



TRACKS

IT'S ABOUT TIME

MARTHA SELLERS AND LISA UPSON

In bear years, coexistence work is coming of age in the US. For people, the effort to prevent human-carnivore conflicts is in its infancy. It wasn't until Yellowstone wolves started leaving the park about 20 years ago that carnivore coexistence became an organized field of practice in the American west, venturing up the steep learning curve of living with carnivores.

In 20 years' time we've learned a lot. Once wolf-livestock conflicts started occurring, some NGOs began working to mitigate negative reactions by experimenting with traditional husbandry practices. You may remember that Keystone Conservation was a pioneer in the use of range riders to prevent conflicts with wolves outside of Yellowstone a dozen years ago. We learned that riders need to actively bunch livestock, a natural prey defense strategy, and we wrote a groundbreaking paper on how this technique not only protects livestock and carnivores, but also improves land health because dispersed livestock create more negative impacts.

People and Carnivores staff was also early fladry users and developed equipment to help practitioners more efficiently deploy the flagged fencing. We have spent years creating innovative solutions to dirty garbage dumps, some of them working and others serving as useful tests. In the last couple years, we innovated bear deterrent fencing around different



This wolf was caught by one of our trail cameras on a fladry project. Cameras help us monitor fence line activity.



We are working to expand National Forest food storage orders and signage in areas where grizzlies are starting to show up.

kinds of chicken coops. Last year we developed a safer and more efficient bear pole building technique, reducing the risk of rotting and falling poles. For-profit companies have brought scare and acoustic devices to the work as well. In the last decade, the number of bear-resistant products has proliferated, including garbage cans, coolers, and backpacking food containers. Collectively we have made great progress in a relatively short time, and there is still a long way to go.

With 2020, a new decade has begun. Good and smart people can debate what needs to happen to further advance coexistence. At P&C, we think population growth and development in urban-wildland interfaces will solidify conflict prevention as the primary wildlife conservation strategy in the west. Wildlife

management will become even more contentious than it already is and policy protections will be nearly impossible to pass, making regional, community, and localized "bottom up" strategies essential to protect wildlife, especially large carnivores.

See more IT'S ABOUT TIME, page 3



STAFF

Lisa Upson
Executive Director

Bryce Andrews
Field Director

Martha Sellers
Director of Development
& Communication

Kim Johnston
Field Project Manager

Gillian Thornton (not pictured)
Communications Coordinator

CONTRACTORS

Paula Posey
Bookkeeping

Robert Rath
Graphic Design

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P.O. Box 6733
Bozeman, MT 59771-9922
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www.peopleandcarnivores.org

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Late winter means it is time for our annual report. Our fiscal year runs from October through September, so this time well for us to combine our bi-annual newsletter with our annual report. We had our FY19 financials audited and share about them in this issue.

As we embark on a new decade of implementing prevention tools across the west, we thank you for helping us protect predator species. By the time we reach 2030, conflict prevention will be recognized as a primary conservation tool for a majority of species. Together we can make a difference for wildlife!

Lisa.

lupson@peopleandcarnivores.org

LESSONS LEARNED FROM 2019 GRIZZLY BEAR ENCOUNTERS

KIMBERLY JOHNSTON



Each year P&C examines bear incidents across the region. In 2019, there were four physical conflicts between people and grizzly bears, all in SW Montana and none of which were fatal. The first incident occurred in April when a 17-year-old encountered a grizzly bear while out looking for antler sheds. While walking down a trail, the young man heard a noise behind him and turned around to see a charging grizzly bear. He deployed bear spray, and the bear ran off. The man sustained minor injuries.

The second and third incidents of 2019 occurred on the same day in September when three hunters were injured in two separate grizzly bear encounters less than a mile apart. The first attack occurred in the early morning, injuring two hunters; the second that evening, injuring

one hunter. The first pair successfully drove the bear away using bear spray, the second hunter with a gun. Officials were unable to determine if the same bear was involved in both incidents. The fourth incident occurred later in September when a hunter was moving through a wooded area and came upon a grizzly bear. The bear attacked the hunter who then reportedly fired gunshots until the bear left.

