

PUBLIC OPINION AND KNOWLEDGE OF GRIZZLY BEARS IN THE CABINET-YAAK ECOSYSTEM

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To measure the public's understanding of grizzly bears and their management in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem (CYE), a telephone survey was conducted in Lincoln and Sanders County, Montana. In the summer of 2007, 502 residents of the seven communities within the CYE answered questions about their knowledge and opinions of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*) in the CYE and of related management activities. Ninety percent of respondents felt that humans can prevent most conflicts with grizzly bears and 62 percent stated that they would accept changes to current garbage disposal methods if it would help prevent problems with grizzly bears. Fifty-seven percent supported the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the CYE. Support decreased to 44 percent for achieving a population goal of 100 bears. Support increased to 75 percent if population recovery could be achieved without using augmentation. Thirty-three percent stated they were unaware of road access restrictions on National Forest lands, due in part to grizzly bear recovery efforts. The majority of respondents indicated some level of support for grizzly bears, yet had concerns over specific management actions used to achieve population recovery. Respondents were more aware of augmentation efforts in the early 1990's than of more recent efforts, suggesting that managers need to keep the public better informed. Educational efforts may benefit residents' understanding of general grizzly bear biology and of related management practices.