

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2018

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Hunting Season/Regulation Comments
3030 Energy Lane
Casper, WY 82604

Dear Commissioners:

I write to express my strong opposition to the proposed regulation to allow the hunting of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Grizzly bears hold significant cultural, spiritual, ecological, intrinsic and scientific values for Americans and deserve continued protection. I urge you to withdraw this proposal immediately.

The proposal to allow the trophy killing of grizzly bears for the first time in Wyoming in over four decades is not only unwise, but is premature considering the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is currently conducting a regulatory review of its erroneous decision to delist grizzly bears in the GYE from the Endangered Species Act (ESA). FWS ignored the best-available science and failed to consult with Tribal Nations, therefore, FWS should have never created a rule to delist the grizzly bear from the ESA in the first place.

Grizzly bears already face numerous threats due to habitat destruction, climate change and human-caused mortality. In fact, GYE grizzly bear deaths have increased in the past three years.¹ Therefore, it is absurd that state officials would knowingly exacerbate the risk grizzly bears face by signing a death warrant for 24 individuals, including two females. Instead, Wyoming should join Montana and announce that it will not move forward with a hunt in 2018.

Wyoming and its grizzly bears have rightly been celebrated; millions of visitors from around the world make the journey to Wyoming to visit its national parks and see wildlife, including the iconic grizzly bear, every year. In fact, a newly published study conducted by the University of Wyoming revealed that wildlife watchers spent nearly twice that of big game hunters in the state, demonstrating the economic incentive to preserve these populations.

In addition to playing a critical role in the ecosystem, grizzly bears are held sacred by several Native American tribes. Before moving forward with any decision, it is critical that the

¹ 2017: 56 deaths; 2016: 58 deaths; 2015: 61 deaths; 2014: 28 deaths; 2013: 29 deaths. "Known and Probable Grizzly Bear Mortalities in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem." U.S. Geological Survey. March 22, 2018. Available online: <https://www.usgs.gov/science-explorer-results?es=known+and+Probable+Grizzly+Bear+Mortalities+in+the+Greater+Yellowstone+Ecosystem>

commission respect and consider the views of the 170 tribes and Canadian First Nations who have joined a treaty that rejects trophy hunting of grizzly bears and calls for formal consultation, sound science, and conservation of grizzly bears over the long term. This treaty, The Grizzly: A Treaty of Cooperation, Cultural Revitalization and Restoration, has the most signatures of any inter-tribal treaty in history.

It is irrational for the state to allow a hunt of grizzly bears. Not only is the prospective hunt an affront to the sacred value of the grizzly bear to Tribal Nations, but it flies in the face of science and the economic value that grizzly bears provide to local communities. The United States government made a mistake by delisting grizzly bears from the ESA, but you do not need to follow suit. I urge you to withdraw the proposed hunt.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources