



Bitterroot Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan EIS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Quarterly Update—Spring 2024

Website: <https://www.fws.gov/BitterrootEIS>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is the lead agency in developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the restoration of grizzly bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem of Idaho and western Montana.

The following entities are cooperating agencies assisting the USFWS in the preparation of the EIS:

- U.S. Forest Service
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Idaho Office of Species Conservation
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
- Custer County, ID
- Mineral County, MT
- Ravalli County, MT
- Missoula County, MT

Tribal Consultation

In 2023, as the EIS process started, the USFWS contacted all federally recognized tribes in the lower 48 states and invited them to consult on the issues surrounding grizzly bear restoration in the Bitterroot. USFWS also invited all tribes in the Pacific and Mountain Prairie Regions as cooperating agencies. Four tribes are already working as cooperating agencies (see above), and several others have responded to either keep them informed or that the project is outside of their traditional area. The USFWS will continue to consult with interested tribes throughout the NEPA process.

Notice of Intent and Public Scoping

The USFWS published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on January 18, 2024. The publication of the NOI initiated a 60-day public scoping period that ended on March 18, 2024. During this scoping period, we held three virtual public meetings in February attended by 194 people. We received 1,275 public comments. We are reviewing public comments to inform the scope of the EIS, including the draft purpose and need, proposed action and alternatives, and environmental effects.

Next Steps

Using comments received from the public, cooperating agencies, tribes, and other stakeholders, the USFWS will develop a draft EIS. The draft EIS will include a discussion of the purpose and need for taking the proposed action, a description of the proposed action and alternatives, and the potential impacts of the alternatives on the physical, natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources (i.e., human environment). Currently, USFWS is working with cooperating agencies to identify alternatives and actions to consider in the draft EIS. The draft EIS is expected to be released for public review in March 2025, and we will continue to provide quarterly updates on its progress.



