

Microfilm No. **557238**
2 Day March 2016
At 9:18 O'Clock AM
ABBIE MACE
FREMONT CO RECORDER
Fee \$ 0 Deputy
Recorded at Request of
Fremont County Commissioners

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-14

A RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING THE DELISTING OF GRIZZLY BEAR IN FREMONT COUNTY AND THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE AREA.

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Fremont County, Idaho, believes it to be the best interest of the citizens of Fremont County to encourage the delisting of the grizzly bear in Fremont County and the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA).

WHEREAS, the grizzly bear in Fremont County is listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) having been first listed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1975. Since that time, the grizzly population in what is described as the GYA has risen dramatically reaching according to credible estimates, approximately five times their number at the time of the original listing; and

WHEREAS, as populations have risen, grizzly bears have expanded their territory into areas where they have been absent for a century. Much of this area is now inhabited by humans where, through the legitimate exercise of property right, the land is now occupied by farms, ranches, residential, and business properties. This human development will not be reversed. Thus, humans and bears will continue to live together on the same landscape for the foreseeable future. In Fremont County, people have learned to adapt to the bear's presence. However, many landowners and outdoor enthusiasts have lost patience with the lack of flexibility in managing conflict problems under the current federal ESA listing regime; and

WHEREAS, most experts agree that the bear's increased population over the last four decades has resulted in the grizzly bear approaching, meeting, and/or exceeding its carrying capacity in core recovery areas including but not limited to Yellowstone Park. Increased bear numbers is the most likely reason for the bear's expansion into new territory, according to credible experts. The argument that the population is stagnant or falling and that the bears are simply moving out of core areas into new habitat, is not consistent with distribution studies and other on-the-ground observations. Bears remain healthy in core areas and have, in the case of some females, decreased the size of their home ranges in response to increased population density. This decrease in home range size in core areas argues against the theory that grizzly bears are vacating those core areas; and

WHEREAS, this Board believes the grizzly sightings and encounters over the past several decades may be considered anecdotal and not scientifically reliable, these sightings in fact affirm population estimates and distribution patterns recognized by experts. This Board deems its own sightings and experiences with grizzly bears to be credible evidence in support of this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, good science and new technologies have assisted in monitoring the health of individual grizzly bears and of the population overall. Based on the current health of the population along with management systems and habitat protections now in place, experts

agree the long-term recovery of the grizzly bear is secure. All targets that have been set through the years for grizzly bear recovery are being met and have been met for many years. The bear's ability to adapt to changes in the environment and food sources ensures that recovery goals will continue to be met.

While the digestive system of a grizzly bear is essentially carnivorous, grizzlies are successful omnivores as well. Their historic distribution indicates the bear's adaptive flexibility in food habits. Recent scholarly examination by the International Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) continues to document this flexibility and demonstrates, for example, that while whitebark pine nuts are an important food source during late summer and fall for some grizzlies, depending on their home ranges, bears captured and sampled show similar body fat conditions in years of good pine nut production as compared with years of poor pine nut production.

Among other things, grizzly bears eat ground squirrels, ungulates, carrion, insects, grasses, clover, roots, bulbs, tubers, fungi, tree cambium, berries, nuts, fish and moths. As it concerns fish, recent reductions of lake trout in Yellowstone Lake through netting and other programs has led to improvements in the Yellowstone cutthroat trout population. As numbers of lake trout drop it is expected that cutthroat will increase. Successful reduction of lake trout in Yellowstone Lake constitutes a substantial effort in time, money and manpower that will have a positive effect on restoration of the grizzly's important cutthroat food source as well as having a positive effect on the natural environment overall and recreational opportunities within that environment. This Board applauds the efforts of these involved and encourages their continued work.

WHEREAS, the Idaho Fish and Game Department (IFGD) has been actively involved in managing grizzly bears throughout the time of its listing under the ESA. The IFGD currently provides the bulk of on-the-ground management for grizzlies and is in large part responsible for gains in grizzly bear recovery, yet the IFGD lacks full administrative management authority. The IFGD believes the grizzly bear is recovered and that the bear should be managed by Idaho along with the rest of Idaho's wildlife. The IFGD has extensive knowledge and experience in managing this and other sensitive species and has adequate planning in place for future management of grizzlies including limited hunting opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the IFGD and other agencies have captured a multitude of bears over the years. Agencies typically extract DNA samples with each capture. Results of DNA sampling have not raised significant concerns among experts regarding genetic diversity. Furthermore, with increases in grizzly bear populations and expansion of ranges in the GYA and the surrounding Island Park Area, experts state that the likelihood of male bears naturally finding their way between the population groups has increased. While the GYA grizzly bear is often referred to as an "island" population, the GYA is the *large* island with widely distributed bears. The population's size and distribution within the GYA are sufficient to provide adequate genetic flow in maintaining a recovered population. Those bears' genetic diversity has not significantly changed over the last century. The IFGD has studied this diversity utilizing the most current genetic science and is competent to continue their studies and provide management options

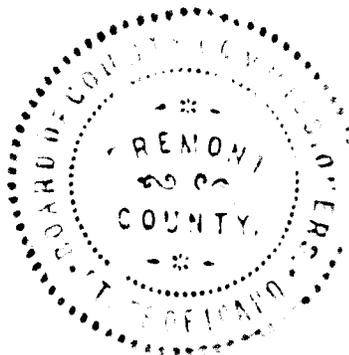
which could include translocation from other populations to address any lack of genetic diversity should that ever occur in the future; and

WHEREAS, an endangered species is one that is "in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." A threatened species is one that is "likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range." Clearly, based on the science applied in monitoring grizzly bears over the years, the grizzly bear in Fremont County and the Greater Yellowstone Area is *not* in danger of extinction nor likely to be in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The population is robust and has expanded its territory; and

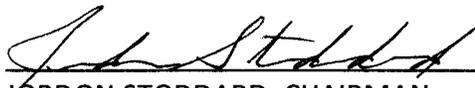
WHEREAS, we agree with the general sentiment of Park County, Wyoming Commissioners, and the Wyoming Governor Matt Mead that the continued expenditure of funds and manpower directed toward a recovered population of grizzly bears undermines the possibility for recovery of species that may actually be threatened. Additionally, we agree with the sentiment of the Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner in supporting the delisting of grizzly bears in the GYA and throughout Idaho;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners of Fremont County, Idaho, strongly encourages the United States Fish and Wildlife service to move forward with all due haste in proposing a rule to delist the grizzly bear in the Greater Yellowstone Area, including Fremont County.

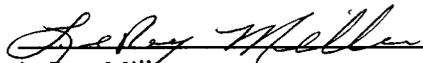
PASSED THIS 22nd DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2016, BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF FREMONT COUNTY, IDAHO.



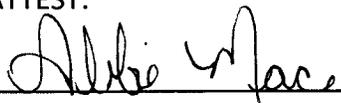
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FREMONT COUNTY, IDAHO


JORDON STODDARD, CHAIRMAN


Bill Baxter


LeRoy Miller

ATTEST:


ABBIE MACE, COUNTY CLERK

