



# Friends of the Clearwater

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## Keeping Grizzlies Wild: Campground Attractant Survey 2018-2019 September 2019

### Background

Grizzlies are a wilderness species and an icon of wild country in the northern hemisphere. Regarding the lower 48 states, the largest chunk of habitat is centered on the Clearwater and Salmon River Basins, though few if any grizzlies inhabit the region. This area, which is the largest complex of wildlands remaining in the lower 48 states, goes by various names including the Greater Salmon-Selway, the Bitterroot Ecosystem (the name given to it by the US Fish and Wildlife Service) or simply, the Big Wild. Indeed, in 2001, a study by World Wildlife Fund Canada Found the Clearwater region, the northern and wetter part of this vast Big Wild, to be the best grizzly habitat in the Rockies, from and including Yellowstone National Park to and including Jasper National Park in Canada. (See Map 1).

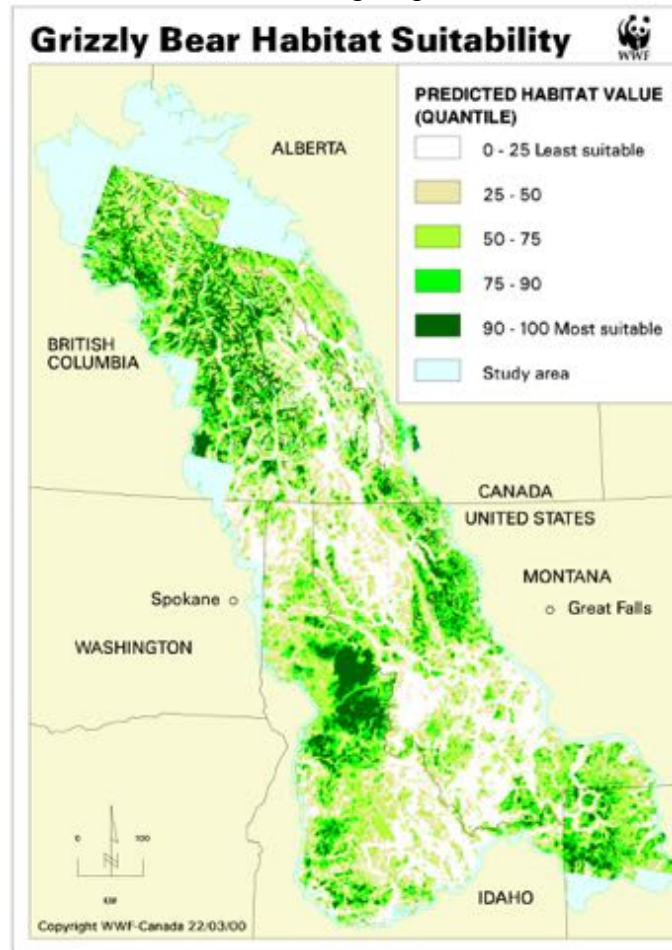


Figure 8. Distribution of grizzly bear habitat in the Rocky Mountains of the United States and Canada as predicted by a regional-scale habitat model.

Map 1, Taken From Carroll, Carlos, Reed F. Noss, and Paul C. Paquet. 2001. Carnivores as focal species for conservation planning in the Rocky Mountain region. World Wildlife Fund. Toronto. The large, dark green, most suitable, habitat block in the south-central part of the map is the Clearwater Basin. This includes mainly the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and North Fork Clearwater.

