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Open letter to Minister Steve Thomson

Wildlife group says trophy hunt report highlights more worries than wins

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Honourable Steve Thomson
Minister of Forests, Lands, & Natural Resource Operations
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Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
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Dear Minister Thomson,

We read with great interest your recently released report, ‘Scientific Review of Grizzly Bear Harvest Management System in British Columbia.’ Our interpretation of what this report suggests about your ministry differs from your own, however.

This report is far from the win you seem to think it is; it is clearly a warning of what will happen, should immediate action not be taken.

Expert Opinions. When data is thought to be inaccurate, “expert opinion” can override physical, scientific methods of collecting and estimating populations; the report notes that “any data-based estimate will outperform expert opinion” and that 39% of the province’s populations are based on expert opinion instead of preferred methods of modelling. The report also notes that “no clear criteria for the use of expert opinion overriding model predictions, nor clear documentation of how experts derived their estimates.” Additionally, the potential bias or conflicts of these experts was not discussed. ([See](#) pages 2, 17, 22)

Lack of Funding. An unreliable, and often unacceptably low, stream of funding for monitoring the resources surrounding grizzly bear populations, including the bears themselves, is shown to be very problematic for the panel, who note that a “lack of resources reduced effective management planning and resulted in excessive dependence on extrapolation methods ... this resulted in an ad hoc inventory program largely driven by other resource development (e.g., oil, gas, mines, pipelines, hydro).” ([See](#) pages 3, 26, 27)

Transparency. Perhaps the most common theme throughout the report is the lack of transparency – from how individual decisions are made on population estimates to an apparent lack of interest in public and First Nations input. ([See](#) pages 2, 3, 28, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43)

The irony of transparency being brought up so frequently is, of course, that information on this very report: the decision to use this panel, the funding they received, the access to resources and information they had, is unavailable.

It is important to note that this report was solely designed to look at scientific procedure, and though it found merit in the efforts of your government, there are significant flaws – potentially fatal flaws – to the sustainability of grizzly bear populations if they are not addressed. It also does not address the public view, the ethical arguments, or the First Nations stances on a grizzly bear trophy hunt.

We can only hope that your government will stop patting themselves on the back long enough to see just how much work needs to be done to protect grizzlies – not for a hunt, but from one.

Sincerely,

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