

Ruiping Luo

From: AWA
Sent: November 12, 2024 8:15 AM
To: Debborah Donnelly, AWA; Ruiping Luo
Subject: Fw: Wildlife Conflict Responders

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Alberta Wilderness Association
"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

We live, work and play across the traditional lands of the First Nations and Metis peoples of Alberta, including Treaties 4,6,7,8 and 10. We express gratitude and respect for these lands and commit to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples to ensure justice, equality and sustainability for all people and the natural world we rely on.

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From: FP Minister <FP.Minister@gov.ab.ca>
Sent: Thursday, November 7, 2024 9:07 AM
To: AWA <awa@abwild.ca>
Subject: Wildlife Conflict Responders

Dear Devon and Ruiping:

Thank you for your letter regarding using a network of wildlife responders to help remove grizzly bears in certain conflict situations. As Minister of Forestry and Parks, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

The safety and protection of Albertans is the government's highest priority. Due to long-term and increasing issues with problem wildlife, the Government of Alberta has responded to concerns from Albertans.

Grizzly bear recovery has been successful. As the grizzly bear population continues to grow and they expand their territory throughout our province, human-grizzly conflicts have increased in both frequency and severity. Some recent conflicts have been predatory in nature and not related to the protection of cubs or food sources.

Four Albertans have been killed by grizzly bears in the last three years. In 2020 there were three maulings by grizzly bears and 2021 recorded a total of nine maulings by bears, seven of which were by grizzly bears. Between 2000 and 2021 there were a total of 104 maulings. Further, Alberta's agriculture producers lose millions of dollars per year to crops damaged by elk and livestock losses to predators such as grizzly bears. These situations have Albertans demanding answers.

Therefore, Alberta's government announced a multi-faceted approach to help solve the issue of problem and dangerous wildlife by offering a range of management tools to address challenges and keep Albertans safe. Again, public safety and property protection are our highest priority, and we are focussed on reducing negative human-wildlife interactions and to promote co-existence with wildlife.

Public education and aversion programs are one of the facets. Ongoing educational initiatives to prevent human-wildlife conflict aim to make Albertans aware of measures they can use to reduce unsafe situations when encountering wildlife. My ministry is continuing the Community Bear Smart Grant Program in 2024-25 with funding to help community organizations educate Albertans about bear safety. The Waterton Biosphere's Carnivores and Communities program offer ranchers and rural Albertans methods to prevent conflicts and reduce losses due to carnivores. Programs like the Wildlife Aversion Program have also been successful in conditioning wildlife populations to avoid areas commonly used by people. Alberta's elk population has also grown over a larger area causing enormous damage to agriculture crops. Each year, there is millions of dollars of compensation paid out to agriculture producers for loss of crops due to damage by wildlife.

Another facet is habitat enhancement, such as prescribed burns and other forest management techniques that reduce wildfire risk and help restore important habitat for a range of species, providing the space and food they need. Decades of fire suppression has changed our landscape from what it was and what it would be naturally. These changes have led to forest encroachment in areas that in the past provided critical habitat for wildlife. Last year, extensive habitat enhancement work took place as part of our improvements in Kananaskis parks and campgrounds, with additional projects like this in the planning process and underway across Alberta.

The final facet is establishing the problem wildlife responders program. This new management tool will see eligible Albertans who have been chosen to participate in the program, contacted by government staff to respond when livestock are being killed, crops are being damaged, for public safety, or other concerns. Agricultural producers and others experiencing negative wildlife interactions will now be able to access help through this new program.

Actions taken by responders will align with all existing policies related to wildlife management will provide quick response times; reduce claims for lost livestock, crops, and property; and most importantly, increase safety for rural Albertans. Having Albertans help with wildlife management is a long-standing policy of the Alberta government. This is not a hunting opportunity, but rather another tool to manage problem wildlife by including Albertans as part of the solution. Alberta's Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan remains in place. For information about the plan is online at www.alberta.ca/grizzly-bear-recovery-plan.

In 2021-23, there were 79 reported negative interactions with grizzly bears. In fiscal 2023-24 there were 120 head of livestock approved for compensation under the Wildlife Predator Compensation Program resulting from death or injury confirmed from grizzly bears. That doesn't count the numerous other unconfirmed losses. From 2005 to 2021 there were a total of 43 reported grizzly bears killed in self-defence. Just this year, we have had 2 bear maulings. One of those bears was the same bear that killed an Albertan in 2021. The numbers are truly staggering and Albertans, quite rightly, expect our government to respond.

Thank you again for your feedback. More information about this initiative is available at www.alberta.ca/wildlife-management-responder-network.

Sincerely,

Honourable Todd Loewen
Minister
Forestry and Parks