

Southwest Alberta Grizzly Bear Monitoring Project

Timeline	2011	2012	2013	2014
Identify/setup bear rubs*	•	•		
Hair collection	•	•	•	•
Genetic/data analysis		•	•	•
Prepare final reports				•

*Surveying/setup will begin on public land in 2011 and will include the entire BMA 6 from 2012 on.

Who can I contact for more information?

For more information, please contact:
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Parks
Canada

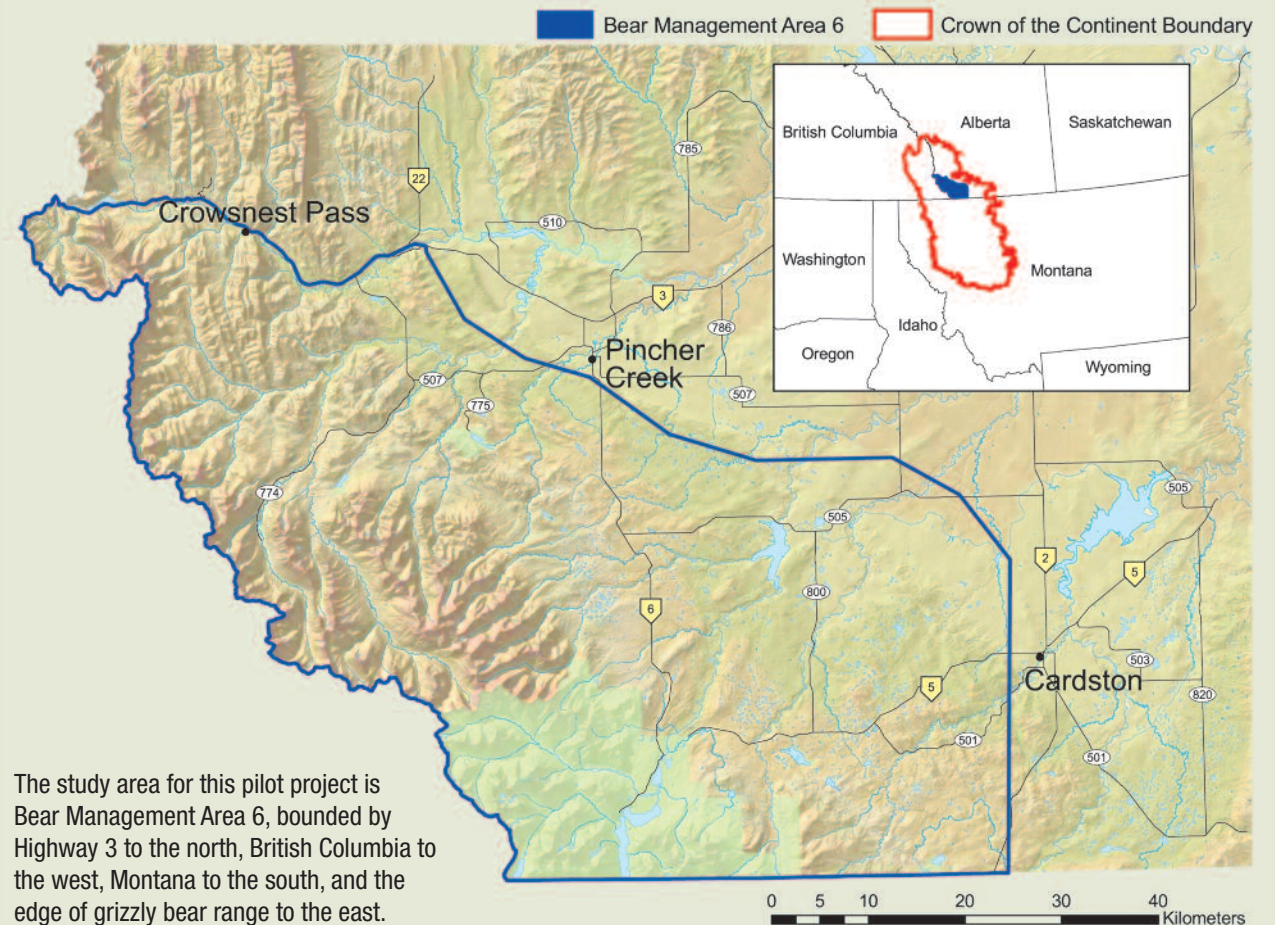
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Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, in partnership with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation – Parks Division, Parks Canada, University of Alberta, and the U.S. Geological Survey, is initiating a three-year pilot project in southwest Alberta to monitor grizzly bears both locally and at ecosystem scales.

