

SEATTLE, Washington, Nov. 11 (TNSgov) -- The Defenders of Wildlife posted the following news on Nov. 10, 2022:

Conservation groups and other wildlife advocates applaud the Biden administration's announcement today that it is restarting the process required to return **grizzly bears** to the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE) - a large network of mostly protected public lands that spans from northwest Washington State into British Columbia and includes North Cascades National Park.

The environmental impact statement process will include an opportunity for public input on a range of strategies designed to restore grizzlies to the North Cascades. The revival of this multi-year effort is backed by overwhelming public approval. When a similar process began in 2015, it received more than 159,000 public comments supporting it.

The North Cascades Ecosystem is one of only two grizzly recovery areas without an established population of bears, and due to its relative distance and isolation from other zones it would not likely be repopulated from natural bear migration.

Scott Schuyler, Policy Representative for the Upper Skagit Tribe, whose territory lies within the recovery zone, urges people to accept that grizzlies belong in the North Cascades.

"The Upper Skagit people coexisted with **grizzly bears** in the region for nearly 10,000 years pre-contact. The grizzly has profound cultural significance and its restoration will enrich our ancestral lands and help restore the foundations of our cultural practices. We thank Secretary Haaland for leading this effort and look forward to welcoming grizzlies back home."

The Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear, a coalition of local and national groups in support of grizzly recovery, also applaud the news.

"For far too long the North Cascades have been missing an integral part of their unique ecosystem," said Kathleen Callaghy, Northwest representative with Defenders of Wildlife. "Returning the grizzlies will finally make this incredible wilderness whole again. What's more, it is clear that the people of Washington overwhelmingly want this to happen. We are ecstatic this process is resuming and will be strongly advocating for its successful conclusion."

"We're cautiously optimistic that this process will lead to a decision on how to successfully restore **grizzly bears** to the North Cascades through sound science and robust public involvement," said Gordon Congdon, retired Wenatchee orchardist and former Executive Director of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust. "There's a lot of interest from folks all over the state and the country because the grizzly bear is such an important, iconic and charismatic animal - and it's the only native large mammal absent from our wildlands."

"The grizzly bear is a critical part of the ecological and cultural fabric of the North Cascades. They belong here. Without them our wild areas are diminished, less diverse and sanitized. The narrative about Cascades grizzly bear recovery will take decades to unfold. But with science, education and a little human tolerance it can be one of the greatest conservation success stories of ours and future generations," said Joe Scott, international program director for Conservation Northwest.

"We know how to move bears successfully into new places and we know how to live with them safely," said Chris Servheen, who retired in 2016 after 35 years as Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Servheen is currently Co-chair of the North American Bears Expert Team for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Board Chair of the Montana Wildlife Federation. "Federal and state agencies have worked for decades to lay a sound scientific and social foundation for reestablishing **grizzly bears** in the NCE, which has hundreds of thousands of acres of productive grizzly (brown) bear habitat."

"Scientific research and habitat analyses have shown that the North Cascades grizzly bear population is not recoverable without moving some animals from other areas into the ecosystem," Bill Gaines, founder of Conservation Science Institute and retired Okanogan-Wenatchee District biologist from the U.S. Forest Service.

"The bottom line is that even with a recovered North Cascades grizzly bear population these consummate icons of wild habitats will have been driven out of 97 percent of their former range in the contiguous US through persecution, habitat destruction and sheer short-sightedness. We now have a rare opportunity to redress these wrongs and bestow a huge conservation legacy to our children," said Rob Smith, Northwest Director with the National Parks Conservation Association.

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Original text here: <https://defenders.org/newsroom/wildlife-advocates-applaud-restart-of-process-return-grizzly-bears-north-cascades>

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