Of all the initial recovery areas, the Bitterroot Recovery Area excluded more prime grizzly habitat, including undeveloped roadless country and even designated Wilderness, than any of the other recovery areas. If one were to draw the recovery area boundaries properly, as was suggested by a map in the US Fish and Wildlife Service's 2000 Final Environmental Impact Statement (alternative 4) on grizzly recovery in the Bitterroot, it would be much larger. (See Maps 2 and 3)

*Summary of Alternatives*

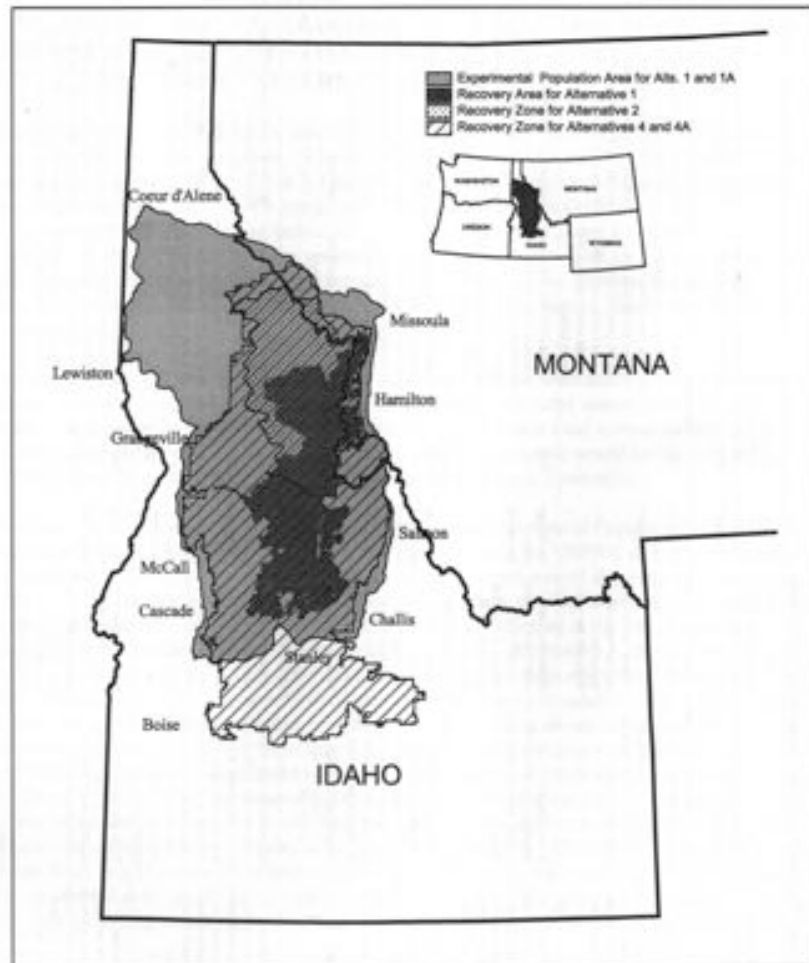


Figure 2-10. Comparison of the Bitterroot Grizzly Bear Recovery Area for Alternative 1, Experimental for 1A, and Bitterroot Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones for Alternatives 2, 4, and 4A.

Map 2, Taken from Page 2-80 of the Grizzly Bear Recovery in the Bitterroot Ecosystem, Final Environmental Impact Statement. US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2000.

