



# North Cascades Ecosystem

## Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement



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## *Background*

Situated in the core of the North Cascades ecosystem (NCE), the North Cascades National Park Service Complex is surrounded by more than 2.6 million contiguous acres of federally designated wilderness, including protected lands and de facto wilderness in British Columbia, Canada. The NCE constitutes a large block of contiguous habitat that spans the international border but is isolated from grizzly bear populations in other parts of the United States and Canada.

Grizzly bears have coexisted with people in the North Cascades ecosystem from when the first people arrived in North America. This changed during the 19th century with the boom in the fur trade. Nearly 3,800 grizzly bear hides were shipped out of area forts during one 25-year period. However, it is unknown how many more grizzly bears were killed by miners and others living and working on the land. As significant mining activity decreased, areas of grizzly bear habitat remained and in many instances returned to a wilder state. What did not survive was a grizzly bear population capable of returning to its former numbers.

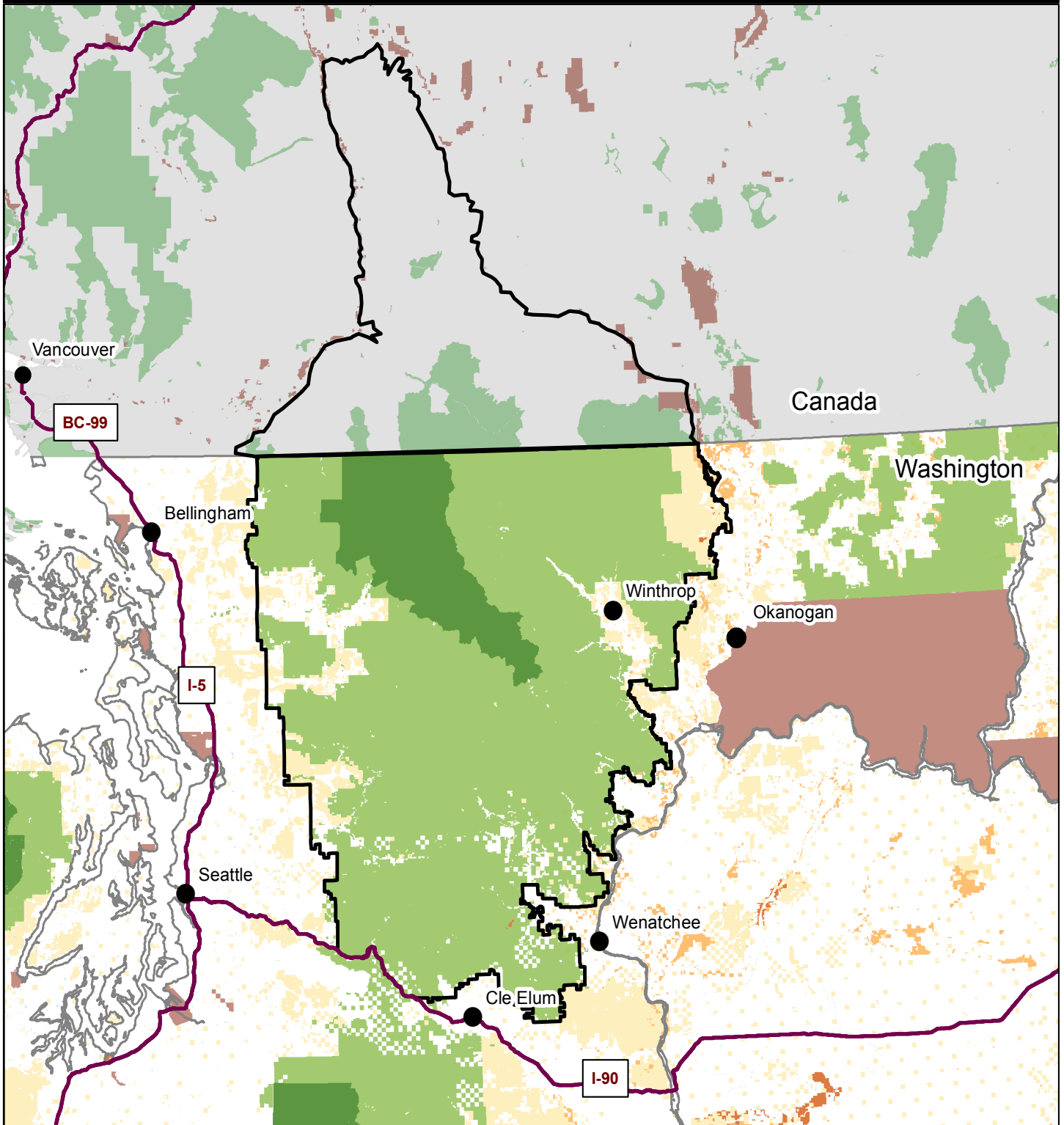
Research indicates this wilderness landscape is capable of supporting a self-sustaining grizzly bear population. However, there has only been one observation of a solitary bear during the past 10 years. Given the low number of grizzly bears, very slow reproductive rate and other recovery constraints, the NCE grizzly bear population is the most at-risk grizzly bear population in the United States today.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) recently reaffirmed (78 Fed. Reg. 70104 [Nov. 22, 2013]) that the NCE grizzly bear warrants uplisting from Threatened to Endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The main threat to grizzly bears in this recovery zone is a small population size, with resulting demographic and genetic risks. Natural recovery in the NCE is challenged by the absence of verified reproduction and isolation from any contiguous populations in Canada and the United States.

