



OUR WILD AMERICA CAMPAIGN: GREATER YELLOWSTONE

Throughout its century-plus history, the Sierra Club has been at the forefront of the movement to protect America's wild places, and the beauty, clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and escape from the modern industrialized world that they provide.

The Our Wild America campaign is working to create a national network of connected wild lands and marine areas to preserve America's natural, cultural, and recreational heritage. This work is especially important in the spectacular Greater Yellowstone region, where much is at stake.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho is the largest intact temperate ecosystem in the northern hemisphere. Grizzly bears, wolves and all other native major carnivores still roam its rugged mountains and wild river valleys. It is one of only a tiny handful of places in the lower 48 states where grizzlies and other species that depend on vast, wild landscapes can thrive. Large herds of elk and bison roam freely across the landscape. Greater Yellowstone is

a wonderland of vast high plateaus, rushing rivers, deep canyons, spectacular geysers, and no less than 14 awe-inspiring mountain ranges.

Approximately 34,000 square miles in size, Greater Yellowstone contains both our country's first national park, Yellowstone, and our first national forest, the Shoshone. Established in the late 1800s, Yellowstone and the Shoshone are the wild anchors of Greater Yellowstone. The region is the source of three of the nation's major river systems: the Missouri/Mississippi, Snake/Columbia, and Green/Colorado, and is nationally known for its many blue-ribbon fishing streams. Greater Yellowstone is treasured by millions of people within and outside the United States as a source of natural wonder, profound hope, and inspiration.

ABOVE: GRIZZLY BEAR. PHOTO COURTESY OF US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

THE CHALLENGES

- Oil and gas development threatens the integrity of the region; projects are proposed both within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and on its perimeter, particularly to the south and east.
- While responsible motorized use has a place on our public lands, a vocal minority is clamoring for more motorized access to inappropriate areas of pristine public lands, threatening the important balance between protection and recreation.
- Climate change is bringing a host of changes to Greater Yellowstone – dramatically decreasing snowpack and glaciers that provide life-giving water to wildlife living downstream, and causing a rapid die-off of whitebark pine, which provides a prime food source for grizzly bears.
- As increasing numbers of people move to the region in order to be close to nature and world-class recreation opportunities, large swaths of private land are being subdivided, severely affecting wildlife migration patterns.

Sierra Club's Greater Yellowstone Campaign focuses on maintaining and enhancing the wildness of Greater Yellowstone and on protecting its irreplaceable wildlife.

FIGHTING DIRTY FUELS DEVELOPMENT

Northwest Wyoming's beautiful Wyoming Range is a key migration corridor for lynx, mule deer, moose, elk and other wildlife, and provides outstanding hiking, fishing, hunting and other recreational experiences. Thanks to the work of the Sierra Club and many partners, in 2009 the Wyoming Range Legacy Act was passed, permanently protecting over 1 million acres of the Range in the Bridger-Teton National Forest from oil and gas drilling. However, parts of the Range that were previously leased before the Act passed are still at risk. Sierra Club's Greater Yellowstone Campaign is working to protect the integrity of the Wyoming Range, to build public opposition to drilling proposed on over 44,000 acres that were improperly leased by the Bridger-Teton National Forest in 2005, and to ensure that the leases are cancelled.

PROTECTING GREATER YELLOWSTONE'S SPECTACULAR NATIONAL FORESTS

The Shoshone National Forest, designated in 1891 as our first national forest, is unrivaled in its wildness and the diversity of wildlife it supports. Over 2.4 million acres of incredibly rugged country located on Yellowstone's eastern border, the Shoshone is home to grizzly bears, wolves and wolverines and hundreds of other native species. Increasing



GREATER YELLOWSTONE MAP

demands for more motorized recreation access and oil and gas development threaten to destroy the wild, backcountry character of the Shoshone. Sierra Club is working to ensure that key parts of the Shoshone, including the Dunoir, Franc's Peak, Wood River, and Trout Creek roadless areas are permanently protected through wilderness designation, and that the Shoshone stays off-limits to more motorized trails and oil and gas development.

