Success of Grizzly Bear Population Augmentation in Northwest Montana

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The Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear recovery zone is located in northwest Montana and northern Idaho. The population has been estimated to be 30-40 grizzly bears. The Cabinet Mountains portion of this area may be isolated from the remainder of the zone and was the site of a test of grizzly bear population augmentation. Between 1990 and 1994, four sub-adult females (2-6 yrs old) were translocated from the Canadian Rocky Mountains of southeast

British Columbia into the Cabinet Mountains. None of the animals involved had any history of conflicts with humans. The objectives of that experiment were to evaluate site fidelity, reproduction, and long-term survival of the translocated bears. Three of the four transplanted bears remained in the target area for 1 year or more and satisfied the short term goal for site fidelity. Recent genetic evidence gathered through hair snagging efforts have determined that at least one of the original transplanted animals remained in the Cabinet Mountains and has reproduced thereby providing evidence of success for the long term goals of survival and reproduction. This paper reports on the results of long-term monitoring of that experiment. We also report on our use of DNA hair-grab sampling to track survival and reproductive fate or one translocated female.