In accordance with the NCE Recovery Plan chapter, the National Park Service and the FWS are initiating a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process as joint lead agencies for grizzly bear restoration in the United States portion of the NCE. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service will serve as cooperating agencies.



# North Cascades Ecosystem



## Legend

● Cities

— Major Interstates and Highways

▭ North Cascades Ecosystem

— Water

— Protected Areas (British Columbia)

— Canada

### Land Ownership

— Tribal

— US Bureau of Land Management

— US Fish and Wildlife Service

— US Forest Service

— US National Park Service

— State Lands



0 10 20 30 Miles





What is the Purpose

The purpose of this Plan/EIS is to determine how to restore the grizzly bear to the North Cascades ecosystem (NCE), a portion of its historic range.

What is the Need

Since the NCE grizzly bears are at risk of local extinction, action is needed at this time to:

- Avoid the permanent loss of grizzly bears in the NCE
- Contribute to the restoration of biodiversity of the ecosystem for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations
- Enhance the probability of long-term survival and conservation of grizzly bears within the lower 48 States and thereby contribute to overall grizzly bear recovery
- Support the removal of the grizzly bear from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species

Objectives

The objectives of this Plan/EIS are to:

- Restore a grizzly bear population as part of the natural and cultural heritage of the North Cascades.
- Provide Pacific Northwest residents and visitors with the opportunity to again experience grizzly bears in their native habitat
- Seek to support Tribal cultural and spiritual values, as well as environmental and natural resource objectives related to the grizzly bear
- Expand outreach efforts to inform and involve the public, and build understanding about grizzly bear recovery

The Planning Process

As part of the planning process, various approaches for the restoration of a grizzly bear population to the NCE will be evaluated. Preliminary alternatives to be considered in the Plan/EIS include the no action alternative (status quo), as well as active restoration alternatives including moving grizzly bears from other United States and/or Canadian populations into the NCE as either a threatened or experimental population under the ESA.

The Plan/EIS will evaluate the effects of a range of alternatives including potential impacts to: rare or unusual vegetation, wildlife and habitat, soundscapes, wilderness, visitor use and experience, socioeconomics, human safety, and other resources.



Timeline	
1975	Grizzly bear listed as threatened species, lower 48 states under Endangered Species Act.
1980	Grizzly bear listed as an endangered species by State of Washington.
1982	National Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan approved by FWS; revised in 1993.
1983	Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee established.
1991	9,800 square miles of North Cascades ecosystem in Washington State identified as adequate habitat for grizzly bears. Grizzly bears are confirmed in locations from just north of Interstate 90 to the international border.
1991	The decision was made by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee during their winter 1991 meeting to recover grizzly bears in the North Cascades.
1993	Detailed habitat evaluation of the North Cascades ecosystem published.
1997	North Cascades chapter added to National Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan.
2004	A grizzly bear recovery plan was completed for the British Columbia portion of North Cascades ecosystem.
2014	NPS/FWS begin Environmental Impact Statement on grizzly bear restoration in the North Cascades ecosystem.