The overall program goal is to develop a cost effective, efficient way to monitor grizzly bear populations, densities and distributions using non-invasive methods that engage the public and utilize local knowledge.



The study area for this pilot project is Bear Management Area 6, bounded by Highway 3 to the north, British Columbia to the west, Montana to the south, and the edge of grizzly bear range to the east.

Government
of Alberta



What is new about this grizzly bear project as compared to the DNA grizzly bear project?

The 2004-2008 provincial grizzly bear project used DNA to produce a snapshot of Alberta grizzly bear populations and provided us with the best population estimate to date. However, it did not provide information on how bear populations and distributions are changing. This pilot project differs from past efforts in that we will monitor bear populations, relative density and distribution over time. Rather than using attractants to lure grizzly bears into a

hair snag, we will take advantage of natural bear behaviour, rubbing, to collect grizzly bear hair samples. One of the great aspects of the rub method is that hair can be collected from a variety of sources (e.g. trees, fence lines, signposts), allowing us to survey ranch lands more effectively than in the past. By collaborating with Montana, we will be able to examine movement of bears into and out of southwest Alberta.

Why use rub objects?

Surveying rub trees is a safe, efficient and cost-effective way to collect DNA samples from grizzly bears. Rubbing is natural bear behaviour and occurs on a variety of sources. Remote video of grizzly bears using rub trees can be viewed at the USGS website www.nrmisc.usgs.gov/research/kendallremotecamerartvideo.htm.

How are rub stations established?

Crews will survey roads, trails, cutlines, power lines and fence lines. Bear-rub objects can easily be identified by the presence of bear hair. Short segments of barbed wire are attached to rub objects to facilitate hair collection. The wire does not hurt the bears. **NO FOOD BASED LURE OR ATTRACTANTS**

ARE EVER USED. Genetic analysis of hair samples reveals species, sex and individual identity of the bear using the rub object.

If I see your rub trees, can I collect the hair for you?

The short answer is no. Hair needs to be collected within designated time intervals and collection must follow strict protocols to ensure hair samples remain suitable for DNA analysis. However, there may be opportunities for community involvement in future seasons. See back panel for contact information.

Why is this only happening south of Highway 3? Will you be expanding the project in the future?

We are targeting Bear Management Area 6 as our pilot study area because it has one of the highest grizzly bear densities in Alberta. Furthermore, this region experiences a high number of conflicts, as compared to the rest of the province. As a result, we want to ensure we have as much information about bears in this area as possible. Pending funding and the success of this three-year pilot project, we are hoping to expand this program into other regions of southwest Alberta. The long-term goal is to build relationships with both Montana and British Columbia to monitor grizzly bears at an ecosystem scale within the Crown of the Continent.

Why are you only surveying public land? When will you survey private land?

For logistical reasons, we are beginning our surveys on public land. Our goal is to have all public land within Bear Management Area 6 surveyed this summer. We will be working with local community groups in the following months to understand how we can best collaborate with private landowners on this monitoring project next year. Participation in the program is voluntary, but we hope to be surveying private land during summer 2012.

What can I do as a private land owner?

As a landowner, you know your property better than anyone else, and we would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about your experiences with grizzly bears. If you choose to participate in the program, private land will be surveyed in 2012, and any information you can provide regarding bear use on your property would be helpful (e.g. rub tree locations, travel corridors, fence crossings). Community support is key to the overall success of the monitoring program as we strive towards further understanding bear populations in southwest Alberta, and we welcome your input on this project.

Why is United States Geological Survey (USGS) a partner?

We have been fortunate to have the expertise of the USGS as we plan this program. Kate Kendall and her team have successfully used rub trees to monitor grizzly bear populations in Montana. By collaborating with them, we utilize their experience. We also begin to monitor grizzly bears at an ecosystem scale as there is a flow of bears between Alberta and Montana. This collaboration will help us gain more insight on that connection.

How will the results be shared?

We will host an annual community open house in winter to provide an update regarding summer activities and plans for the future season. We are working on developing a project website where we will post study updates. Upon project completion, results will be published in peer reviewed journals and popular magazines.

