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## **Alberta Government Fails our Grizzly Bears Again**

The Alberta government yesterday announced that it will go ahead with this year's spring grizzly bear hunt, despite overwhelming scientific evidence that Alberta's grizzlies are in serious trouble. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is one of a number of environmental groups in agreement with government scientists and committees, who have consistently recommended suspending the hunt.

"Scientists now agree that Alberta's grizzly bear population stands at less than 700 bears," says AWA Conservation Specialist, Nigel Douglas. "The government's own Grizzly Bear Recovery Team has called for a postponement to the hunt. Its Endangered Species Conservation Committee has recommended listing the grizzly as a "threatened" species which would lead to an automatic suspension of the hunt. To continue to kill threatened grizzly bears is obtuse in the extreme."

Today's announcement will allow for 73 hunting licences to be issued – the same number as last year. Six bears were killed in the hunt in spring 2004. This was less than in some previous years (in part due to heavy snow in the early part of the hunt season), but still six bears unnecessarily removed from a threatened population.

A suspension of the grizzly hunt is the first of several major steps that need to be taken if Alberta is going to sustain a grizzly bear population in the future. Other vital measures include:

- Designate the grizzly as a 'threatened' species, as recommended by the government's Endangered Species Conservation Committee and Grizzly Bear Recovery Team.
- Prevent the loss of grizzly habitat. Legislated protection of key habitat areas, such as the Bighorn, Castle and Chinchaga is vital.
- Introduce measures to reduce the enormous network of industrial roads throughout the foothills and boreal forest.

"If we can't even take this relatively modest first step towards recovering grizzly populations, then the future for grizzly bears in the province is bleak," says Douglas.

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