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## **Motorized Access Levels in the Ghost Too High for Grizzlies**

Motorized access density in southern Alberta's Ghost Watershed is more than three times that officially recorded by the Alberta government, and more than four times the maximum recommended in the province's Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan says a new report released August 8. Motorized access levels in bear habitat strongly correspond to high mortality rates for grizzly bears.

The report, *An Assessment of Cumulative Effects of Land Uses in the Ghost River Watershed, Alberta, Canada* was prepared for the Ghost Watershed Alliance Society by ALCES Landscape and Land-use Ltd. The Ghost River watershed drains into the Bow River, and is a source of drinking water for the City of Calgary, and communities across Southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

"This new report underlines how ineffective access management is in the Ghost," says Nigel Douglas, conservation specialist for Alberta Wilderness Association. "With rampant motorized access far beyond the authorized trail system, grizzly habitat suffers, water quality suffers and self-powered recreation suffers."

The 53,000-ha study area had approximately 2,780 km of roads, trails and other linear features:

- **5.12 km/km<sup>2</sup>** - average landscape edge density measured in the Ghost report. Compares to:
- **1.42 km/km<sup>2</sup>** - Ghost access level as measured by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development,
- **1.20 km/km<sup>2</sup>** - maximum access density as recommended for this grizzly bear habitat in the province's 2008 *Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan*.

"It is clear that threatened species, such as grizzly bears, are not likely to maintain viable populations in the Ghost," says Sarah Elmeligi of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. "Recovery will not happen unless the government acts immediately to reduce road densities and motorized access."

Other key findings from the report include:

- The ability of the area to support grizzly bears is restricted by many things, "including high densities and motorized use of linear features, forestry clearcuts, poor management of attractant foods by random campers and lack of food storage and garbage facilities."
- "(T)he need for more effective enforcement of [off highway vehicle] regulation... to help maintain or restore key environmental indicators and recreational opportunities for non-motorized users."

The Ghost report comes hot on the heels of an April 2011 report from Global Forest Watch Canada - *Castle Area Forest Land Use Zone: Linear Disturbances, Access Densities and Grizzly Bear Habitat Security Areas* - which found motorized access densities in southwest Alberta's Castle region more than twice those recommended by the province for Core Grizzly Bear Areas.

"It's clear that the province has not accurately documented current motorized access levels within grizzly bear habitat," says Wendy Francis of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. "Until it does so, we can assume that any new roads or trails will drive grizzlies closer to extinction in this province."

The full Ghost watershed report can be seen at [www.ghostwatershed.ca](http://www.ghostwatershed.ca)

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