

GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY

TRANSLOCATED BEAR HAS CUBS



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

A female grizzly bear translocated from Montana to Wyoming in 2024 was photographed recently with two cubs during a Wyoming Game and Fish Department monitoring flight.

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Wildlife officials in Montana and Wyoming announced this week that the female grizzly bear translocated from south of Glacier National Park to Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 2024 has been photographed this spring with two cubs after emerging from her winter den.

The officials lauded the development as another step in their effort to show that grizzly bears have recovered in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and as a signal that translocating bears can help reach the current administrations' goal in both states of broadening the gene pools of the two populations by having them interbreed.

Northern Continental Divide grizzly bears expand range by 12%, connectivity gap decreases

Both of the current administrations in Montana and Wyoming are seeking to have grizzly bears delisted from federal Endangered Species Act protections in the two ecosystems, while opponents of their efforts say there is not interconnectivity between the two grizzly populations and, thus, the grizzlies still need federal protections so they can't be hunted under state management.

"This is concrete evidence that Montana and Wyoming are committed to sustaining a recovered population of grizzly bears and is a major success in our continued efforts to ensure genetic diversity in these two recovered populations of bears," Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Director Christy Clark said in a statement.

Biologists captured the sow and another male grizzly near the Middle Fork of the Flathead and moved them to Wyoming in July 2024 — the sow, who was 4 years old at the time, went to the Blackrock drainage northwest of Dubois, Wyoming, and the 5-year-old subadult male to an area south of Yellowstone Lake.

What happened to the grizzlies Wyoming trucked in from Montana to boost genetic diversity?

FWP and Wyoming Game and Fish said the sow, now 6 years old, was photographed with two cubs at her den during a radio-telemetry monitoring flight.

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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Director Christy Clark FWP grizzly bear researcher Cecily Costello said age 5 or 6 is around the time most grizzlies have their first cubs.

During the bear's first two years in Wyoming, she covered a vast stretch of the southern part of Yellowstone National Park, which made it somewhat surprising she emerged from her den this spring with two cubs, Costello said.

"We wondered if that energy expenditure might reduce her chances of reproducing, but, from the photo, she appears to be in great condition," Costello said.

Whether both cubs survive remains to be seen. Annual cub survival rates are just north of 50%, the two wildlife agencies said, and slightly lower for a grizzly's first litter. Costello said even if these two cubs don't survive, grizzly experts believe the sow will be successful in the future in birthing and rearing more litters.

As for the male bear translocated to Yellowstone, he is now estimated to be 7 years old, according to the departments, though he may still be too young to successfully challenge older and more dominant males for chances to reproduce.

But the female's successful reproduction is seen as a win by Montana and Wyoming officials who have been pushing for delisting so the states can take over management. They face opposition from conservation groups that worry the states' management

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FWP COURTESY PHOTO

A female subadult grizzly bear is released in the Blackrock drainage 35 miles northwest of Dubois, Wyoming, in July 2024 as a part of a translocation project between Montana and Wyoming.

Lawyers eye one suit on 2 sex laws

Motion asks to fold suits on 2023, '25 bills into one

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Lawyers for transgender and intersex individuals hope to settle once and for all whether Montana Republican officials' repeated attempts to legally define sex as binary pass constitutional muster.

They filed a motion on Monday asking a Missoula County district court judge for permission to bundle two legal challenges against a pair of separate but almost identical measures passed through the last two Legislatures and signed into law by the GOP governor.

Senate Bill 437 created definitions for sex based on reproductive systems. It mimicked a bill from 2023 that had already been blocked by two separate judges by the time it was making its way through the 2025 Legislature.

Though it passed without much trouble through both Republican-led chambers, SB 437 collected dust for nearly a year before Gov. Greg Gianforte, also a Republican, signed it into law last month.

GOP leadership hoped that holding the bill would keep it from getting ensnared in ongoing litigation against its predecessor — the exact legal strategy Helena-based Upper Seven Law hopes to employ with the motion it filed on Monday.

Attorneys for the plaintiff asked Judge Leslie Halligan, the same judge that struck down the 2023 legislation, to tack the complaint against SB 437 onto the existing lawsuit, and to block the recently enacted law from being enforced while litigation plays out.

"After this Court determined that Senate Bill 458 ("SB 458") — the State's

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St. Mary water system repair hits milestone

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A repair job on infrastructure supplying some 18,000 people in northern Montana with water reached a major milestone this week.

Two siphons carrying water for the St. Mary Diversion Dam and Canal system, which supplies the Milk River with the majority of its waterflow, officially came online Tuesday. The announcement that the siphons at St. Mary and Halls Coulee were complete marked the culmination of a massive effort to restore the Hi-Line's water supply after a catastrophic failure in 2024.

The failure flooded portions of the nearby town of Babb, prompted a mobilization of state, federal and tribal engineers and instigated water restrictions for Milk River stakeholders from the Blackfeet Indian Reservation east all the way to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

"We're coming online," said Jennifer Patrick, project manager for the Milk River Joint Board of Control. "But still, we're playing catch up from the past two years without water."

The St. Mary River begins in Glacier National Park. When it reaches Babb, on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, it flows into the St. Mary Dam. Water flows through two 29-mile pipes, surging into the Milk River. The water breaks north into Canada before returning to Montana, a 730-mile stretch that rolls east into the Missouri River just past Glasgow, filling hundreds of miles of canals along the way.

Oversight of the St. Mary Diversion

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