

Hon. Raul Grijalva, Chairman
House Natural Resources Comm.
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Joe Manchin, Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Comm.
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

May 20, 2021

Dear Chairman Manchin and Chairman Grijalva:

The worldwide extinction rate of all mammals is rising. In particular, large mammals like the grizzly bear in the Lower 48 states are more likely to go extinct, and human actions drive this likelihood. We are experts and organizations concerned about the future of the grizzly bear, currently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. We are writing to urge you to advance legislation and support appropriation items, as discussed below.

Grizzly bear biologist Dr. David Mattson's recent report, [The Grizzly Bear Promised Land](#),¹ outlines the minimum number of individuals required to maintain a viable population of grizzly bears. Science suggests that grizzly bears, with their low reproductive rates typical of many large mammals, need 2,500-9,000 individuals in the contiguous United States and connections between those populations for the species to achieve long-term viability. Dr. Mattson's report affirms that the wildlands of southern, central, and north-central Idaho present a scientific habitat opportunity for as many as 1,000 grizzlies outside of the current political recovery areas. Grizzly bears arrived in North America as early as 70,000 years ago, but could disappear far faster if our government does not heed the science. Congress must seize the opportunities still available by protecting grizzlies and their habitat.

Congress must act to protect the species itself, which means valuing grizzlies and their habitat, recognizing their worth lies beyond opportunities for states to "manage" the bears upon delisting. Removal of Endangered Species Act protections with no other safeguards in place will lead to trophy hunting and state-sanctioned killings as we now see with wolf management in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. Grizzly bear survival requires a holistic legislative package that ensures bears will not only recover, but thrive. During the 116th legislative session, lawmakers introduced a number of bills that provide examples for a robust legislative package, and include:

- The Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act (H.R. 2532) that limits killing or harassing grizzly bears and prioritizes working with Tribes who agree to reintroduce grizzlies to Tribal lands.
- The Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act (S.1499, H.R.2795) that conserves and restores landscape linkages to aid the movement of species, such as grizzly bears, at risk due to habitat loss or fragmentation.

¹ Found also at <https://www.mostlynaturalgrizzlies.org/selway-bitterroot>.

- The Tribal Wildlife Corridors Act (S.2891, H.R.5179) that empowers Tribes to nominate an area as a tribal wildlife corridor to provide habitat or ecological connectivity to provide safe passage for a range of species, including grizzly bears.
- The Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act (H.R. 5737) that will reduce grizzly-livestock conflicts, which often results in death for the grizzly involved. Retiring grazing allotments has successfully reduced conflicts in areas that it has been applied, and this bill will make this tool broadly available.

To further protect grizzly bear habitat and contribute to the Biden administration’s 30x30 initiative, it is important to protect large roadless areas. For example, currently before Congress is HR 1755, the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA), which, if passed, would designate many national inventoried roadless areas in Idaho and Montana as Wilderness and protect that habitat under the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Finally, protecting grizzly bears means expressing support for appropriations, such as provisions in an infrastructure bill that fund wildlife overpasses, which reduce mortality from animal-vehicle collisions, or provisions in a farm bill that can fund nonlethal strategies to protect livestock and communities within the landscapes that link grizzly recovery areas.

Congress has opportunities to lead by action. We sincerely urge you to step towards these opportunities. Protecting grizzlies will benefit the landscape, and it will benefit our country.

Sincerely,

Mike Garrity
Alliance for the Wild Rockies

Arlene Montgomery
Friends of the Wild Swan

Andrea Zaccardi
Center for Biological Diversity

Joseph Scalia III, Ph.D.
Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance

Patty Ames
Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force

Louisa Willcox
Grizzly Times

Gary Macfarlane
Friends of the Clearwater

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Thomas Wheeler
EPIC (Environmental Protection
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John G Carter
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Amy Anderson
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Susan Jane Brown
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Katie Fite
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Kristin Combs
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates, Executive
Director

Rick Bass
Yaak Valley Forest Council

Jason L. Christensen
Yellowstone to Uintas Connection

Cc: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Members
House Natural Resources Committee Members