2019 taught us that backcountry use during dawn or dusk, in dense vegetation, without making noise and traveling in groups of two or less people increases the risk of an incident. In the first and non-hunter encounter, we are also reminded to be aware of what's behind us. We emphasize several key points in our bear safety trainings, including:

- 1. ACTIVELY ASSESS THE SURROUNDINGS.** Situational awareness is the key to bear safety.
- 2. TRAVEL IN A GROUP.** Traveling in a group of three or more people is statistically safest.
- 3. MAKE NOISE.** When given the chance, bears want to avoid humans. Make noise.
- 4. HAVE BEAR SPRAY AT THE READY.** Bear spray is proven to be the most effective deterrent.
- 5. AVOID HIGH RISK TIMES/AREAS.** There are certain times of day and year when risk is higher.

For more information about safety in bear country, visit the P&C website, fwp.mt.gov, and igbconline.org.

Collectively we are called to make this the decade in which coexistence is widely embraced so that tools and practices are applied consistently in and across regions and communities of ecological significance. This is called “scaling.” To scale coexistence, a coalition of practitioners, businesses, agencies, and private and public funders will need to develop a sustainable funding mechanism. In order to make this possible, we first need to show that the tools work, eventually at the community level, and then we must evaluate projects and document outcomes.

The P&C field staff evaluates and documents to ensure we are collecting data for this purpose. The lynchpin is generating social interest and willing participation from landowners, and this is what we work every day to create. The more we can show the tools work, the more people will pivot from carnivore animosity to carnivore coexistence.

In the meantime, wolves and cougars live an average of just 8-10 years in the wild, bears about 20. While we work to fulfill our vision of coexistence at scale, P&C will continue to help as many wolves, bears, and cats as possible travel as far as they can through this decade, hopefully into new, unoccupied habitat. This year, we have a number of projects already up and running and several in development. Here is just a sample.

FENCING. Fladry continues to be an effective short-term method to keep wolves away from livestock. We'll install an 80-acre fladry fence in a Big Hole Valley location this winter where many wolves



A Foxlight is a random flashing light that keeps bears and wolves away from livestock by mimicking human presence.



Our Kim Johnston installs fladry fencing at a ranch in the Big Hole Valley to keep wolves away from a calving pasture.

have been killed after conflicts. At a farm in the Mission Valley with increasing grizzly presence, we will put fencing around pig pens and grain storage. We are also designing and installing nearly a mile of fencing around a melon farm with black and grizzly bears in the area who would love nothing more than to feast on sweet, juicy melons.

LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOGS. Again this year we're holding two LGD workshops, and we're placing a pair of dogs at the Oxbow Cattle Company to guard some sheep that are consuming invasive weeds in an area with high cougar predation risk. We're also cost-sharing four LGDs at a ranch in the Big Hole Valley where wolves have been frequently seen.

GARBAGE. This year we will continue to focus on garbage security. We've been working with the Big Hole Watershed Committee to fund dozens of canisters. We're in year two of a three-year project to equip an entire resort town with canisters. We'll work with the trash hauler, US Forest Service and MT FWP, and area businesses to fundraise for the next phase of cans and educational events. We'll also continue our loaner programs to businesses and emergency service providers who need temporary help around SW Montana.

BACKCOUNTRY FOOD STORAGE. With nearly 250 of our bear poles on the landscape, we're still finding many places that need them. We'll be working with The Nature Conservancy this summer to install poles in the Gold Creek area where TNC has public access land. We'll also work with the US Forest Service to get new food storage orders in place and add signage in areas that are experiencing new grizzly bear presence. We will conduct several bear safety events.

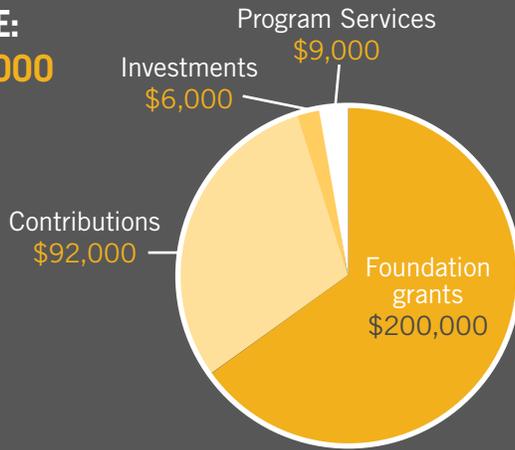
PREVENTION TOOL KITS. We're always trying to make coexistence easier for people, and this year we'll begin loaning out coexistence toolkits to ranchers and farmers consisting of both short- and long-term prevention tools, such as Foxlight and Critter Gitter scare devices, fencing supplies, and information about LGDs.

