

June 3, 2010

Alberta designates grizzly bears a threatened species

Population and habitat mapping provide key information

Edmonton... The Alberta government has designated grizzly bears as a threatened species in an effort to better protect the bears and sustain the provincial population.

The designation is based on cutting-edge population research and habitat data, as well as a recommendation from the Endangered Species Conservation Committee (ESCC), a group of stakeholders including ranchers, industry, academics, wildlife managers and conservation interests.

“I would like to thank the broad group of partners and staff who assisted in gathering population and habitat information to provide an excellent snapshot of the status of grizzly bears in Alberta,” said Mel Knight, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. “Their research allowed a thorough population assessment and has provided the necessary baseline to compare future work.”

An independent scientist prepared an updated status report that incorporates a broad range of population and habitat information. This information included Alberta government-sponsored DNA population surveys and satellite mapping of core and secondary habitat. The ESCC recommended the designation based on criteria of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which address population size, population declines, the extent of species’ distribution, how much area is occupied, and potential natural and human-related threats to the populations.

Grizzly bears were recognized in Alberta as a species that may be at risk as early as 2000. A recovery plan was initiated in 2002, followed by steps to collect better population and habitat data. Government committed to improving data gathering, reducing human-bear interactions and managing habitat. The DNA population survey technique, used in B.C., and throughout the U.S., was used in Alberta as the primary tool to reliably document grizzly bear populations. The recovery plan was published in early 2008.

Future conservation actions under Alberta’s Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan include enhancing the province’s BearSmart programs, coordinating research and limiting access to selected roads in grizzly bear habitat. In specific Wildlife Management Units, the hunt may resume once the recovery plan criteria for population and wildlife management objectives have been met. The hunt has been suspended since 2006.

“We share this province with grizzly bears and are committed to ensuring grizzly bears remain part of Alberta’s landscape,” said Knight. “We have been working directly with stakeholders

and the public to reduce human-bear interactions and help control access to habitat. Everyone living, working in or just visiting bear habitat has a role to play in conservation.”

For more information on grizzly bear management in the province, including a report on 2009 Grizzly Bear Management Activities and Recovery Implementation, visit www.srd.alberta.ca.

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Backgrounders: Grizzly Bears in Alberta, [map of grizzly bear habitat/BearSmart communities](#), and a [summary of the 2009 Grizzly Bear Management Activities and Recovery Implementation report](#).

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Grizzly Bears in Alberta

The Alberta government designated grizzly bears as threatened based on the grizzly bear's low rates of reproduction, habitat quality and estimated population of 691 across Alberta, excluding portions of Banff and Jasper national parks.

The Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan In 2002, the Alberta government established a Grizzly Bear Recovery Team, which drafted a grizzly bear recovery plan that was published in 2008. Some recommendations have been completed while others are ongoing.

Completed

- Grizzly bear population data and habitat map
- Establish BearSmart programs
- Hire a carnivore specialist

- Train staff and establish Bear Response Teams
- Revise management of problem grizzly bears

Ongoing

- Use map information to manage access in habitat
- Establish BearSmart communities
- Invest about \$1 million per year for grizzly bear management
- Improve data management and analysis

- Suspend the hunt

In specific Wildlife Management Units, the hunt may resume once the recovery plan criteria for population and wildlife management objectives have been met. The grizzly bear recovery plan can be found at www.srd.alberta.ca and click on Biodiversity & Stewardship > Species at Risk > Recovery Program > Recovery Plans.

BearSmart

BearSmart is a public awareness program for people living, working in or visiting bear territory. The goals are to:

- help Albertans to make safe decisions in bear territory;
- help people prevent bear encounters and respond appropriately in a bear encounter; and
- reduce property damage caused by bears.

BearSmart programs focus on:

- recreationists, residents, hunters, anglers, farmers, ranchers, beekeepers and industry workers; and
- communities in grizzly bear country - Canmore, Bragg Creek, Crowsnest Pass, and Mountain View County - and the program is under development with a range of BearSmart activities in Slave Lake, Fox Creek, Grande Cache, Hinton, Edson, Cadomin, Nordegg, and the Southwest Agricultural Initiative.

For more information about BearSmart, visit www.srd.alberta.ca and click on Recreation & Public Use.

Designating endangered or threatened species

Using information in detailed status reports, the Scientific Subcommittee of the Endangered

Species Conservation Committee (ESCC) assesses the risk of extinction or extirpation for Alberta species identified as potentially at risk. The Scientific Subcommittee evaluation is presented to the ESCC, which then recommends a status designation to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The Minister has the final responsibility for legally designating species as threatened or endangered under the *Wildlife Act*.

Following legal designation, recovery plans are required within one year for endangered species and within two years for threatened species.

Definitions

- **Data Deficient:** A species for which there is insufficient scientific information to support status designation.
- **Species of Special Concern:** A species with characteristics that make it particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events.
- **Species at risk:** A species at risk of extinction or extirpation (threatened or endangered), or a species that needs special management attention to prevent it from becoming at risk.
- **Threatened:** A species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.
- **Endangered:** A species facing immediate extirpation or extinction.
- **Extirpated:** A species no longer existing in the wild in Alberta, but occurring elsewhere in the wild.
- **Extinct:** A species that no longer exists.

Other threatened species in Alberta

Other threatened species in Alberta include the peregrine falcon, western silvery minnow, trumpeter swan and northern leopard frog.

Each of these threatened species has a recovery plan prepared by recovery teams of species experts, wildlife and land managers, and stakeholders who would potentially be impacted by recommended recovery actions.

Recovery plans can be found at www.srd.alberta.ca and click on Biodiversity & Stewardship > Species at Risk > Recovery Program > Recovery Plans.

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