

May 9, 2016

Sally Jewell, Secretary U.S. Department of the Interior  
Daniel Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Docket FWS–R6–ES–2016–0042, Maintain Endangered Species Act Protections for Grizzly Bears

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Ashe:

On behalf of our millions of members, we, the undersigned 81 organizations, oppose the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) proposal to remove grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*) in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) as *threatened* from the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). The proposal is premature as the GYE grizzly bear population remains in peril from the combined effects of habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change, decline of primary food sources, and human-caused mortality.<sup>1</sup> Delisting and subsequently adding the threat of mortality from trophy hunting could seriously jeopardize grizzly bears.

Grizzly bears are an iconic species in our country and the majority of Americans do not support their persecution. According to a recent poll, the majority of American voters oppose the proposal to delist GYE grizzly bears from the ESA.<sup>2</sup> When asked, 60% of prominent grizzly bear biologists: “believe delisting would be an incorrect decision, or at the very least a violation of the precautionary principle.”<sup>3</sup>

#### **GYE Grizzly Bears Have Not Recovered and Face Serious Threats to Their Continued Recovery.**

Grizzly bears occupy a small fraction of their historic range and live on isolated geographic islands. The FWS suggests that before 1800 approximately 50,000 grizzly bears roamed the lower 48 states from northern Mexico to Alaska.<sup>4</sup> After European settlement, humans heavily persecuted grizzly bears to near eradication.<sup>5</sup> Today, according to the federal government, grizzly bears number between 1,400 and 1,700 individuals in the lower 48 states<sup>6</sup> – with between 674 and 747 grizzly bears in the GYE.<sup>7</sup> But grizzly bear biologists contest that population figure.<sup>8</sup>

Grizzly bears’ two primary staple foods, whitebark pine and cutthroat trout, are in precipitous decline.<sup>9</sup> This should signal to wildlife managers that grizzly bear conservation efforts should not be stripped away at the very time when they face a food crisis. These food losses have caused bears to reduce their density from their core, protected habitat as they disperse further afield to find sufficient food resources. Compounded with these threats, removal from federal listing would jeopardize the continued health and persistence of the GYE grizzly bear population.

#### **Grizzly Bears are Not Resilient to Human Persecution.**

If federal protections are removed from GYE grizzly bears, the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming will rush to open up trophy-hunting seasons. Indeed, these states have already divvied up hunting rights for the bears.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, bears that leave the GYE core habitat would be subject to trophy hunting adopted by state wildlife managers, despite the fact that these dispersing individuals could provide vital connections between other subpopulations, maintaining genetic diversity.<sup>11</sup>

Large-bodied carnivores are sparsely populated across vast areas; they are slow to reproduce, provide extended parental care to their young, and social stability promotes their resiliency.<sup>12</sup> Human persecution affects their social structure,<sup>13</sup> harms their persistence,<sup>14</sup> and is “super additive” – meaning that hunting pressures far exceed what would occur in nature.<sup>15</sup>

Hunting mortality has direct effects on population growth rates because of increased mortality, but it can have indirect effects, too, such as disrupting the sex and age structure of a population.<sup>16</sup> Hunting bears during their period of *hyperphagia* is energetically costly to them as they shift their sleeping patterns and become more nocturnal to avoid being hunted,<sup>17</sup> and hunting females can influence a lifetime of reproductive success.<sup>18</sup> Females with cubs generally avoid males as a strategy of avoiding sexually-selected infanticide, but this means that they often choose suboptimal habitats, including in closer proximity to humans, and this affects their diet quality and reduces their reproductive potential.<sup>19</sup> Hunting makes the risk of sexually-selected infanticide greater, which leads to increased avoidance of males by females, and, ultimately, to lower fecundity.<sup>20</sup>

Right now, an unsustainable number of grizzly bears are dying in the GYE. In 2015, approximately 60 grizzly bears—excluding the bears that agents could not find—are known to have died in the GYE from various causes.<sup>21</sup> This is a substantial portion of the estimated population of the slowest-reproducing mammal in North America. Meanwhile, more than half of grizzly bears killed by humans go unreported—from 46 to 66 percent.<sup>22</sup>

Protection under the ESA has benefited GYE bears, but the population is not yet recovered. Instead of delisting and handing management to states, we strongly urge you to renew your commitment to conserving this iconic species.

