

## **Sentencing in Grizzly Bear Poaching/Assault Incident**

In late February, a concerned citizen contacted AWA about a November 2018 potential grizzly bear poaching incident

and assault against someone who witnessed the incident in southern Alberta. This news came as a shock to us given there was no mention of the incident in the news, nor were there murmurs circulating in the conservation community. Our contact was concerned that without publicizing this incident, it would not be investigated and charges, if warranted, would not be laid and prosecuted.

AWA's contact clarified that family members on a camping trip witnessed the incident. From a nearby campsite, they saw two men with a grizzly bear carcass and approached the men requesting an explanation. It was alleged the two men illegally killed the grizzly at their hunting camp

near Indian Graves Provincial Recreation Area. CBC recently reported that the grizzly had fed on deer the two had killed and hung on a meat pole. When the grizzly returned, they shot it.

Worried that this was indeed poaching, one witness photographed the bear carcass and the license plates of the two suspects; this person was subsequently threatened and assaulted by the suspects for doing so. After the confrontation, the witnesses left the area and contacted Alberta Fish and Wildlife and the RCMP.

After the altercation with the witnesses, Fish and Wildlife officers visited the suspects at their campsite. One suspect confessed to his involvement in poaching the

grizzly bear and showed the officers where the carcass had been dumped. The officers could find no evidence that the suspects acted in self-defence.

In November, Jeffrey Edison Hambrook and Gary Edgar Gilson were sentenced. They were fined \$22,000, given a one-year conditional sentence, and banned from hunting for three years.

For AWA these sentences for assault, uttering threats, hunting out of season, and the unlawful possession of wildlife are insufficient. From the wildlife perspective, the deliberate, unjustified killing of a threatened species should demand a much longer ban of hunting and a steeper fine.

*- Nissa Petterson*