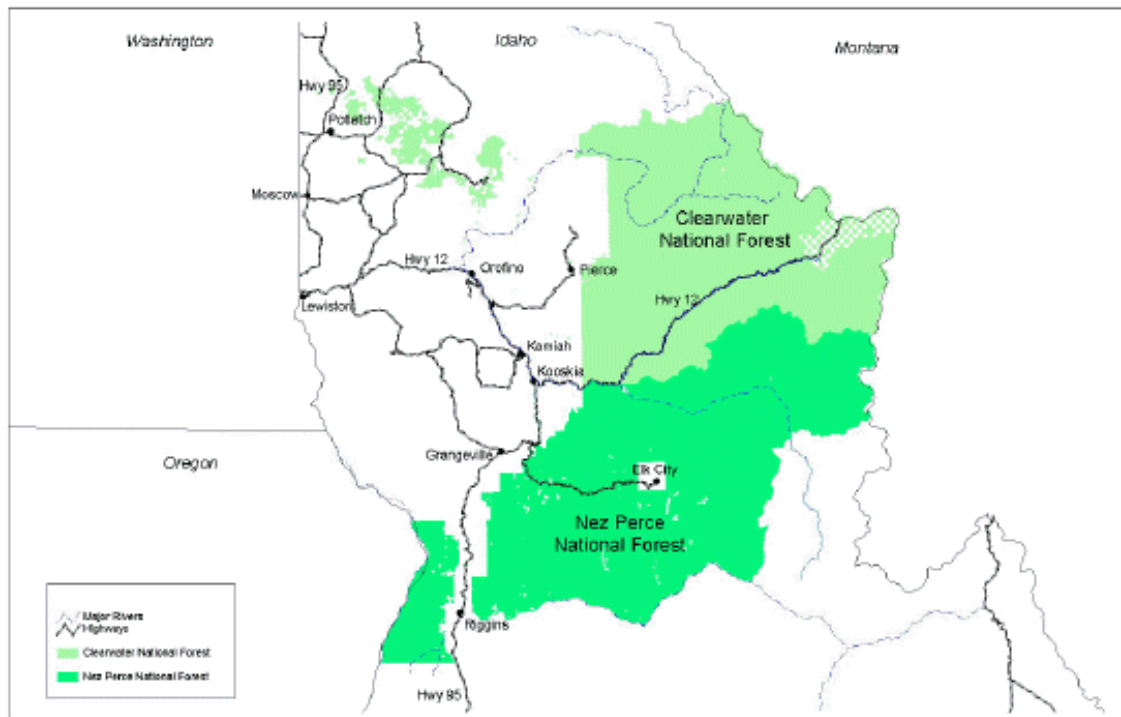


Map 3, From grizzly researcher, Dr. David Mattson, and his presentation in April 2019, Moscow, Idaho Grizzly Bears for the Clearwater: Beyond the Great Divide

Originally, when the grizzly bear was listed as threatened in the lower 48 under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the intent was to recover grizzly bears in each of the recovery areas, including the Bitterroot Recovery Area, before removing ESA protections. That has changed with efforts to delist grizzlies in Yellowstone and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem before there was recovery in other places and connectivity between populations. In the most recent effort to delist grizzly bears from the protections of the ESA in the Yellowstone region, the Court found that this was premature.

#### The 2018-19 Survey

This is the final draft of a survey over a portion of what is termed the Bitterroot Recovery Area for grizzly bears. The first goal of this project was to document attractant sites in the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests, which have the possibility to result in human-wildlife conflicts (see Map 4). An earlier survey was conducted in the late 1990s that led to remedial action on the ground. (Appendix 1). We wanted to see how/whether the remedial action was working after the decision to reintroduce grizzlies to the ecosystem was put on hold and the *de facto* decision was to allow for natural recovery. A second goal of this project was to facilitate community involvement by having families and others visit campgrounds on these two national forests within or adjacent to the Bitterroot Recovery Area.



Map 4, From US Forest Service

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5404067>

Due to road construction on Highway 12 that accesses the Lochsa and smoke from wildland fires mainly in British Columbia, not as many sites were visited as we had wished in 2018. In 2019, some volunteers and interns took pictures and monitored other areas that were not covered in 2018. Many of the higher elevations weren't covered until mid-summer because of a late snowpack.

What we learned from our 2018 and 2019 field seasons is that many of the earlier efforts in the late 1990s and early 2000s to reduce attractants have not been maintained at developed campgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Some education seems to be available at most sites, though in some cases, it is old, incomplete, or missing information about bears. We have seen some major changes since the earlier survey. Many campgrounds are now pack it in and pack it out. While that seems to be positive in that it might instill a sense of responsibility in campers, not every camper reads the education about keeping a clean camp. Tables 1-3 document campgrounds visited in 2018 and 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Backcountry sites by outfitters and guides are harder to locate. A student intern who did four backcountry trips backcountry did not find active outfitter and guide sites in 2018, likely due to the fact that these sites were not in use until later in the fall. We do have one example from 2017 that is a particular problem. It is attached as Appendix 2.