AUDITED FINANCIALS

FISCAL YEAR 2019: OCTOBER 1, 2018 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

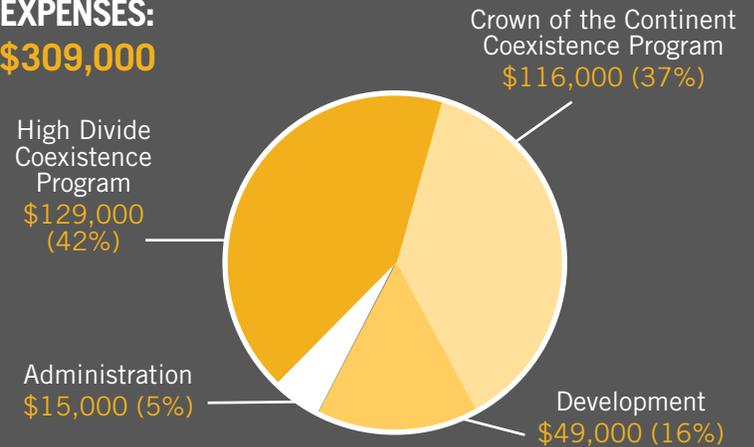
FUNDING SOURCES

INCOME:
\$307,000



USE OF FUNDS

EXPENSES:
\$309,000



Fiscal year 2019 was a productive year for People and Carnivores, both financially and programmatically. We closed the year with a \$2,000 deficit because we decided to invest in new bear pole building equipment but otherwise tracked our budget. At the fiscal year end our total assets stood at \$591,000, a 370% increase over the last five years. In 2018, we were fortunate to receive an impact grant from the Volgenau Foundation, and in 2017 a donor bequest. This generous support allowed us to invest \$200,000, which generates roughly \$5,000 of income annually. We also have a

\$200,000 reserve in a trust benefit a donor created, and our donor contributions have been increasing slightly over time. We have a cautious orientation towards financial management to ensure our program work can be sustained despite annual funding variations and, when possible, grow responsibly. Over the next year we may spend some of the impact grant by adding capacity to get more coexistence tools on the ground. We commit to being good stewards of all donations and grants, as we are mindful of our shared priority to protect wolves, bears, and lions.

MANY THANKS TO OUR INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS

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PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS, FISCAL YEAR 2019

In both the High Divide and Crown of the Continent programs last year, we expanded two aspects of our conflict prevention work to protect bears and help them move further out from core habitat: garbage security and backcountry food storage. We cost-shared and distributed more than 50 canisters to a community with bears in garbage, and we worked with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to cost-share and implement food storage signs and loaner equipment to recreationists including bear-resistance coolers, portable fences, and backpacking containers. We also began to work with a town to help them become a “Bear Smart” community and hope to use this project as a model we can apply with other towns and cities in bear country.

We added a new service, a conflict risk assessment, wherein we conduct risk assessments on properties and make recommendations to prevent future conflicts. In three of these projects, in 2020 we will add guard dogs and fencing deterrents. Interestingly, together these properties involve conflict risks with all the large carnivores; one has high risk of conflicts with mountain lions, one with wolves, and one with both grizzly and black bears. We added a new product at year-end: coexistence tool kits which we’ll loan out to landowners or communities having conflicts. And much more. Our outcomes were positive, as conflicts and losses thus far were held at zero, reduced, or eliminated. Conflict prevention works to protect the big critters and keep them moving!

WITH GRATITUDE!

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Our next film, “Tracks and Cams,” will focus on mountain lions, and how tracking and cameras can inform landowner choices to use proactive conflict prevention measures.

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