

WASHINGTON (June 22, 2017) – Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the formal removal of Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, turning over management of the bears to agencies in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

Though grizzlies have made a strong comeback in the Greater Yellowstone Area, expanding from 136 to over 650 bears since their listing under the ESA in 1975, their recovery is ongoing and strong conservation efforts must be maintained.

[Jamie Rappaport Clark](#), **president and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife, issued this statement:**

"The ongoing recovery of Yellowstone grizzly bears is an undeniable example of how the ESA can bring a species back from the brink. However, we are concerned over how grizzly bears and their habitat will be managed after delisting. We cannot allow the decades of work and investment to save these bears go down the drain.

"Defenders of Wildlife is going through the delisting rule with a fine-toothed comb, and we will hold federal and state wildlife and land management agencies accountable for strong stewardship and management of grizzly bears and their habitat post delisting.

"Additionally, Defenders will continue our work with local ranchers and landowners in the region to promote [coexistence efforts](#) between humans and their grizzly neighbors that can prevent bear mortalities and conflicts."

Background:

Defenders of Wildlife is concerned that states will allow high levels of mortality of both the core grizzly bear population as well as bears living outside the key recovery area. This could result in a substantial decrease in the population and limit the Yellowstone population's ability to reconnect with other grizzly bear populations.

Defenders of Wildlife is also concerned that land management agencies may weaken habitat protections post-delisting. Secure habitat is essential to the continued recovery of the species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is obligated to ensure that adequate regulatory mechanisms that secure the future for grizzly bears are in place before delisting.

The states of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho have updated regulations and management plans regarding management of grizzly bears post-delisting.

- [Idaho's](#) plan remains out of date and a new law signed in 2017 could allow for unnecessary and potentially excessive grizzly bear mortality in the state.

- [Wyoming's](#) plan implies that grizzly bears will not be allowed to expand into historic habitat. Defenders supports the expansion of grizzlies into suitable historic habitat.
- [Montana](#) is key to connecting grizzly bear populations across the lower 48 states. Montana must commit to allow and encourage bears to expand and occupy historic habitat.

The primary factor limiting grizzly bear recovery is human-caused mortality. Bears die when they get into trouble with people's garbage, livestock, when they are hit by cars and trains or illegally killed. By preventing these conflicts through our [coexistence efforts](#), Defenders of Wildlife is working to help both people and bears.

[Historically](#), an estimated 50,000 grizzly bears roamed North America. By 1975, populations remained in only five isolated locations in the lower 48 states, including the greater Yellowstone Ecosystem where they were down to 136 bears at their lowest point.

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Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With nearly 1.2 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. For more information, visit newsroom.defenders.org and follow us on Twitter [@DefendersNews](https://twitter.com/DefendersNews).

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