



## Community-supported Conservation of Grizzly Bears on Private Agricultural Lands, Montana

Seth Wilson; The Blackfoot Challenge, Montana; Contact Author Email: [swilson@bigsky.net](mailto:swilson@bigsky.net)

Effective conservation and management of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*) on private agricultural lands largely depends on whether people will tolerate bears. In Montana, expansion of grizzly bear activity on private, low elevation agricultural lands has resulted in conflicts between people and bears. This applied research and conservation effort seeks to reduce human-grizzly bear conflicts by using a systematic approach that emphasizes understanding the social and ecological context in the Blackfoot Valley, MT. We worked closely with the local community to build a prototype through research, planning, and projects. We used an integrative, multi-method approach relying on GIS field-based mapping and analysis, one-on-one meetings, workshops, field tours, and group meetings to actively engage the local community in data collection and participatory efforts. Preliminary results are encouraging. Reported and verified human-grizzly bear conflicts have fallen by 93% from 2003-2007 and there is a downward trend in grizzly bear mortality for this same period. We describe our decision-making processes and innovative, non-lethal deterrent strategies involving electric fencing, livestock carcass removal, education, and outreach. We recommend that future efforts that seek to reduce human-carnivore conflicts in agricultural landscapes should: 1) develop community-supported goals for carnivore management and conservation; 2) focus primarily on changing practices and behaviors not value systems; 3) create inclusive decision-making forums that emphasis common not special interests; 4) recognize livelihood interests; 5) provide economic incentives; 6) work across ownership and agency boundaries at the correct biological scale; and 7) cultivate the trust and support of key project partners.

2009. 62nd Society for Range Management Annual Meeting. Paper No. 02-3.