



David
Suzuki
Foundation

GREENPEACE

FOREST ETHICS

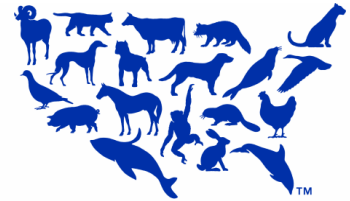
Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty
Worldwide



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WESTERN CANADA
WILDERNESS
COMMITTEE



Re: Closure of trophy hunt for bears in the Great Bear Rainforest

September 16, 2009

Honourable Barry Penner
Minister of Environment
Parliament Buildings
PO Box 9047, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Penner,

Last week, a large number of Canadian and international media outlets reported on the extremely low chum salmon returns on BC's northern coast, and the potential catastrophic impacts on local wildlife including grizzly and black bears. Reports continue up and down the BC coast about lower numbers of bears returning to salmon rivers, in particular very few reports of cubs of the year. In light of this development and for the reasons that follow, we urge you to take immediate action to cancel the fall bear hunt in the Great Bear Rainforest and provide adequate resources for monitoring our coastal ecosystems.

Such a move would receive broad support. Coastal First Nations oppose the trophy hunt for spiritual and economic reasons, and view the continuation of the hunt as an affront to their culture. Polls consistently tell us that a majority of BC residents oppose the BC grizzly bear hunt. According to a 2009 Ipsos Reid poll, 78 percent of all British Columbia residents oppose trophy hunting of bears in the Great Bear Rainforest.

We are dismayed that even grizzly bears—which are a ranked species at risk in Canada by COSEWIC, are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and that reproduce only every three to four years—are routinely killed for sport in the Great Bear Rainforest, including in parks and protected areas.

As you are aware, the Ministry of Environment has tracked the mortality of grizzly bears in the province from 1975 to the present. Of the over 11,000 grizzlies known to have been killed during this period, over 87 % were killed by trophy hunters.¹ No doubt the mortality of grizzly bears is likely much higher, as this estimate does not include bears whose deaths have not been registered in the Compulsory Inspection Database, such as the majority of animals killed by poachers.

Black bears are also at risk. The BC coast has one of greatest diversity of black bears subspecies in North America, ranging from the spirit bear (*kermodei* subspecies) to the Haida black bear. While hunting of white kermodes is already banned, the gene pool is nevertheless affected by killing black bears that carry the recessive gene for the white phase. As well, trophy hunting of bears impacts the gene pool by the constant selection of the largest, most robust individuals.

Ending the trophy hunt will also benefit local communities from an economic standpoint.

Our ecosystems are undergoing dramatic changes. Global warming, pollution, fish farms, habitat loss and hunting have cumulative impacts. We are beginning to witness the consequences without fully understanding what is happening. Bears could be the canary in our coal mine. We should protect them to understand the changes that occur in our ecosystems and as part of the alarm systems that inform us about the state of the environment.

There is action that you can take to immediately stem bear mortality from hunting. There are also measures necessary to buffer the effects of low salmon returns and other environmental factors. In particular ensuring that habitats that support bears are protected will give the best chances for their survival over the medium and long term.

In the lead-up to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, BC's conservation practices are under increased international scrutiny. The eyes of the world are on BC and the plight of the bears—just one more reason for the provincial government to take action.

¹ From 1975 to 2008; 11,182 grizzlies were killed in the province. Of this total 9,915 were killed by trophy hunters. Source: BC Compulsory Inspection Database, as reported by the David Suzuki Foundation.

We would strongly support the province taking a precautionary approach to wildlife management by immediately cancelling the fall bear hunt in the Great Bear Rainforest and providing adequate resources for monitoring our coastal ecosystems. We look forward to your immediate response on this issue.

Sincerely,

cc. Premier Gordon Campbell



Dr. Faisal Moola, PhD
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Eduardo Sousa
Forests Campaigner
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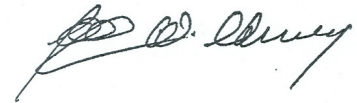
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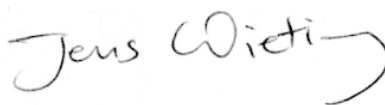
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