## How to Comment

1. **Submit comments electronically at:**  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/NCEG>
2. **Mail or hand deliver comments to:**  
Superintendent  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex  
810 State Route 20  
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
3. **Written comments will also be accepted at the open houses**

**Please submit your comments by March 26, 2015**

Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or in any other than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Winter 2015	Public Scoping	WE ARE HERE
Summer 2016	Draft Plan/EIS Release and Public Comment	
Spring 2017	Final Plan/EIS Release	
Summer 2017	NPS/FWS Record of Decision	

## Public Scoping Open House Schedule

**Tuesday, March 3, 2015 | 5-7:30 pm**

Winthrop Open House, Red Barn Upper Meeting Room  
51 N. Hwy 20 Winthrop, Washington 98862

**Wednesday, March 4, 2015 | 5-7:30 pm**

Okanogan Open House, Okanogan PUD Meeting Room  
1331 2nd Ave N Okanogan, WA 98840

**Thursday, March 5, 2015 | 6-8:30 pm**

Wenatchee Open House, Chelan County PUD Auditorium  
327 N. Wenatchee Ave, Wenatchee, WA 98801

**Monday, March 9, 2015 | 5-7:30 pm**

Cle Elum Open House, Putnam Centennial Center Meeting Room  
719 East 3rd Street, Cle Elum, WA 98922

**Tuesday, March 10 | 5-7:30pm**

Seattle Open House, Seattle Pacific University Bertona Classroom 1  
103 West Bertona Seattle, WA 98119

**Wednesday, March 11 | 5-7:30 pm**

Bellingham Open House, Bellingham Central Library Lecture Room  
210 Central Avenue Bellingham, WA 98227



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Environmental Quality Division  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

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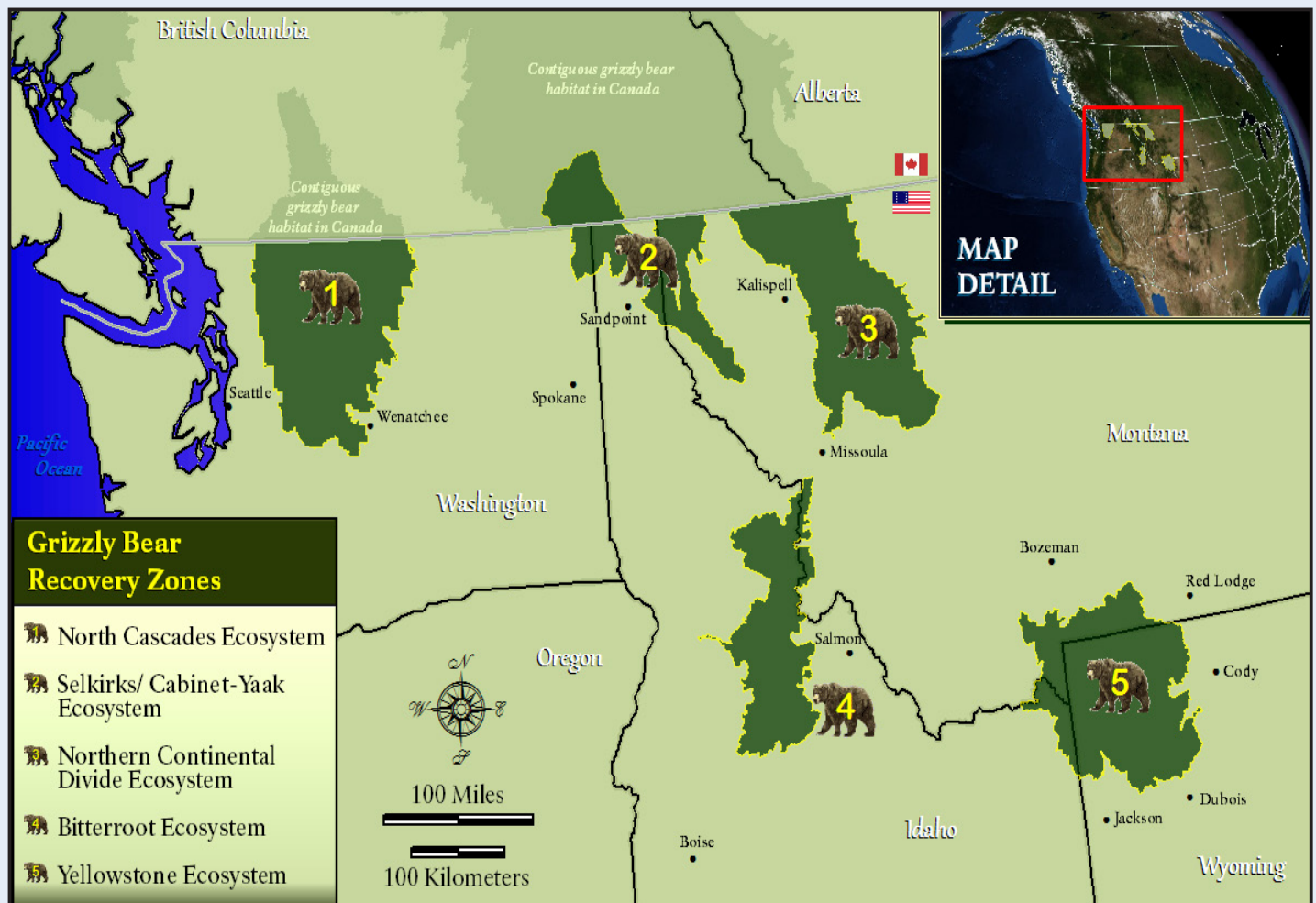


