

**Less than two weeks left to speak up for grizzlies
in the North Cascades**
Restoration plan addresses missing grizzly population

SEATTLE—*Grizzly bears need our help...* Less than two weeks are left to speak up for grizzlies—an iconic native large mammal still missing from the wild North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE).



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Park Service (NPS) released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as a plan to restore grizzlies here. The public is invited to submit comments, which can be done via a link on Woodland Park Zoo's grizzly recovery web page at www.zoo.org/recover/grizzlybear through November 13, 2023.

During the comment period, the agencies gather public input that will be used to develop their final strategy on grizzly recovery in north-central Washington. Once FWS and NPS have reviewed and considered public input, a final EIS will be developed with a detailed plan for restoring grizzly bears.

"The draft EIS is a critical milestone on the path to restoring grizzlies as our last missing large mammal in the North Cascades. This huge, wild ecosystem has more than enough space and food to once again support a healthy grizzly bear population. But we will all have to work together to make sure we can coexist with these magnificent animals into the future," said Paula MacKay, Carnivore Conservation Specialist at Woodland Park Zoo.

For thousands of years, grizzly bears roamed the NCE in the state of Washington. At nearly 10,000 square miles on the U.S. side of the border alone, the North Cascades is one of North America's premier intact ecosystems, but it is incomplete without grizzly bears. The last confirmed sighting of a grizzly in the NCE was in 1996.

The NCE is too isolated from healthy grizzly populations in British Columbia and the Rocky Mountains to realistically enable grizzlies to re-establish a population here on their own. The successful restoration of North Cascades grizzly bears would be a historic victory given their widespread persecution prior to the turn of the 19th century.

"Grizzly bears play an essential role in ensuring the health of ecosystems like the North Cascades," said Robert Long, PhD, Director of Woodland Park Zoo's Living Northwest Program and a carnivore research ecologist. "Their natural behaviors help disperse plant seeds and maintain sustainable landscapes in surprising ways. For example, grizzly bears use their claws to dig for food, which aerates the soil and is helpful for meadow systems. Recovering the grizzly to the North Cascades is an investment in the future health of this unique ecosystem."

[The Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear](#), a coalition of which the zoo is a member, applauds the draft EIS process, which is a critical step in bringing grizzly bears back to suitable habitat that spans Washington into British Columbia.

The NCE is one of only six recovery areas identified by the FWS, and the only one outside of the greater Rockies. Based on decades of thorough research, wildlife biologists recommend safely relocating grizzlies from other healthy populations into the North Cascades.

Woodland Park Zoo supports Alternative C, presented in the EIS. This action-oriented alternative provides FWS and NPS with management flexibility; its aim will be to release three to seven grizzly bears per year for five to 10 years, deep in the wilderness of the North Cascades. This will help achieve an initial population of 25 bears. The goal is to reestablish reproduction in this ecosystem, and to ultimately host a population of 200 grizzlies a century from now. The zoo is committed to promoting long-term coexistence between people and grizzly bears.

Hard copy comments on the draft EIS can also be submitted by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to:

Office of the Superintendent
Grizzly Restoration EIS
810 State Route 20,
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

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