South of Yellowstone is the vast wild country of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. At over 3.4 million acres, the Bridger-Teton comprises a large part of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Grizzly bears and a host of other species depend on its immense wildlands for their survival. Over 300 miles of its pristine waters are part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and 1.2 million acres are permanently protected as wilderness. But large areas remain unprotected, and are threatened by drilling, logging, and increased motorized use. In addition to our ongoing work to protect the Bridger-



SHOSHONE NATIONAL FOREST. PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM MEWES

Teton's Wyoming Range from drilling, the Sierra Club will be a strong voice for protection of core wildlife habitat and wildlife linkage areas, permanent protection for the Palisades and Shoal Creek Wilderness Study Areas, and quiet recreation as the Forest Service undertakes processes to revise the Bridger-Teton's forest and travel management plans. These plans will determine how the forest will be managed for decades to come.

ENSURING PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR THE GALLATIN RANGE

Extending from within Yellowstone National Park to the foothills of Bozeman, Montana, the Gallatin Range covers more than half a million acres and contains some of the wildest lands remaining in the lower 48 states. Some of the healthiest wildlife populations of any temperate ecosystem on Earth make their home in the Gallatins, including grizzly and black bear, wolverine, marten, moose, mountain lion, lynx and gray wolf, ranging back and forth from Yellowstone to over 200,000 acres of unroaded public land directly to the north on the Gallatin National Forest.

The Gallatin Range is the only mountain range originating in Yellowstone National Park that does not have permanent protection. In 1977, the wildest portion of the Range's core was designated as the Hyalite-Porcupine-

Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Given the ecological importance of the area to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and Yellowstone National Park, the Gallatin Range deserves wilderness designation; however, the future of the WSA and the Range has been a contentious issue for many years. Sierra Club members will be a key voice for protection of wildlife habitat and wilderness designation in a recently-launched community collaborative process to help determine the future of the Gallatin Range, as well as other forums.



GALLATIN RANGE. PHOTO COURTESY OF BONNIE RICE

PROTECTING THE ICONIC WILDLIFE OF THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM

Bison are one of the most well-known and beloved species of the Greater Yellowstone region. Unfortunately, for many years this iconic species has been subject to extremely inhumane treatment and profound disrespect. Bison attempting to leave Yellowstone to find forage at lower elevations to sustain them through the harsh winters are hazed back into the Park, captured and shipped to slaughter, or shot at the Park boundary. Sierra Club played a key role in convincing the state to develop a historic proposal in 2013 to establish the first-ever year round habitat for bison outside of Yellowstone in Montana on over 400,000 acres of public lands. We will continue working to ensure that this proposal moves forward and is implemented, and we will continue to advocate for additional habitat for this keystone species in Montana.

There is no more beautiful or powerful symbol of wildness than the **grizzly bear**. Greater Yellowstone is one of very few places where grizzlies can exist in the lower 48 states. Since the 1970s when Yellowstone grizzly numbers were at their lowest, the population has rebounded thanks to federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. Now, however, recent research shows that the growth of the population has leveled off and may even be in decline. Throughout the region, climate change has caused a severe decline in whitebark pine—the seeds of which are one of four major high-protein food sources for bears—and there is considerable uncertainty about how shifting food sources will affect grizzlies' reproduction and survival rates. In years of poor whitebark pine cone production, grizzlies seek other foods, frequently at lower elevations, which often results in conflicts with humans and bears being killed. Additionally, Yellowstone grizzlies are geographically isolated from other grizzly populations, making their future even more uncertain. Sierra Club has long been involved in advocating for protection of the Yellowstone grizzly and the large, wild areas critical to their survival, and human-bear coexistence. We will continue to do so as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers removing federal protections for the Yellowstone grizzly population.



GRAY WOLVES. PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The **gray wolf** has made an incredible comeback in the Northern Rockies since its reintroduction in the mid-1990s to Yellowstone and central Idaho. However, since states regained management control over wolves just a short time ago, over 1,200 wolves have been killed in state hunting seasons and in Wyoming's unregulated 'predator zone', where wolves can be killed by any means, at any time, without a license. Sierra Club is challenging Wyoming's management plan in court to regain federal protections for wolves in Wyoming and pushing for more restrictions on wolf hunting in Montana.

This is an important and historic time for many issues in Greater Yellowstone. Sierra Club will continue to play a strong role in steering policy on these issues in the right direction. Our large membership, volunteer grassroots activism, policy expertise, and lobbying and litigation skills are critical to ensuring success in preserving the iconic species and vast wildlands of Greater Yellowstone. We look forward to working together to protect this spectacular region.

For more information on Sierra Club's Greater Yellowstone campaign, contact our Bozeman office at 406-582-8365, 424 E. Main Street #202B, Bozeman MT 59715 and visit sierraclubyellowstonecampaign.org

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