

BREAKING

# Commissioners share issues with bear decision

By LEO WOLFSON [leo@codyenterprise.com](mailto:leo@codyenterprise.com) Oct 8, 2018

In response to the recent Federal court ruling returning the Yellowstone grizzly bear to Endangered Species Act protection, the Park County Commissioners voiced strong displeasure at a Oct. 2 meeting.

“Everyone’s disappointed,” commissioner Loren Grosskopf said.

Grosskopf is a member of the Yellowstone Grizzly Coordinating Committee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. YGCC aims to engage top decision makers to recover grizzly bears through policy and procedures and has recommended proceeding with delisting grizzlies from the endangered species list. Now the Park County commissioner is unsure in what way YGCC will continue into the future.



“We’re all apprehensive that we’re going to lose the public support,” Grosskopf said. “The sportsmen that are funding this (grizzly bear hunting and delisting), we’ll lose their financial support also.”

Grosskopf said many protection issues remain regarding the ruling issued by Judge Dana Christensen in Missoula, including whether the grizzly can continue to be considered a “recovered” species now that it has returned to the endangered list.

“He obviously knows more than all the scientists and all the biological people,” Grosskopf said sarcastically.

More than 40 years of federal protection brought the Yellowstone grizzly population from a low of 136 to an accepted count of about 700 animals currently.

In 2007, the Yellowstone grizzly was delisted only to be returned to Endangered Species Act supervision in 2009, based mostly on the bears' loss of whitebark pine nuts for food.

Park County Commissioner Lee Livingston, a local outfitter, said he feels misled by the federal government.

"You guys do this, we (federal government) get the bears recovered, then we'll remove them (from endangered list)," Livingston said he was told. "People ... have been jumping through hoops and holding up their end of the deal even more so than were expected."

Livingston also referenced guide Mark Uptain, who was killed by a grizzly while guiding a hunter near Jackson Hole in mid-September.

"In the outfitting community, we said, it's just a matter of time before someone gets killed," Livingston said. "Now unfortunately, Mark (Uptain) was killed. It changes the demeanor in those camps. There's going to be more bears killed."

Commissioner Tim French seconded Livingston's sentiment.

"Many of the public are going to deal with the bears in their own way," French said. "They're upset with that decision and now they're going to take matters into their own hands. It's ridiculous and there's going to be a lot of bears (that will) die."

Livingston suggested bear relocation to thin population density as an alternate to endangered listing. Anything short of immediate action he said falls short.

"The bears aren't going to say, 'O.K. we'll wait for that decision to come down the pike. In the meantime we're not going to do what bears do,'" Livingston said.

Grosskopf said Christensen ignored YGCC studies that point to stable grizzly genetic populations, in his decision.

"The fact is, the bears have been healthy, increasing," Grosskopf said. "The studies they've already done, basically prove the judge wrong and the judge didn't accept that."