



Media Release

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## **Too Many Dead Grizzly Bears in 2008 Conservationists Call for Government Action to Reduce Human Caused Mortalities**

(Calgary) Human caused mortality of grizzly bears reached unsustainably high levels in 2008 according to data recently released by the Government of Alberta. This indicates the government is not taking sufficient action to prevent grizzly bear mortalities or to implement an effective recovery strategy. In response, Action Grizzly Bear is calling on the Alberta Government to take immediate action to reduce human caused mortality in Alberta. This includes reducing road densities in bear habitat, developing effective conflict prevention programs and dedicating a budget necessary to implement these and other recovery strategies.

“Humans are responsible for over 90% of grizzly mortalities in Alberta,” said Carl Morrison with Action Grizzly Bear. “Although this is a discouraging figure, it speaks volumes of our direct ability to reduce our impact on bears.”

There were 19 known human caused grizzly bear mortalities and 15 grizzly bears relocated in 2008. According to the *Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (2008-2013)* 30% - 50% of grizzly bear mortalities go unreported and bears suffer a 30% increase in mortality following relocation. This means Alberta may have lost an estimated 28 – 34 grizzly bears in 2008. With the present population estimate of fewer than 500 grizzlies in Alberta, this equates to 5.6 % to 6.8 % of the total population. This is not sustainable according to the Recovery Plan that states human caused mortality cannot exceed 2.1% in moderate habitat and 4.9% in optimal habitat.

“Last year’s mortality data indicates the government has not been effective in reducing human caused mortality, which is a critical aspect in the recovery of this species at risk,” said Philip Penner with Federation of Alberta Naturalists. “The government must take immediate action to reduce open route densities, implement effective conflict prevention programs and dedicate a budget for recovery to execute these strategies.”

Open routes (roads, trails, and seismic lines without restrictions on motorized vehicle use including trail bikes, ATV’s and 4WD vehicles) are a major source of grizzly bear mortality because they facilitate human access into grizzly habitat. In fact 89% of grizzly mortalities occur within 500 meters of a road. The Recovery Plan suggests clear limits on open route densities for prime habitat and surrounding grizzly bear range. To date, no on the ground action has been taken to meet these requirements.

“The government process currently underway to assess open route densities will take far too long and is only looking at routes on which a 4WD vehicle could drive. This will not provide an accurate representation of open route densities,” said Morrison. “Before this process actually results in any reduction of route densities we will likely see further degradation of the habitat it is intended to protect and as a consequence, more dead bears.”

Improperly stored food and attractants are also a major threat to grizzly bear persistence. Bears that get into attractants are often labeled problem bears and either destroyed or relocated. This is not a viable solution because of the increased risk of mortality following relocation. Programs such as Bearsmart have great potential to inform the public and reduce conflict but these programs must be adequately staffed and funded if they are to be effective and last year’s data indicates this is not the case.

“Bears are not the problem: they are a symptom of a problem that begins with people,” suggests Penner. “The government needs to invest more resources into prevention.”

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**For more information go to [www.actiongrizzlybear.ca](http://www.actiongrizzlybear.ca) and contact:**

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**Independent contacts regarding grizzly bear science:**

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## Background:

### Action Grizzly Bear:

Action Grizzly Bear is a campaign headed by Sierra Club Canada and supported by several leading local, national and international conservation voices including Alberta Wilderness Association, Defenders of Wildlife, Federation of Alberta Naturalists, and USTB Research. It focuses on achieving Alberta and Canadian government action on grizzly bear recovery. It provides citizens with a vehicle to have their voices heard on behalf of the fewer than 500 grizzly bears remaining in Alberta. For more information visit [www.actiongrizzlybear.ca](http://www.actiongrizzlybear.ca)

## Grizzly Bear Mortality Statistics

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Hunting licences allocated	145	122	130	101	73	73	0	0	0	<b>644</b>
Total grizzlies taken during legal hunt	19	17	15	18	6	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>85</b>
Aboriginal (subsistence harvest)	3	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	2	<b>10</b>
Illegal kill	9	5	7	5	1	6	2	3	1	<b>39</b>
Mistaken for black bear	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	<b>7</b>
Self defence	3	3	2	7	3	1	5	4	6	<b>34</b>
Accidental (human-related e.g. road kills)	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	4	<b>8</b>
Research-related	0	0	1	3	0	2	1	0	0	<b>7</b>
Destroyed - problem bears	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	2	6	<b>14</b>
Killed by predation	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
Unknown	0	1	2	4	1	0	2	0	1	<b>11</b>
Total known human-caused grizzly mortalities	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>204</b>
Total mortalities	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>217</b>

## Grizzly Bear Relocation Statistics

