



Release Date: July 6, 2005

Ten More Dead Grizzlies Pressure Mounts on Struggling Bruins

Ten more grizzly bears were killed in the province's spring grizzly bear hunt, according to new figures released by the Alberta government. Conservation groups say that this is totally unacceptable in a province developing a Recovery Plan process for a "threatened" species.

"This is 10 bears too many," says Nigel Douglas, Conservation Specialist with Alberta Wilderness Association. "The evidence is clear now that grizzly bears are in serious trouble in Alberta and this hunt shames Alberta both nationally and internationally."

Calls to suspend the hunt come not just from conservation groups but also from concerned hunters and even from the government's own scientists. The provincial Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan reports, "Because hunting is the largest source of grizzly bear mortality, an immediate, temporary suspension of the hunt is necessary to significantly reduce mortality while recovery actions are implemented."

The plan, which was submitted to Minister for Sustainable Resource Development, David Coumts, in December 2004 by his multi-stakeholder Recovery Team, is very clear on the matter. But the minister continues to prevaricate.

"It has been 3 years since the government's own scientists and advisory committees began stressing the importance of suspending the hunt, and each year the evidence continues to mount," says Tracey Henderson, Program Director of the Grizzly Bear Alliance. "It is time Premier Klein started managing grizzly bears in a manner that acknowledges the existing science and the values of all Albertans, not just those few who wish to have another trophy for their wall."

Half of the bears, including three females, were killed in units already highlighted for excessive human-caused grizzly deaths. "Just ending the hunt will not save grizzlies," says Jim Pissot of Defenders of Wildlife Canada. "But it is one provincial action that will be immediately beneficial to Alberta's threatened grizzly population."

In 2002, the government's Endangered Species Conservation Committee recommended that the grizzly should be designated as 'threatened' in Alberta. "The government's continued reluctance to suspend the hunt clearly demonstrates their lack of sincerity in recovering this important species," says Henderson.

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