## *Grizzly Bears in the United States*

Grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) once existed throughout western North America and into northern Mexico. The Lewis and Clark Expedition encountered their first grizzly bears not long after departing from St. Louis, Missouri in 1805. During the 19th century an estimated population of 50,000 was reduced to possibly fewer than 1,000 grizzly bears in just a few decades. Today only 5 isolated populations survive in the contiguous United States (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1982/1993).

Because of the continuing decline in population, the grizzly bear was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act on July 28, 1975. Direct killing, habitat destruction, habitat modification, and range curtailment were identified by the FWS as major contributing factors that led to the population decline. (US Fish and Wildlife Service 1982/1993).

In the United States, the remaining populations are managed within five recovery zones: NCE, Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE), Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (S/CYE) and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) was formed in 1983 to help ensure the recovery of viable grizzly bear populations in the contiguous states through interagency coordination of policy, planning, management and research. The IGBC consists of representatives from the National Park Service, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, the US Geological Survey and representatives of the state wildlife agencies of Washington, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.







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A nationwide Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan was finalized by the FWS in 1982 and updated in 1993. Recovery plans delineate reasonable actions that are believed to be required to recover and/ or protect the species (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1982/1993). In 1997 a chapter specific to the NCE was added to the national plan. The priority actions recommended in the NCE chapter were to: develop a strategy for implementing the recovery chapter (through improved sanitation and access management); develop an ongoing educational program to provide information about grizzly bears and grizzly bear recovery to the public; conduct a research and monitoring effort to determine grizzly bear population size and distribution, habitat and home ranges; and initiate an EIS to evaluate a range of alternatives for how to recover the population in the NCE.

Current recovery efforts in the United States are focused on limiting human-caused mortality through conflict reduction and access management; habitat protection; on-going research; and education. At the state and federal level, food storage and waste disposal facilities, along with comprehensive education programs have reduced the most common sources of bear-human conflict.

### *References*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*): 5-Year Review: Summary and Evaluation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Office, Missoula Montana.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1982/1993. Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. Missoula, Montana. 181 pp. Located at: [http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/grizzly/Grizzly\\_bear\\_recovery\\_plan.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/grizzly/Grizzly_bear_recovery_plan.pdf).



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