From:	Adam Rissien
To:	shawn.johnson@mso.umt.edu; heather.stokes@umconnect.umt.edu; Tabish, Dillon
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Comments
Date:	Monday, July 20, 2020 2:55:56 PM
Attachments:	MT_Grizz_Respondents_Monday,_July_20,_2020.pdf

Dear Mr. Johnson, Ms. Stokes and Mr. Tabish,

As facilitators and state liaison to the Grizzly Bear Advisory Council (GBAC), we are sharing with you the following letter signed by 11,141 WildEarth Guardians members and supporters (attached). Some past entries made by our members and supporters via the public comment portal on the GBAC webpage have not appeared in the public input document. As such, we respectfully request you share our letter and the attached list of signatures with the GBAC members.

Dear Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Members,

I am writing to urge that any final Council recommendations reject trophy hunting of grizzly bears, require non-lethal conflict prevention measures, call for improving habitat security by removing old, deteriorating forest roads, and direct the state to identify protected corridors that allow bears to migrate safely between recovery areas.

We are in the midst of both a climate crisis and the sixth great extinction, and protecting grizzly bear habitat and connectivity for movement of bears is essential to their survival. Grizzly bears have very large home ranges, up to 500 hundred square miles. Within these areas, wildlife biologists have identified paths that bears will likely take as they migrate out of their home range to seek new habitat and food sources. It is crucial that we protect grizzly bears within these corridors, because they allow dispersal, return to historic range, and genetic exchange, which is necessary for recovery.

Grizzly bears need protection from human-caused mortality and from a whole host of harmful uses that threaten their survival including roads, logging, mining, human development, grazing, and recreation. Significantly, one of the five recovery zones in the Northern Rockies, the Bitterroot, remains officially unoccupied, although there have been recent documented sightings of individual bears returning. We must ensure grizzly bears can repopulate this zone, and moving safely between all recovery areas is crucial for the bear's future survival. Montana has the opportunity to identify specific grizzly bear corridors and provide specific management recommendations for protection that will ensure their full recovery.

The Council must also recommend improving the security of grizzly bear habitat. The science is clear that forest roads and motorized trails harm grizzly bears in a number of ways. Experts have established that bears need areas with low road and motorized trail densities because roads increase vehicle strikes and illegal harvest, and their use chases bears away. Roads and motorized trail use cause bears to avoid habitat they need to recover. The Council should recommend the U.S. Forest Service: 1) adopt specific road and motorized trail density standards of less than 1 mile per square mile, and 2) work to remove old, deteriorating roads within grizzly bear habitat and migration corridors.

Further, grizzly bear recovery requires measures that encourage non-lethal coexistence

with people and communities. The Council must recommend that anybody who lives where grizzly bears are, may be, or may travel through, must take proactive conflict prevention measures, including electrified fencing where appropriate (bee hives, chicken coops, calves, lambs, fruit trees, etc.), use of bear dogs or other guard animals, relocation of livestock away from dens, use of range riders, etc. No agency should provide support for predation or other conflict without evidence of the use of such conflict prevention measures.

Finally, a recent national poll showed that 68% of Americans oppose trophy hunting of grizzly bears. Indeed, the experts the Council consulted confirmed that hunting neither reduces conflicts nor increases social acceptance. The only certainty is that trophy hunts will inflame public sentiment, give Montana a black-eye, and demonstrate the state's complete indifference to Tribal Nations that view the Great Bear as sacred. The Council must reject the small (only 20% according to the recent national poll) percentage of people who are calling for grizzly bear trophy hunts.

The grizzly bear remains absent from nearly 98 percent of its historic range after near-extermination, and Montana must help speed the recovery of these majestic animals. I urge the Council to recommend protecting grizzly bears, not killing them.

Cc: Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Facilitators Shawn Johnson & Heather Stokes, and Montana FWP Information and Education Manager, Dillon Tabish

Signed by the attached 11,141 WildEarth Guardians Members and Supporters.

Thank you,

ReWilding Advocate
He/Him/His (what's this [mypronouns.org]?)

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