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Alberta Government Kills 145 Bears at Oilsands Camps.

No Charges Laid



Last year, the Alberta government killed 145 garbage-habituated black bears at oilsands camps in Alberta. Poorly-managed oilsands camps are known to attract bears to garbage. But rather than enforcing regulations, or prosecuting the guilty companies, Alberta government staff simply move in and kill bears. Lots of bears.

"At a time when Alberta's appalling international reputation for "dirty oil" is in the spotlight, this is one more bloody nose for the beleaguered oilsands industry," says Nigel Douglas, AWA conservation specialist. "Increasingly it seems that oilsands development in Alberta means destroying caribou habitat, shooting wolves from helicopters, and killing bears."

"What is frustrating is that it is so unnecessary," adds Douglas. "Securing garbage should be a basic requirement of running an oilsands camp. Why are the companies not bothering to do this? Why is the government doing nothing to require them to do so?"

Killing garbage-habituated bears is nothing new in Alberta. In 2009, there was a loud public outcry when 12 bears were killed at the Conklin garbage dump. Responses from government officials at the time were quick and consistent: it was all somebody else's fault. Darcy Whiteside, spokesman for Alberta Sustainable Resource Development pointed out at the time that "Alberta Environment and the municipality are responsible for ensuring proper fencing is in place to protect bears and humans." (Calgary Herald, August 14 2009). Trevor Gemmell, from Alberta Environment in turn pointed out that "With these types of landfills, we rely on the operator and Sustainable Resource Development to work together to identify any nuisance wildlife issues." (Edmonton Journal, August 15 2009). And, according to the Edmonton Journal, nobody from Alberta Environment or Sustainable Resource Development contacted Jarrod Peckford, supervisor of solid waste service for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the man in charge of the dump. Shooting the bears "was their decision," he said.

It seems that nothing was learned from the Conklin outcry. Companies continue to attract bears to their demise; the finger pointing continues and the Alberta government continues to kill bears. Lots of bears.

For more information:

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