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## Spring Grizzly Hunt Over for this Year

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Alberta's spring grizzly bear hunt finished on May 31, 2004. At the time of writing, no numbers were available for the numbers killed during the hunt. Even if the numbers killed are down from the 18 bears killed in the 2003 hunt, this is still too many!

Now that the hunt is out of the way, it is time for the government to listen to its own scientists, and to the 1500+ Albertans who have written to the Premier to say that enough is enough. It is now beyond doubt that there are not enough grizzly bears in the province to support a hunt. The grizzly must be designated a 'threatened' species, and the hunt suspended.

There is still considerable uncertainty as to how many grizzly bears there are in the province. Up until 2002, government staff used a figure of 1000 on provincial lands. In 2003, this figure was revised down to 500. Government scientists are now working on a 'best guess' figure of less than 700 bears.

Even the overoptimistic population estimate of 1000 bears in 2002 was still sufficient to lead the government's Endangered Species Sub Committee to recommend that the grizzly should be designated a 'threatened' species (which would lead to an automatic suspension of the hunt). Minister for Sustainable Resource Development, Mike Cardinal, has so far decided to ignore the advice of his scientists.

To some people, the issue of the spring grizzly bear hunt has unfortunately become one of hunters against environmentalists. AWA is opposed to the hunting of species that are threatened or endangered. Many hunters, who see themselves as 'stewards' of Alberta's wild places, are opposed to the hunt. Those hunters who continue to argue that they should be allowed to continue to hunt Alberta's struggling grizzly population, do themselves, and hunters in general, little credit.

