POSITION OPENING FOR:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center
West Yellowstone, Montana

An AZA Accredited Not for Profit Wildlife Park and Educational Facility

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

The Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center (GWDC) is a nationally recognized, AZA-accredited, non-profit wildlife park dedicated to education, conservation, research, and the responsible care of grizzly bears and gray wolves. Located at the west entrance of Yellowstone National Park, GWDC provides visitors with unique opportunities to observe and learn about these iconic species while advancing coexistence between people and wildlife.

Opened in 1993, GWDC is home to more than 25 animals and welcomes over 200,000 visitors each year. The organization is well established and financially sound, with an annual budget of $4–$5 million, and is widely recognized for its educational experience and excellent animal care and well-being.

The new Executive Director will guide the GWDC into its next chapter to build on fiscal sustainability and staff development, expand educational programs, advance conservation initiatives, and deepen community engagement.

POSITION SUMMARY

The Executive Director (ED) serves as the chief executive and visionary leader of the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the ED is responsible for overall strategic leadership, organizational management, animal welfare, conservation programming, financial sustainability, and community engagement. This role requires a dynamic leader with strong non-profit management experience and a deep commitment to animal welfare and conservation. Experience in accredited zoological institutions and with large carnivores such as grizzly bears and wolves is highly valued.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

GWDC's current Executive Director is retiring in mid-March 2027. The new Executive Director is expected to start in early March 2027, allowing about two weeks of overlap for a planned handoff of key relationships, operations, and ongoing initiatives.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership & Governance

- Partner with the Board of Directors to set and implement long-term strategic priorities aligned with GWDC's mission and AZA standards.
- Ensure compliance with AZA accreditation requirements and foster a culture of continuous improvement and excellence in animal care and conservation.
- Represent GWDC professionally at the local, regional, and national levels.

Animal Care, Conservation & Programs

- Provide executive oversight of animal care, welfare, and habitat management for grizzly bears, gray wolves, and other resident species.
- Support and advance conservation, research, and education initiatives related to large carnivores and human–wildlife coexistence.
- Ensure programs meet or exceed AZA best practices and ethical standards.

Non-Profit Administration & Finance

- Oversee all aspects of organizational operations, including budgeting, financial management, audits, and risk management.
- Lead fundraising, donor relations, grant development, and earned revenue strategies to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Provide overall leadership and supervision for a staff of 40 to 50 full-time and seasonal employees.
- Manage senior staff, foster professional development, and maintain a positive, mission-driven workplace culture.

Community & External Relations

- Serve as the primary spokesperson for GWDC with donors, partners, government agencies, media, and the public.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with local, state, and federal partners, including those connected to Yellowstone National Park.

COMPENSATION

Salary range: $135,000 to $175,000, commensurate with experience, with a comprehensive benefits package that includes: health insurance, dental/vision insurance, profit-share dividend, SIMPLE IRA with employer match, PTO and annual National Park pass.

Relocation support may be offered, depending on the candidate's needs and eligibility.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Demonstrated senior leadership experience in a non-profit, zoological, wildlife, or visitor-serving organization.
- Significant non-profit management experience, including budgeting, fundraising, and board relations.
- Experience managing day-to-day operations, such as admissions, retail, visitor services, and special events.
- A strong commitment to animal welfare and the ability to lead and support a professional animal care team.
- Familiarity with AZA accreditation standards, animal welfare regulations, and conservation best practices, or the ability to learn them quickly.
- Excellent communication, leadership, and interpersonal skills.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

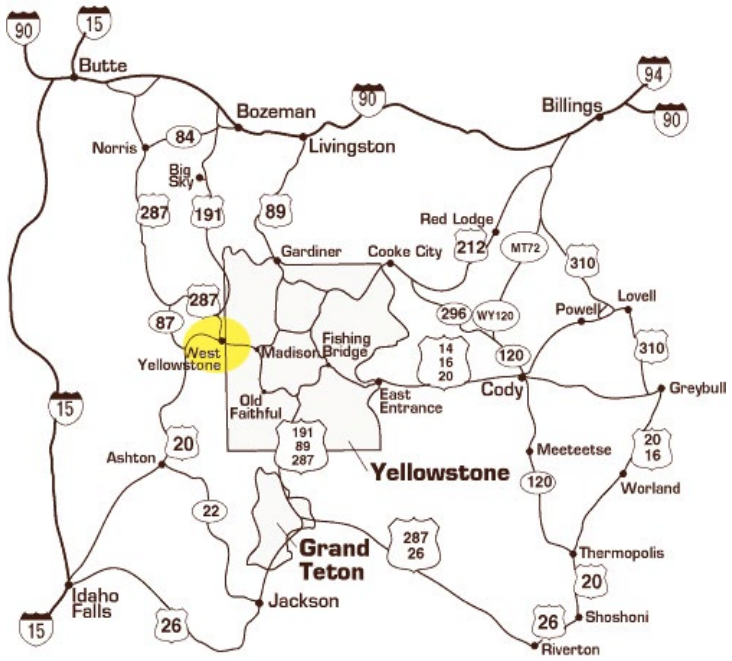
- Advanced degree in wildlife biology, zoology, conservation, non-profit management, or a related field.
- Senior leadership experience within an AZA-accredited institution.
- Experience overseeing the care of large carnivores or other potentially dangerous animals.
- Direct professional experience with grizzly bears and/or gray wolves.
- Experience leading an organization of comparable size (budget of roughly $4–$5 million).
- Demonstrated success in donor cultivation, capital campaigns, or major grant acquisition.

LIVING IN WEST YELLOWSTONE – IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

West Yellowstone is a small mountain community at the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park. Residents enjoy extraordinary year-round access to public lands and wildlife, from hiking, fishing, and wildlife watching in summer to cross-country skiing and snowmobiling in winter, along with the close-knit feel of a small town. It also presents unique challenges that we ask every candidate to weigh carefully:

- Limited housing availability and higher cost of living.
- Long, cold winters with heavy snowfall.
- Limited local services and healthcare.
- Seasonal tourism-driven population fluctuations.

We encourage candidates to talk through these realities with their partners and families early in the process. Finalists will be invited to visit West Yellowstone during the winter, and GWDC is glad to connect partners and families with local employers, schools, and community resources.



APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply, email a cover letter and résumé or CV to application@grizzlydiscoveryctr.com with "Executive Director" in the subject line. Questions may be directed to Travis Vineyard, Search Committee Chair, tgv@clevelandmetroparks.com.

In your cover letter, please describe what draws you to living and working in West Yellowstone and any experience you have living in a rural or remote community.

If selected as a semifinalist, applicants must disclose any prior termination or request to resign and briefly explain the circumstances. A past termination does not automatically disqualify a candidate, but failure to disclose one will. Professional references will be requested from semifinalists and contacted only with the candidate's permission. Finalists must complete a background check.

SEARCH TIMELINE

- Priority application deadline:
  Friday, November 18, 2026.
  Applications received after this date may be considered until the position is filled.
- First-round video interviews:
  November 30 – December 4, 2026
- Finalists selected and notified:
  by December 7, 2026
- Finalist visits to West Yellowstone:
  December 9–17, 2026
- Board decision and offer:
  by December 23, 2026
- Anticipated start date:
  early March 2027

The Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome applicants of all backgrounds and encourage you to apply even if your experience does not match every qualification listed.