears, and our planet, healthy, on this one continent. Similar efforts are needed worldwide," Craighead said.

"It is impossible to over-estimate the value of independent scientific research on grizzly bears in the lower 48, especially to the larger grizzly community. This technical report by Mike Bader and Paul Sieracki comes just at the right moment as the federal government is currently deciding if the bears of the contiguous states should remain on the Endangered Species Act list. This report challenges the government's use of their 1993 Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and Conservation Strategy as anachronistic," said acclaimed author, filmmaker and grizzly bear advocate Doug

Peacock. “Alternatively, the authors offer professionally derived benchmarks, which the government did not incorporate, as better science. It should be noted the states of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho are heavily lobbying to de-list the grizzly from the ESA so they can open trophy hunting seasons. I applaud the report’s authors and funders--it is critically needed,” Peacock said.

“Grizzly bears require secure, connected habitat and human acceptance of bears living and traveling beyond isolated recovery zones. This report demonstrates that habitat security and connectivity is crucial for recovering endangered grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems,” said Chris Bachman, wildlife biologist and conservation director, Yaak Valley Forest Council.

The report is publicly available at: www.montanaforestplan.org