TABLE 1: Selway/Lochsa Campgrounds

Campground	Dumpster(s)	Dumpster Condition	Educational Materials	Notes
Johnson Bar	Yes	Problems <sup>2</sup>	Yes, but not on point	See text*
CCC Camp	No	N/A	No	See text
O'hara Creek	Yes	Okay	Yes, but not on point <sup>3</sup>	See text*
Boyd Creek	No	N/A	Yes	*
Glover	No	N/A	Yes	*
Powell	Yes	Problems <sup>4</sup>	Short note on dumpster	
Rackliff	No	N/A	Yes	*
Selway Falls	No	N/A	Limited	
Slide Creek	No	N/A	No	*
Slims	No	N/A	Yes, but not on point	
Twenty Mile	No	N/A	No	*
Twenty Three Mile	No	N/A	No	*
Twenty-Five Mile	No	N/A	No	*
Race Creek	No	N/A	Yes	*
Roar Creek <sup>5</sup>	Yes	Not bear proof	N/A	See text
White Sand	Yes	Problems <sup>6</sup>	Short note on dumpster	See text
Wilderness Gateway	Yes	Most functional but well-worn	Yes	See photo 12

\* visited twice

TABLE 2: North Fork Campgrounds

Campground	Dumpster(s)	Dumpster Condition	Educational Materials	Notes
Kelly Forks	No	N/A	Yes	See text
Noe Creek	No	N/A	Yes, but not on point	
Washington Creek	No	N/A	Yes	
Purple Beach	No	N/A	Yes, but not on point	
Aquarius	No	N/A	Yes, but not on point	
Weitas Creek	No	N/A	Yes, but not on point	
Portal Entry	No	N/A	Yes	

<sup>2</sup> See Photos 7 and 8

<sup>3</sup> See Photo 11

<sup>4</sup> Two of the three dumpsters were broken. The other had a locked chain around it.

<sup>5</sup> This is not technically a campground but a dumpster along the Selway road.

<sup>6</sup> See photos 9 and 10.



TABLE 3: South Fork/Gospel Hump Campgrounds

Campground	Dumpster(s)	Dumpster Condition	Educational Materials	Notes
Jungle Creek	No	N/A	No	
Nelson Creek	No	N/A	No	
Castle Creek	No	N/A	No	
South Fork	No	N/A	No	
Meadow Creek	No	N/A	No	
Cougar Creek	No	N/A	No	
Leggett Creek	No	N/A	No	
French Gulch	No	N/A	No	
Trapper Creek	No	N/A	No	
Sams Creek	No	N/A	No	
Rocky Bluff	No	N/A	No	
Corral Creek	No	N/A	No	
Rainy Day Pt.	No	N/A	Yes	See Photo 10
Tenmile Creek	No	N/A	Yes	

While there were no dumpsters at any of the campgrounds in the South Fork and Gospel Hump areas, three dumpsters were observed along highway 14. Dumpsters were also observed near the Selway/Lochsa confluence. Because there are inholdings in these areas, there are dumpsters that are maintained by the county as well, not located in campgrounds or in national forest land. However, this poses a serious risk for Grizzly bears, as all three of these dumpsters did not even have lids on them (see the photo below). Without lids, any animal is free to access the garbage inside, and a Grizzly bear passing through the area would have a very easily-accessible meal waiting for them in these county-maintained dumpsters.



Photo 1: Private inholding area along highway 14 – this dumpster has no lid and is easily accessible



Photo 2: Dumpsters at the Selway/Lochsa confluence – Dumpsters have no lids or flimsy lids and are overflowing



Photo 3: Dumpster at Jerry Johnson Hot Springs – Broken and no longer effective at keeping out bears.

