

April 1, 2010

The Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041
Station Provincial Government
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Campbell,

British Columbia's grizzly bears are among the most vulnerable large mammals on the continent to human-caused threats, such as climate change, degradation and loss of habitat due to industrial and recreational development, over-fishing of the salmon they feed on, and unsustainable rates of mortality from hunting, control kills and poaching. Strong government laws and regulations to protect and recover the species must address all of these drivers of endangerment if B.C. is to maintain healthy populations of grizzlies in the wild. Ensuring a future for grizzlies depends on the decisions government makes today about how it chooses to manage the habitat where bears live, and how it limits human-caused mortality.

As senior scientists with expertise in bear biology, behavior, ecology and conservation, many of us have contributed to grizzly bear management initiatives such as the 1995 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy, the 2002 and earlier Grizzly Bear Scientific Advisory Panels, and more recently, land use planning tables in the central and north coast. We are disappointed that the science-based solutions that we have consistently raised with the government to reduce human-caused mortality and provide effective habitat protection for bears have not been implemented in regulatory standards. Consequently, the viability of grizzly bear populations and their habitat continues to erode.

We again urge government to establish a comprehensive, province-wide network of *core and benchmark no-hunting and habitat management zones for grizzlies*. Although this was recently recommended by the David Suzuki Foundationⁱ, it is not a new idea. Grizzly Bear Management Areas (GBMAs) that are off-limits to hunting have long been a part of the B.C. government's stated policy to "maintain in perpetuity the diversity and abundance of [B.C.'s] grizzly bears"ⁱⁱ under its Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy, and have received the endorsement of ourselves and fellow researchers, including the government's own science advisory panels.

Research has shown that to be effectiveⁱⁱⁱ, GBMA no-hunting zones will need to cover most of the habitat currently occupied by grizzly bears and areas where populations need to be recovered. These designated areas should be protected from ecologically damaging human activities; should be large enough to provide sufficient habitat to sustain viable populations of bears within their natural range; should include and buffer existing parks and protected areas, and should be connected on the landscape.

BC's *Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy* captures the challenge before us:

“We have the opportunity – and the global responsibility – to protect British Columbia's remaining Grizzly Bears. We owe it to ourselves, to our descendants and to the Grizzly Bears to implement a strategy for the survival of this majestic creature.”^{iv}

Sincerely,

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CC: Martyn Brown, Chief of Staff; and Jeff Hanman, Director, Policy Coordination and Issues Management; Hon. Barry Penner, Minister of Environment.

ⁱ David Suzuki Foundation. 2010. *Ensuring a future for Canada's grizzly bears: A report on the sustainability of the trophy hunt in B.C.*

ⁱⁱ British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. 1995. *A Future for the Grizzly: British Columbia Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Gilbert, B., L. Craighead, B. Horejsi, P. Paquet, W. McCrory. 2004. Scientific Criteria for Evaluation and Establishment of Grizzly Bear Management Areas in British Columbia. Panel of Independent Scientists, Victoria, BC. 16pp.

^{iv} British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. Supra note i.