

\$3 million DNA study pegs grizzly population at about 765 animals

Sept. 18, 2008—There are some 765 grizzly bears in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, according to a report released Sept. 16 by the U.S. Geological Survey, reports Chris Peterson in the **Sept. 18 Hungry Horse News**.

“Biologist Katherine Kendall and a small army of staffers and volunteers embarked on an ambitious DNA project in 2003-2004 with the goal of counting grizzlies in a unique and non-invasive way: By capturing their hair in barbed wire,” writes Peterson. After collecting hair and scat samples from the bears, DNA analysis was used to identify individuals. The study cost \$3 million, reports Peterson, and it took 2½ years to complete the genetic analysis.

The 7.8 million-acre ecosystem—straddling the Continental Divide from north of Missoula and Seeley Lake to the Canadian border—encompasses the Bob Marshall and Great Bear wildernesses, Glacier National Park, and the North Fork. Actual figures released by the USGS estimate the grizzly population at between 715 and 831 animals, Peterson reports.

For more, go to the **USGS grizzly-project Web site**.