



Electric Fencing Incentive Program

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to long term grizzly bear recovery in the lower 48 states. Conflict with people is a major cause of grizzly bear mortality and reduces human tolerance for the species. Defenders' Electric Fencing Incentive Program provides financial and technical assistance to help landowners minimize conflict by securing their livestock, beehives, gardens or other bear attractants. Our program field staff work directly with communities and landowners to improve awareness and implement conflict reduction measures across five grizzly bear ecosystems: Greater Yellowstone, Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak, Selkirk and Bitterroot.

In addition to individuals and communities, Defenders collaborates with nonprofit organizations, small businesses and government agencies to complete a wide variety of electric fence projects, primarily on private lands. We provide the financial support and technical expertise to build electric fence systems that effectively deter grizzly bears and other carnivores from accessing human-related attractants.

Program Summary

Defenders' electric fencing program is designed to proactively prevent conflicts, with priority given to landowners with past bear problems. At sites with fences completed and maintained, we see a direct reduction in human-bear and other wildlife conflicts.

Initially, we reimbursed landowners \$100 of the cost to install an electric fence around an identified grizzly bear attractant. In 2012, we improved the program to reimburse 50% of the cost of electric fencing around any grizzly bear attractant within priority counties, up to a maximum incentive of \$500 per landowner.

As the 10th anniversary of our fencing program approaches, its popularity and visibility continue to grow and our results attest to its effectiveness.

For more information, visit the grizzly bear section of our interactive web feature, [Storymapping Coexistence Across the Country.](#)

Right: Residential enclosure fence securing backyard attractants along a riparian corridor experiencing regular grizzly bear traffic on Montana's Rocky Mountain Front. This high tensile, seven-strand, alternating positive - negative design is highly effective at keeping bears and other carnivores out.



2019 Results

Defenders helped landowners complete an additional 45 electric fence projects in 2019 and provided \$17,758 in reimbursements and materials to participants. We conducted 17 site visits with participants, including several direct responses to ongoing bear conflicts.

We also attended eight outreach events to promote the use of electric fencing to reduce conflicts and contacted well over 100 landowners and livestock producers. Many of these contacts will likely carry over into 2020 as future projects.

Our total number of completed projects since the program began in 2010 is now 392 electric fences (see the spatial and temporal map of all projects completed to date on page 3) and over \$117,000 in reimbursements to participants.

Average reimbursement (2019)

- \$355 per project

Fence type (2019)

- 80% of participants built permanent fences.
- 9% of participants built semi-permanent fences.
- 11% of participants built temporary fences.

Attractants secured

- In 2019, protecting livestock was the top reason for installing a fence, followed by chickens, bees and fruit trees (Fig. 1).

Program awareness

- In 2019, word of mouth was the most commonly cited source of initial information on the program, followed by state and tribal wildlife managers (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1: Percentage of fence projects by type of attractant secured (2019)

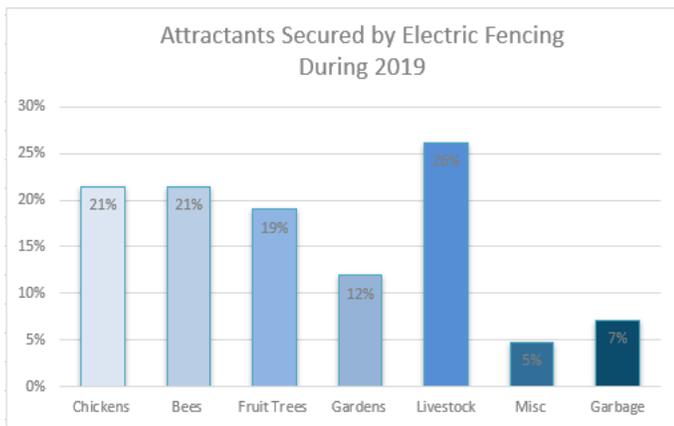
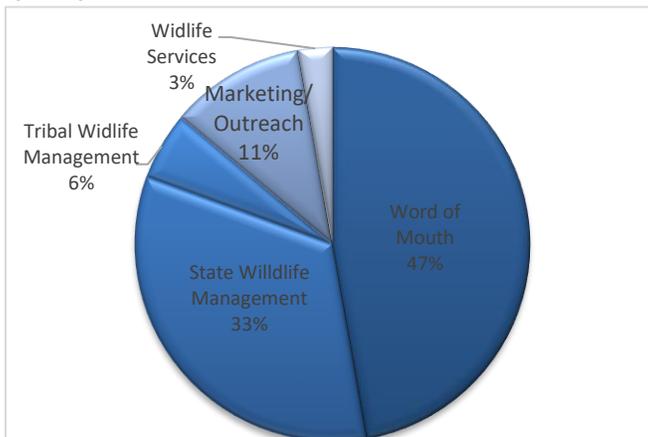


Fig. 2: How participants heard about the program (2019)



2010-2018 Participant Survey Highlights

Defenders monitors pre- and post-fencing success related to human-bear conflicts on private lands by annually surveying participants with electric fences in use for one or more years. Since 2012, we have also been collecting a variety of participant and project data.

Of the 145 participants surveyed to date:

- 51% experienced past bear conflicts at their site.
- 94% report their electric fences are still in use.
- 99% report that their fence has successfully protected the intended attractant.
- 3% report experiencing some type of fence failure resulting in a conflict. Each failure was attributed to technical difficulties and/or user error.
- 25% have improved or expanded their fences since the time of installation.

