



# FWP NEWS RELEASE

Region 3 Headquarters

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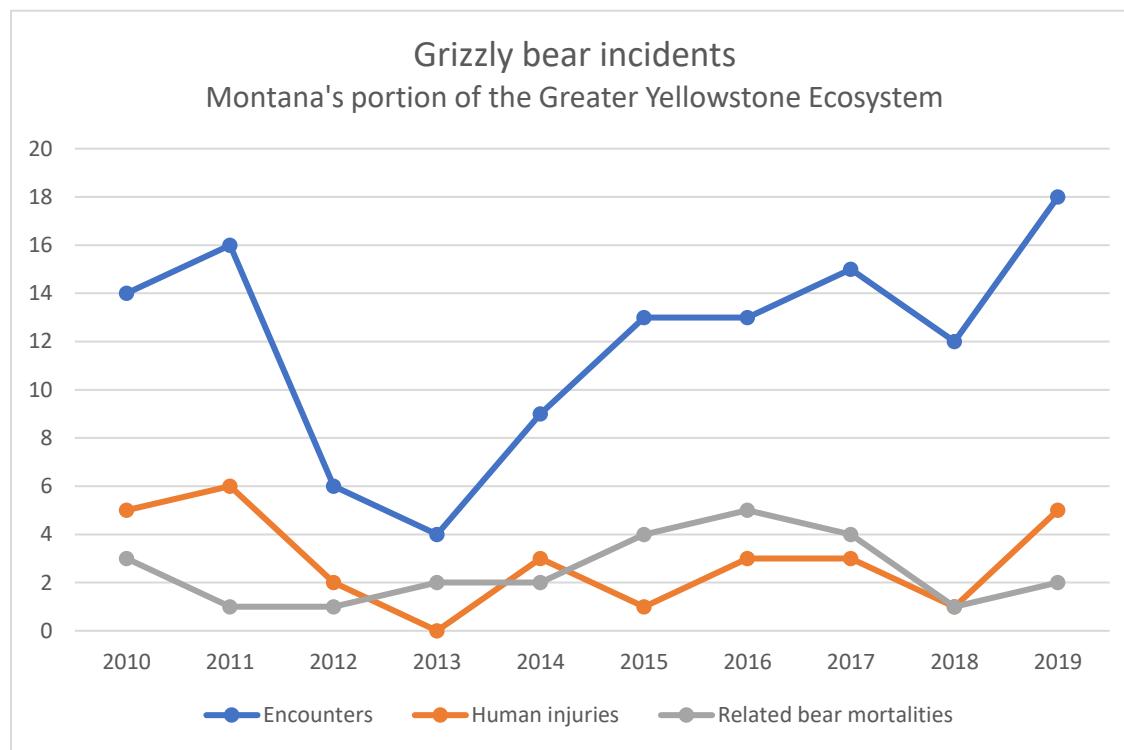
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Mar. 11, 2020

## Grizzly bear encounters in southwest Montana increase from recent years

**Bozeman, MT** — Recreationists in southwest Montana reported having more encounters with grizzly bears in 2019 than in recent years.

Montana's portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem saw 18 potentially dangerous encounters between humans and grizzly bears mostly in non-residential areas last year. In those encounters, five people were injured and two adult bears were killed. Fortunately, none of the human injuries were fatal.



Last year's 18 incidents happened in the Madison, Gravelly, Absaroka and Beartooth mountain ranges, with 14 of them occurring after Sept. 1.

Most attacks from grizzly bears happen in surprise close encounters with people. Grizzly bears often attack defensively when encountering people in dense brush or timber, at the site of an animal carcass or when cubs are present.

Grizzly bears are currently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Management authority rests with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, working closely in Montana with FWP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, the U.S. Forest Service and Tribal lands who conduct the



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investigations and management actions. However, grizzlies have expanded well beyond recovery zones and become more densely populated in southwest Montana. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's grizzly bear population, which includes portions of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho, is estimated conservatively at about 750 bears.

## Preparing for 2020

March is typically when bears start emerging from hibernation, and by April, most, if not all, bears are active again. This is also when residents and recreationists are spending more time outside.

Residents can help minimize bear attractants by doing a spring cleanup of their yard. Bird feeders, pet food, garbage and other attractants should be stored securely. Bear-resistant garbage containers are available to residents in many areas.

If a bear finds an artificial food source during the bear activity seasons, it is likely to return to the same place to look for food and lose its natural drive to find food in the wild. Situations like these can create risks for humans and property and require problem bears to be relocated or destroyed.

Recreationists should always be prepared to handle a bear encounter. Carry bear spray and travel in groups; these two factors proved essential for people who survived bear attacks last year. Casual noise can help alert bears to your presence. Animal carcasses can attract bears, so avoid them. Follow food storage orders, which went into effect on Mar. 1 for public lands in Montana.

For more information on avoiding negative encounters with bears, visit [igbconline.org/bear-safety](http://igbconline.org/bear-safety).

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