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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Ravalli County Commissioners

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Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701
September 9, 2013

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks released a draft **Southwest Grizzly Bear Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement** for public comment on August 12th. The original deadline for written public comment was September 16th. We are extending this comment deadline two weeks to allow the public additional time to prepare comments. The new deadline for written comment is Sept 30, 2013.

Plan Alternatives:

Southwest Grizzly Bear Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement - Draft

Alternative I. FWP's preferred alternative for managing grizzly bears in southern MT is to manage grizzlies in a manner that allows for a sustainable, adequately distributed population that is secure and stable enough to meet the provisions of the GYA CS (2007) and remain out of federal ESA protections. This approach is summarized in the approval of the proposed Grizzly Bear Management Plan for Southwest Montana (2013).

FWP's current approach of management and that implemented since publication of the 2002 EIS has been sufficient to maintain grizzly populations while also maintaining social tolerance for grizzlies. FWP recognizes the dynamic nature of wildlife populations, ecosystems and human populations and acknowledges the need for equally dynamic and adaptive management strategies that keep the original goals in mind.

FWP's preferred approach maintains proactive programs to minimize and prevent human-grizzly conflict and responsive programs that adequately address conflicts when they do arise. It is critical for the maintenance of social acceptance of bears on the landscape that management of human-grizzly conflicts remains a priority for FWP. It is also critical to monitor bear numbers and habitats to ensure CS criteria are being met and adequate suitable habitat is available.

Alternative II. A "No Action" alternative is not a viable option as FWP is mandated to manage wildlife and failure to do so by FWP would likely result in the maintenance of a 'threatened' ESA classification for the species within the state. FWP wildlife management works most effectively under approved state plans. Failure to continue active management would contradict current FWP management statutes

TO MAKE A COMMENT

Copies of the draft plan and comment forms are available online at fwp.mt.gov. Click "[SW MT Grizzly Bear Management Plan](#)." Public comment will be accepted through 5 p.m. Sept. 30.

A final decision notice is expected from FWP in October, and then considered for approval by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in November. For more information, call 406-444-2612, or visit the FWP website at fwp.mt.gov.