Participant testimonials

“I’ve sat and watched bears and [mountain] lions stop and stare at the fence and walk away empty-handed. We’ve told lots of folks about this program because if we hadn’t heard about the program there is no way we could have afforded the fence or even thought to try it.”

– J. Maestes, Thompson Falls, MT, 2016 participant

“Loved the support when we were putting the plan together. Most folks aren’t familiar enough with electric fence, so it was super helpful to have the guidance.”

– S. Morris, Clinton, MT, 2018 participant

“We know it’s working because we’ve seen bears hit it and move on. They tried climbing in, got shocked, and never came back.”

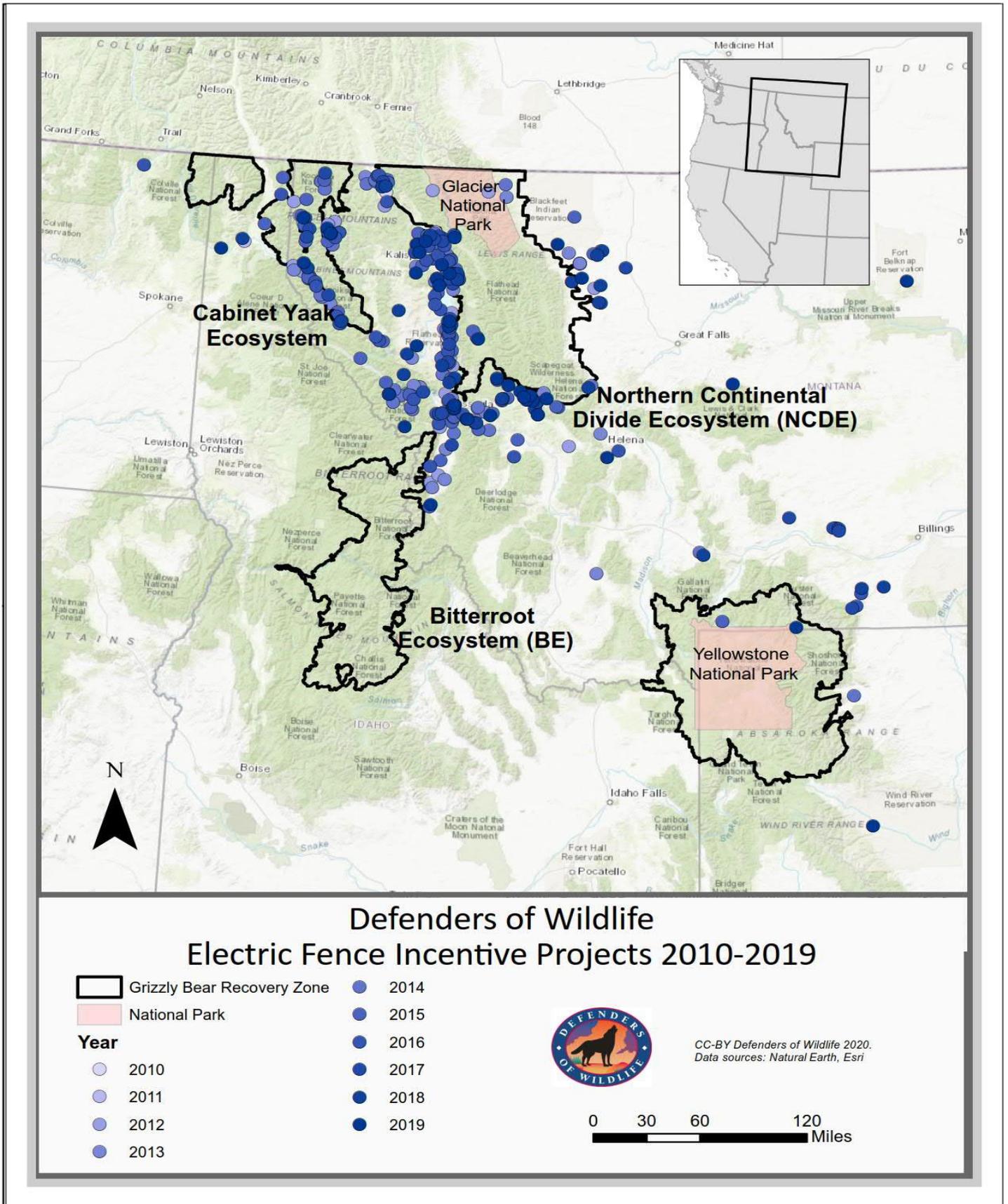
– R. Schlenker, Kalispell, MT, 2016 participant

“I think the program is great with or without the cost sharing component. Just getting good information out there for us was appreciated.”

– B. Yanker, Bozeman, MT, 2018 participant

I believe this support of landowners who might be directly impacted by grizzly bears is an important part of keeping bears out of trouble. Thank you for your work.

– M. Gebhardt, Roberts, MT, 2018 participant



Right: This newly installed electrified protection for a community orchard on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Lodgepole, Montana was a collaboration of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Tribes, American Prairie Reserve, Wildlife Services and Defenders of Wildlife (representatives pictured).



Left: Defenders staff assisted Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks with the installation of this temporary electric fence around a grease bin and dumpsters at a restaurant in the Bitterroot Ecosystem experiencing black bear conflicts. A collared grizzly bear had been observed in the area the previous day.

Right: Defenders installed this electric fence around the Cooke City School compost site in Cooke City, Montana, with assistance from teacher Lara Belice (pictured) and in partnership with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Greater Yellowstone Coalition.

