



Media Release

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Humans killing too many grizzly bears in Alberta

Human caused deaths of grizzly bears in Alberta reached unsustainable levels in 2009. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) reported that 17 grizzly bears were killed by humans in 2009 and almost that many again were relocated. Scientific research indicates that unknown poaching kills likely accounted for an additional five to eight undocumented grizzly bear mortalities. Conservationists are calling on the Alberta government to immediately list the grizzly bear as *Threatened* under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*; increase habitat security by protecting critical habitat and reducing open route densities in grizzly bear range; and increase funding to public education programs that aim to reduce human-bear conflict.

"These high rates of mortality could have been avoided had the government implemented key aspects of the *Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan* that it adopted two years ago," says Carl Morrison of Sierra Club Canada

The *Status of the Grizzly Bear in Alberta*, a report recently released by the Government of Alberta, confirms that the expanding network of open routes (i.e., roads and other linear features without restrictions on public motorized use) in grizzly habitat has lead to unsustainable levels of bear mortality and that some local populations of grizzlies are likely in decline. In fact, 89 per cent of grizzly deaths in Alberta's central Rocky Mountains occurred within 500 meters of an open route. "The *Recovery Plan* sets thresholds for open route densities in grizzly habitat but the government has failed to meet these requirements" says Sarah Elmeligi, Senior Conservation Planner at the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. "On the contrary, certain forest management plans are now proposing to exceed these thresholds."

Bears hardly ever die of old age or of other natural causes. "Humans are responsible for over 90% of grizzly bear deaths in Alberta," says Philip Penner with Nature Alberta. "Reducing our impact on bears is a critical aspect of recovery."

Following thorough scientific review of the recent *Status Report*, Alberta's multi-stakeholder Endangered Species Conservation Committee (ESCC) recommended, for a second time in less than a decade, listing the grizzly bear as a *Threatened* species under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*. Since 2002, when the ESCC first recommended protecting the bear, at least 159 grizzlies have been killed by humans. "So far, SRD Minister Mel Knight has been unwilling to accept the most recent status recommendation," says Jim Pissot of WildCanada Conservation Alliance. "In fact, more inexcusable government delays are expected as Minister Knight plans to consult with Cabinet before making a decision"

The solution to limiting the number of human-caused bear deaths involves increasing habitat security by protecting adequate amounts of grizzly bear habitat and restricting the number of open routes and motorized access in other places.

"Programs such as BearSmart have great potential to reduce human-bear conflict but lack the funding and staff necessary to be most effective," says Nigel Douglas of the Alberta Wilderness Association. "Only \$150,000 is spent on Alberta's BearSmart program, compared to the \$4.5 million spent on the Bear Wise program in Ontario."

"Listing the grizzly bear as Threatened will also assist with conflict prevention," says Wendy Francis, Director of Conservation at the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. "An important aspect of public education and promoting stewardship is delivering a clear message that Alberta's grizzly bear is a threatened species deserving of special management considerations," she adds.

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Grizzly Bear Mortality Statistics

Also available at:

<http://srd.alberta.ca/ManagingPrograms/FishWildlifeManagement/BearManagement/GrizzlyBears/AlbertaGrizzlyBearMortalityRates.aspx>

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Hunting licences allocated	145	122	130	101	73	73	0	0	0	0	644
Total grizzlies taken during legal hunt	19	17	15	18	6	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	85
Aboriginal (subsistence harvest)	3	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	10
Illegal kill	9	5	7	5	1	6	2	3	1	6	39
Mistaken for black bear	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	7
Self defence	3	3	2	7	3	1	5	4	6	0	34
Accidental (human-related e.g. road kills)	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	4	5	8
Research-related	0	0	1	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	7
Destroyed - problem bears	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	2	6	0	14
Killed by predation	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	2
Unknown	0	1	2	4	1	0	2	0	1	1	11
Total known human-caused grizzly mortalities	35	27	32	36	11	23	12	9	19	17	204
Total mortalities	35	28	34	40	13	24	14	9	20	21	217

Grizzly Bear Relocation Statistics

