



Summary of the Yukon North Slope Grizzly Bear Research Project

What is the reason for study?

This study is needed to find out more about grizzly bear populations on the Yukon North Slope. The study will provide information on population size, birth rate, death rate, where bears can be found at different times of the year, and how much they move around. It will also include a review of harvest activity. It is important for wildlife managers to have all this information when they are determining the conservation requirements of this population and in reviewing harvest quotas.

Who is involved in the study?

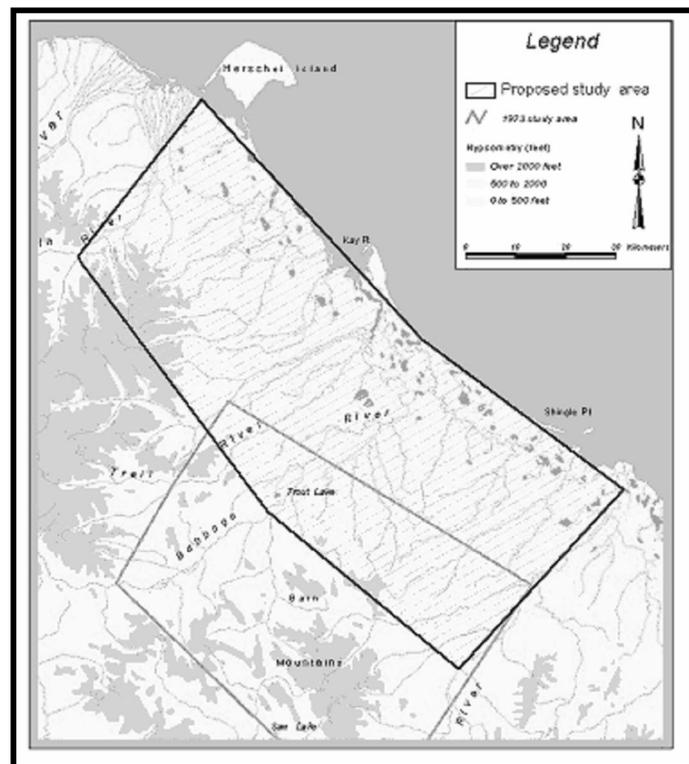
The Yukon Government (Department of Environment), Parks Canada, and the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee are involved in the study. The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) recommended the study.

What area does the study cover?

The study will focus on grizzly bears on the Yukon North Slope between the Firth and the Blow Rivers (see map).

What information is needed and why?

We need to know more about the how many grizzly bears there are on the Yukon North Slope. It's been 30 years since the last population surveys were done. The IFA recognizes the need to balance species conservation and the harvesting rights of the Inuvialuit. To make sure bear populations remain at the healthy level, wildlife managers and hunters need to know as much as possible when they discuss harvest quotas. Population size and how fast it is growing are important factors. Population size is usually estimated using different kinds of information. The number of bears that are born and die each year (including those harvested), the number of males and females and their age are all considered. It is important to calculate the number of bears that move in and out of the area since this also affects the total number. Knowing what is available for the bears to eat at different times of year can influence the number of bears as well.



What kinds of projects are included in the study?

The study includes projects to gather information from local residents as well as some science-based projects. We will talk with Aklavik residents to record their observations of bear activity and to gather information on harvesting. A DNA mark-recapture study will provide information on movement and population size by collecting hair samples from bears using special traps. Radio collars will be used to follow bear movement and to find out what habitat the bears are using at different times of year. This part of the study is designed to determine how changes in habitat can influence population size and movements. The habitat work can also provide population estimates based on the amount of good habitat for grizzly bears.

How will local Inuvialuit be involved?

Local knowledge and involvement is an important part of grizzly bear management in the ISR. It is key to the success of this study. We will talk with local people to find out about the number of bears, where bears can be found at different times of the year and how much they move around. Information from earlier interviews will be included. Harvest report forms and interviews with local hunters will be used to find out the number, location, sex and age of all the bears harvested in the study area. This information is needed to examine the current harvest levels. Local people can also be involved in figuring out how the study should be set up, in doing some of the fieldwork, in collecting samples while out on the land (scats and hair) and in reporting recent bear activity.



How will this study affect the grizzly bear harvest quota?

Information collected in this study will be used to update the grizzly bear harvest quota for the Yukon North Slope. People are seeing bears more often. They believe that grizzly bear numbers have increased since the last estimates. In the Barn Mountains, the last estimate of the grizzly bear population size was made in 1975. Information on the number of bears that are born and die in the region are also almost 30 years old. Current harvest quotas are based on a combination of these old estimates and estimates from other regions of the ISR with similar habitat. This new research will be used to update population estimates.

How long is the study?

The study will take six years to complete. It will start in May 2004. The first group of bears will be collared in the early summer. The local knowledge and the hair-trapping projects will start in 2005.

What will happen when the study is over?

The collars will be removed from all the bears at the end of the study. All the information gathered over the years will be used to design a program for long-term monitoring of grizzly bears on the Yukon North Slope. Long-term information is critical for understanding anything that could cause changes in bear population size, behavior or movement, including human activities.

For more information contact

Yukon Government, Department of Environment 867-667-5177
Parks Canada, Inuvik 867-777-8800
Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) 867-633-5476

Also see - www.taiga.net/wmac/grizzlyresearch/index.html