Indicates: We Are Here

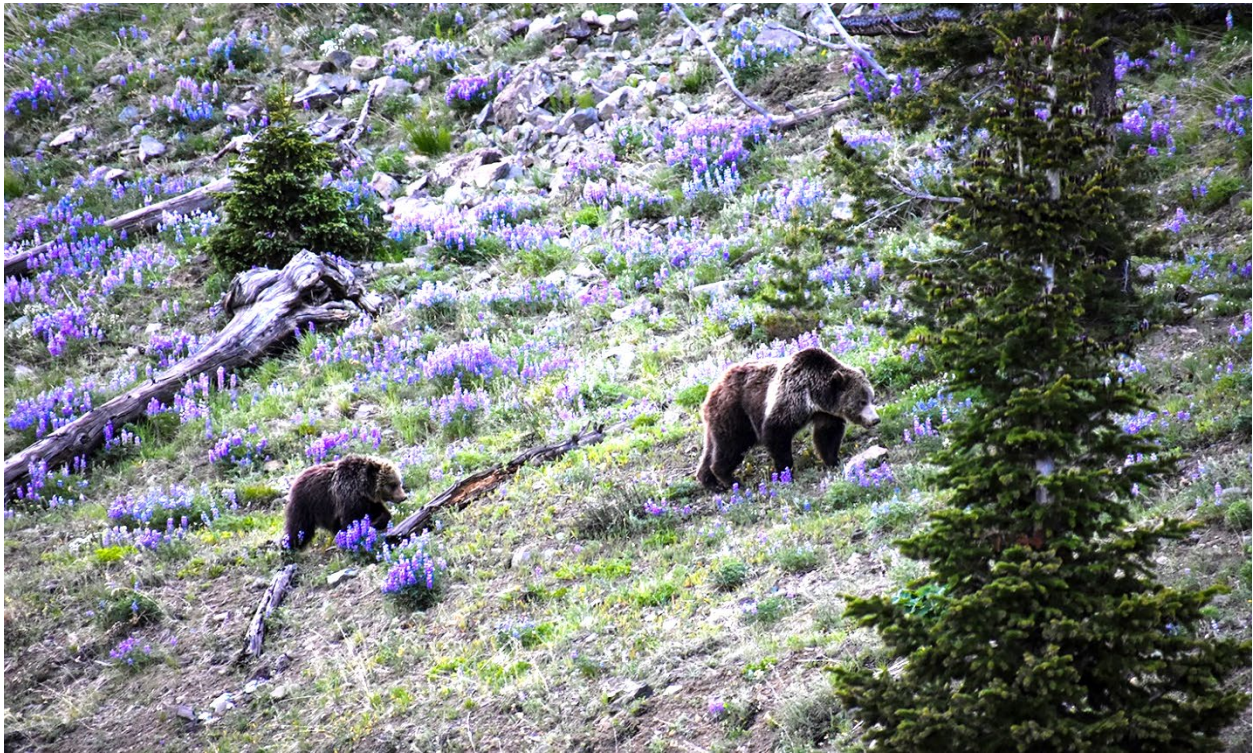
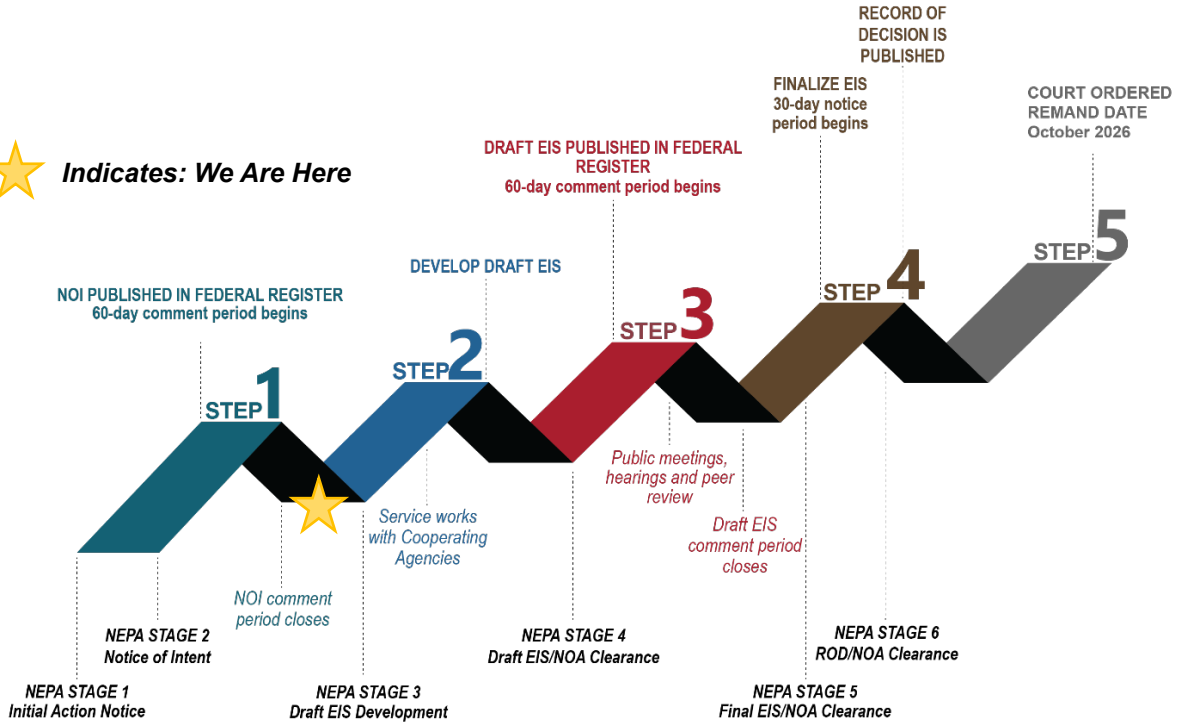


Photo credit: Jennifer Fortin-Noreus / USFWS