



Media Release

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Grizzly Status Report Points to Need for Immediate Government Action on Recovery

An updated grizzly bear status report released today by the Alberta government confirms shockingly low numbers of mature breeding grizzly bears in Alberta and highlights the urgency of reducing the number of grizzly deaths in the province. Conservationists now assert that there is no longer any reason to delay necessary recovery actions, including listing the grizzly as Threatened under the Alberta Wildlife Act, limiting the densities of roads and reducing the amount of motorized access in prime grizzly habitat, and implementing effective public education and conflict prevention programs.

Today's report, titled *Status of the Grizzly Bear (Ursus arctos) in Alberta: Updated 2010*, estimates only 359 mature breeding grizzly bears are found on provincial lands and within Waterton Lakes National Park and portions of Banff and Jasper National Park.

"This figure is tragically low and strongly supports listing the grizzly as *Threatened* or *Endangered* under Alberta's Wildlife Act," says Carl Morrison with Action Grizzly Bear. In 2002, Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee recommended the grizzly be listed as *Threatened* but the government refused to accept the recommendation.

The report points to the need to reduce human-caused grizzly bear mortality in Alberta. According to Cathy Shier, CPAWS-Northern Alberta, "The amount of motorized access in prime grizzly habitat must be reduced and human activity that results in human-bear conflict must be mitigated."

"Unfortunately, the Report states that progress on controlling access has been limited to some mapping and an Access Management Working Group convened well over a year ago. To date, there are no approved plans to manage access," says Wendy Francis of Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.

Public education and conflict prevention programs, such as the Alberta BearSmart program, have great potential to reduce human-caused mortality but they must be adequately resourced to be effective. Jim Pissot notes, "The Report mentions Alberta's entire BearSmart budget is only \$150 000 per year, compared to the \$4.5 million Ontario dedicates to its BearSmart program. Why won't Edmonton invest what's needed for this win-win partnership program?"

"This government inaction and lack of funding does not reflect the high value Albertan's place on the conservation of our species at risk," says Nigel Douglas, conservation specialist with the Alberta Wilderness Association. "As action to recover this iconic species is delayed, the greater is the cost, the time required and the probability of failure."

"As stated in the report, it takes an instant to kill an adult female grizzly bear, but it takes many years to replace her," notes CPAWS' Sarah Elmeligi. "Albertans and Alberta's grizzly bears cannot afford anymore government delays."

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Background:

Link to report:

<http://srd.alberta.ca/BioDiversityStewardship/SpeciesAtRisk/DetailedStatus/documents/Status-GrizzlyBear-inAlberta-Feb2010.pdf>

Link to report also found on Alberta's Sustainable Resource Development homepage:

<http://srd.alberta.ca/>

How Alberta determines the status of wildlife:

Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee, in consultation with its Scientific Sub Committee, uses the same criteria set forth by the International Union on Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It states:

If the population has fewer than:

- **1000** mature adults it should be listed as Threatened
- **250** mature adults it should be listed as Endangered

According to Alberta's Strategy for the Management of Species at Risk (2009-2014):

- *Sec 1.2: Wild species are a keystone to healthy ecological process providing environmental stability with a subsequent benefit to the economic stability of our province and the social and economic well-being of Albertans. This is keystone role is reflected in the high value that the large majority of citizens place on the conservation of species at risk.*

In plain language, Albertans want to know Endangered species are being protected using our own laws and programs, without the need to turn to federal legislation.

- *Sec 3.3: The ultimate goal of formally designating a species as Threatened or Endangered is to facilitate management and recovery efforts necessary to restore viable populations.*