Another problem that arises in areas outside of Forest Service campgrounds is areas with special permits from the forest service. The two examples that are shown here are Lolo Hot Springs (private land) and Lochsa Lodge. These are both notable examples because although Lochsa Lodge, at least, has a special permit from the Forest Service and both are operating in grizzly recovery areas, their management of dumpsters and garbage is bordering on nonexistent. Even though these are not campgrounds, they have an equal or bigger impact on grizzly bears, as these establishments also produce a great amount of waste which could be consumed by an opportunistic bear. Shown below are photos of the poor dumpster management at Lochsa Lodge and Lolo Hot Springs.



Photo 4: Dumpsters at Lolo Hot Springs resort in Montana





Photo 5: Two dumpsters at Lochsa Lodge without bear-proof tops. These dumpsters would not deter or stop a bear.



Photo 6: One of many non-bear-proof trash cans at Lochsa Lodge. The trash in this can would be entirely available to a bear should it decide it wanted it.

The elephant in the room is the fact that the State of Idaho allows bear baiting. This practice is where human food or other attractants are put in a large pile to lure bears, where the hunter is stationed near the bait, often in a tree stand, and can then choose what bear to kill. Advocates claim they can discriminate and kill only the “right” bear with this practice. However, it conditions bears to human attractants and

creates serious problems for grizzly recovery in the Bitterroot. A hunter from Tennessee illegally killed the last documented grizzly in the Clearwater over bait in 2007. The investigation termed it an accident, but it does show how attractants will be a major problem. The Forest Service has abdicated its responsibility to dealing with bait sites, even in Wilderness.

Many campgrounds no longer have garbage cans and require a pack it in, pack it out practice. While this has some benefits, too many campers become sloppy and often food is left out. Without education and enforcement, campgrounds without dumpsters can be attractants. In particular, the campgrounds on the North Fork Clearwater, Kelly Forks and Noe Creek, were examples of how this could be a problem in future years.

The campgrounds that had had dumpsters usually showed signs of neglect. For example, the Johnson Bar Campground dumpsters were in poor repair, not functioning or overflowing. The Johnson Bar Campground is along the Selway River. The upper reaches of this river are in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, which has been long recognized as part of the Bitterroot Recovery Area for grizzlies.



Photo 7: Johnson Bar Campground—this dumpster is not closed because it is overflowing



Photo 8: Johnson Bar Campground—this dumpster lever is rusted in the open position



The White Sand Campground in the Lochsa River Basin is just north of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This is in the heart of the best habitat for grizzlies in the Bitterroot Recovery Area. We found problems with this campground as well. This dumpster was in the worst condition. Further, the educational materials at the registration kiosk did not mention bears, either black bears or grizzly bears.



Photo 9: White Sand Campground—this dumpster’s safety features are no longer functional. A bear could push up the lid and crawl in.



Photo 10: White Sand Campground—the information does not include education about bears



Photo 11: O'hara Campground—the information does not include education about bears

The dumpster along the Selway at Roar Creek presents problems as well. It has not been kept up. The Forest Service needs to coordinate with those who handle Idaho County's garbage pick up for the vacation homes along the lower Selway near Lowell. The sites along this are often overflowing.



Photo 12: Rainy Day Pt. – The bear education signs are in a remote, fairly inaccessible area.





Photo 13: Dumpster at Wilderness Gateway campground – functional but worn to the point that it does not quite close properly anymore. This is an example of poor upkeep of the dumpsters in campgrounds such as this.



Photo 14: Dumpster at Powell Ranger Station. Even the dumpster at a ranger station is not bear-proof, and doesn't have a lid on it to stop grizzly bears.

## Summary

Sadly, the efforts that began in the late 1990s and early 2000s in anticipation of action in the Bitterroot Recovery Area, have fallen into disrepair. Coupled with the Forest Service's hostility to grizzly recovery as stated in a recent article (Appendix 3), this does not bode well for recovery of grizzlies in the largest habitat in the lower 48 states for the bears. We hope this effort will help reinitiate interest in keeping clean campsites, which would benefit grizzlies and many other species, and spur agency action.