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Officials: West Glacier Cyclist Collided with Bear Before Fatal Attack

Wildlife managers removing traps, cameras as search for bear winds down

BY JUSTIN FRANZ & DILLON TABISH // JUL 2, 2016 // [NEWS & FEATURES](#)



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Update: July 2, 9 a.m.

A 38-year-old West Glacier man was riding his mountain bike at a high speed along a narrow forest trail when he collided with a bear, leading to a fatal attack earlier this week, according to a preliminary investigation by Montana wildlife officials.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks on Saturday released initial details of the June 29 bear attack that occurred in a section of Flathead National Forest south of Glacier National Park.



Brad Treat, 38, of West Glacier, was killed while mountain biking [on the Green Gate/Half Moon trail system](#). Treat grew up in the Flathead Valley and graduated from Flathead High School in 1996.

Wildlife response team investigator Brian Sommers says he believes Treat was riding at a high rate of speed on a narrow trail when he collided with the bear that then attacked him. A family member who was biking with Treat was not attacked and was able to summon help.

“Sight visibility at the location of the collision is very limited and the collision was unavoidable,” FWP officials said in a press release Saturday. “The bear reacted which led to the attack.”

Three days after the fatal mauling, the search for the animal is winding down, although the investigation is continuing. John Fraley, FWP spokesperson, said officials were removing bear



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traps and cameras from the forested area near West Glacier.

Authorities initially identified the bear as a grizzly, but state wildlife managers have collected DNA samples from the scene to officially confirm whether it was a grizzly bear or black bear.

Treat, a law enforcement officer with the U.S. Forest Service in the Hungry Horse District, was pronounced dead at the scene. His body was transported out by an off-highway vehicle and was taken to the Montana State Crime Lab in Missoula. Flathead County Sheriff Chuck Curry said an autopsy would be conducted to gather information about the bear that killed Treat.

The Green Gate/Halfmoon trail system off U.S. 2 remains closed and posted by U.S. Forest Service officials in the interest of public safety. Forest Service roads closed in that area include Pack Trail, Hog Haven, Belton Point Road, Halfmoon Lake Road, Belton Ski Course and Ryan Road. Landowners in the area are exempt from the road closures, although everyone is reminded to use caution while traveling through the area.

In fall 2015, [a black bear fatally attacked an elderly woman](#) in her home near Kalispell. Barbara Paschke, 85, died Oct. 1 from injuries she suffered during a black bear attack inside her Ashley Lake home on Sept. 27. According to FWP, Paschke had been providing supplemental feed to bears and was previously cited in 2012. Wildlife managers suspended the search after failing to locate the animal.

If the attacking bear is identified as a grizzly, it would be the first fatal grizzly attack in Northwest Montana since 2001, when an elk hunter was killed on the Blackfoot Clearwater Game Range near Ovando.

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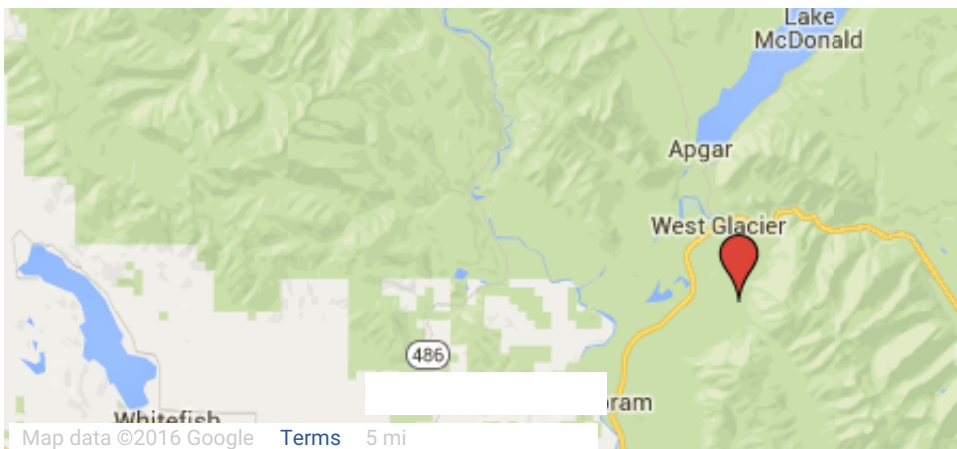
Grizzly bear attacks are rare in the Glacier region but not unheard of. Since Glacier National Park was created in 1910, there have been 10 fatal grizzly attacks in the national park, the most recent in May 1998 when a 26-year-old man was killed hiking in the Upper Two Medicine Valley.

Northwest Montana is home to the largest grizzly bear population in the lower 48 states with approximately 1,000 bears living in the region. Grizzlies are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

There have been six fatal grizzly bear attacks since 2010 in the Yellowstone region of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho.

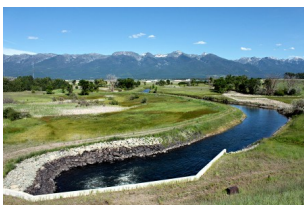
This story will be updated when more information becomes available.

General area where fatal grizzly



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