



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office - Spokane

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In Reply Refer to:
FWS/IR9/ES/IFWO/2020-F-0869

Jeanne Higgins
Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forests
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815

August 13, 2020

Subject: Biological Opinion addressing the Idaho Panhandle National Forests' Land and Resource Management Plan (Plan or LRMP)

Dear Ms. Higgins:

This letter transmits the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) biological opinion (Opinion) on the effects of the subject Plan on species and critical habitats listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.; ESA). Our Opinion concludes that the Plan is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the grizzly bear.

In a letter dated November 8, 2019, and received by the Service on the same day, the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) requested re-initiation of consultation on the Plan in accordance with the requirements of section 7 of the ESA. This was necessary because of delays due to administrative challenges that have prevented full implementation of LRMP-related grizzly bear conservation actions within the timeframes specified in the Plan, as well as elements identified in an Incidental Take Statement (ITS) accompanying the Service's 2013 Opinion on the Plan. The IPNF submitted a biological assessment (Assessment), signed on March 31, 2020 and revised on June 24, 2020, and received by the Service on those same days, describing the effects of these delays on the threatened grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*).

In the Assessment, the IPNF determined that ongoing implementation of the LRMP is not likely to cause effects to any listed species or critical habitat over and above those analyzed in the 2013 Opinion, except for the grizzly bear. Beside the grizzly bear, four other listed species may be present and affected within the action area for the LRMP: (1) the endangered woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*); (2) threatened Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*); (3) threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*); and (4) the endangered Kootenai River white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*). The action area also encompasses portions of critical habitat for the woodland caribou, Canada lynx, bull trout, and the Kootenai River white sturgeon. The Service concurs with the above findings of the IPNF, based on our review of the Assessment, our 2013 Opinion on the IPNF LRMP, and the biological opinion addressing the IPNF 2011 Access Amendment.

INTERIOR REGION 9 COLUMBIA-PACIFIC NORTHWEST

IDAHO, MONTANA*, OREGON*, WASHINGTON
*PARTIAL

INTERIOR REGION 12 PACIFIC ISLANDS

AMERICAN SAMOA, GUAM, HAWAII, NORTHERN
MARIANA ISLANDS

We also determined that the proposed action will not result in exceedance of incidental take exemptions for the other species referenced above as set forth in the ITS accompanying the 2013 Opinion.

For the reasons presented above, reinitiation of consultation on the LRMP is not necessary for the woodland caribou or its designated critical habitat, Canada lynx or its designated critical habitat, bull trout or its designated critical habitat, or the Kootenai River white sturgeon or its designated critical habitat.

The attached Opinion supersedes and replaces the 2013 Opinion on the LRMP with respect to the grizzly bear.

Thank you for your continued interest in the conservation of threatened and endangered species. If you have any questions regarding the attached Opinion, please contact Kat Sarensen of this office at (509) 893-8021 (tel) or katherine_sarensen@fws.gov (email).

Sincerely,

Sandra M Fisher

for Christopher Swanson
Acting State Supervisor

Enclosure

cc:
IDFG, Coeur d'Alene (Horsmon)