

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Report shows the Province is not doing enough to protect and recover Alberta's threatened grizzly bears

The Alberta government is not following its own recovery plan to protect the province's grizzly bear population, which will likely lead to population decline.

Calgary – A new report analyzing current recovery efforts in Alberta indicates that the provincial government is not doing enough to protect one of the most threatened grizzly bear populations in North America. Recent research indicates that the grizzly bear population in Alberta is small and may be declining due to expanding networks of industrial access roads and the high levels of human-caused mortality that accompany them.

“Grizzly bear range once extended to Manitoba, but has been pushed westward by habitat loss and poor land use management practices” says Wendy Francis, Conservation Director for the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, “Alberta has an obligation to prevent grizzly bear range from being pushed even farther west by protecting grizzly habitat and reducing road densities.”

At the same time, the government is not adequately implementing the recovery plan it adopted in 2008. The government's own status report indicates the recovery area has been significantly reduced in size, and strategies limiting road densities in the recovery plan are not being followed.

“Scientific research has shown that roads and human access into core grizzly bear habitat is the biggest threat to grizzly bear survival,” says Sarah Elmeligi, Senior Conservation Planner for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Southern Alberta Chapter, “Science has also shown the solution is to regulate road construction and reclamation once a road has served its purpose. What has been missing is for the Alberta Government to implement regulations ensuring these on-the-ground measures to protect grizzly bear habitat.”

The Alberta Government has repeatedly stated its commitment to grizzly bear recovery in Alberta. It spent years and millions of dollars to conduct DNA research to gather more concrete population numbers, instigated a BearSmart program, and put a moratorium on the hunt. These actions, however, are merely peripheral to solving the problem of diminishing habitat and actually increasing grizzly bear population numbers.

“The fact that grizzlies are in trouble tells us that we are doing something drastically wrong,” says Nigel Douglas, Conservation Specialist for the Alberta Wilderness Association, “Adopting the measures outlined in this report will help to recover the province's grizzlies and protect countless other species who share their habitat.”

A Grizzly Challenge: Ensuring a Future for Alberta's Threatened Grizzlies and the accompanying summary can be downloaded at: www.y2y.net.

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