Sincerely,

Nicole Paquette  
Vice President, Wildlife Protection  
**The Humane Society of the United States**  
Washington, DC

Andrea Santarsiere  
Staff Attorney  
**Center for Biological Diversity**  
Victor, ID

Jessica L. Blome  
Senior Staff Attorney  
**Animal Legal Defense Fund**  
Cotati, CA

Tamra Brennan  
Executive Director  
**Kindness Ranch Animal Sanctuary**  
Hartville, WY

Travis Bruner, J.D.  
Executive Director  
**Western Watersheds Project**  
Hailey, ID

Larry Campbell  
Conservation Director  
**Friends of the Bitterroot**  
Hamilton, MT

John Carter  
Manager  
**Yellowstone to Uintas Connection**  
Paris, ID

Adrienne Cronebaugh  
Executive Director  
**Kootenai Environmental Alliance**  
Coeur d'Alene, ID

Mike Garrity  
Executive Director  
**Alliance for the Wild Rockies**  
Helena, MT 59624

Jonathan Hunt  
Owner  
**Grizzly Country Wildlife Adventures**  
Jackson, WY

Matthew Koehler,  
Director  
**WildWest Institute**  
Missoula, MT 59802

Penelope Maldonado  
Executive Director  
**The Cougar Fund**  
Jackson, WY

Sally Maughan  
President  
**Idaho Black Bear Rehab, Inc.**  
Garden City, ID

Kelly Nokes, JD  
Carnivore Campaign Lead  
**WildEarth Guardians**  
Missoula, MT

Jeff Rosenthal, DVM | Chief Executive Officer  
**Idaho Humane Society**  
Boise, ID

Mady Rothchild  
President  
**Animals in Distress Association, Inc. (AIDA)**  
Boise, ID

Michelle Uberuaga  
Executive Director  
**Park County Environmental Council**  
Livingston, MT

Nancy Warren  
Executive Director  
**National Wolfwatcher Coalition**  
Gardiner, MT

KC York  
Chair  
**Trap Free Montana Public Lands**  
Hamilton, MT

Noelle Almrud  
Interim Director  
**Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch**  
Murchison, TX

Sara Amundson  
Executive Director  
**Humane Society Legislative Fund**  
Washington, DC 20037

Lori Andresen  
President  
**Save Our Sky Blue Waters**  
Duluth, MN

Sara Andrews  
Executive Director  
**Alliance for Animals and the Environment**  
Madison, WI

Kimberly Baker  
Executive Director  
**Klamath Forest Alliance**  
Orleans, CA

Jessica L. Blome  
Senior Staff Attorney  
**Animal Legal Defense Fund**  
Cotati, CA

Bettina Bowers  
Animal Care Director  
**Walden's Puddle WREC**  
Joelton, TN

Ruth Brooks  
President  
**Freedom Center for Wildlife Inc.**  
Cinnaminson, NJ

Nick Cady  
Legal Director  
**Cascadia Wildlands**  
Eugene, OR

Christine Canaly  
Director  
**San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council**  
Alamosa, CO

Linda Challeen  
Director  
**Minnesota Humane Society**  
St. Paul, MN

Katie Cleary  
President  
**Peace 4 Animals**  
Los Angeles, CA

Timothy J. Coleman  
Executive Director  
**Kettle Range Conservation Group**  
Republic, WA

Ali Crumpacker  
Director  
**The Fund for Animals Wildlife Center**  
Ramona, CA

Daryl Dejoy  
Executive Director  
**Wildlife Alliance of Maine**  
Penobscot, ME

Natalynne DeLapp  
Executive Director  
**Environmental Protection Information Center**  
Arcata, CA

Linda Dionne  
Coordinator  
**Voices of Wildlife in NH**  
Concord, NH

Brooks Fahy  
Executive Director  
**Predator Defense**  
Eugene, OR

Camilla H. Fox  
Founder & Executive Director  
**Project Coyote**  
Larkspur, CA

Brenna Galdenzi  
Executive Director  
**Protect Our Wildlife**  
Stowe, VT

Howard Goldman  
Director  
**Friends of Animals and Their Environment**  
St. Paul, MN

Bruce Gordon  
President  
**EcoFlight**  
Aspen, CO

Joanna Grossman, PhD  
Federal Policy Advisor  
**Animal Welfare Institute**  
Washington, D.C.

Maureen Hackett, MD  
President and Founder  
**Howling for Wolves**  
Hopkins, MN

Susan Harvey  
President  
**North County Watch**  
Templeton, CA

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
Veterinary Advisor  
**Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association**  
Gaithersburg, MD

Dr. Brian L. Horejsi  
**Speak Up For Wildlife Foundation**  
Penticton, British Columbia

Dr. Tom Huhnerkoch  
Founder  
**Mountain Cats Trust**  
Lead, SD

Louise Kane, JD  
Founder  
**Justice for Wolves**  
Eastham, MA

Matthew Koehler  
Executive Director  
**WildWest Institute**  
Missoula, MT

Delia G. Malone  
Executive Committee Member  
**Sierra Club, Rocky Mountain Chapter**  
Denver, CO

Jarid Manos  
Founder & CEO  
**Great Plains Restoration Council**  
PO Box 1206  
Fort Worth, TX 76101

Ara Marderosian  
Executive Director  
**Sequoia ForestKeeper**  
Kernville, CA

Buz Marthaler  
Chairman  
**Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah**  
Ogden, UT

Roz McClellan  
Director  
**Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative**  
Nederland, CO

Angi Metler  
Executive Director  
**Animal Protection League of New Jersey**  
Englishtown, NJ

Deborah Robbins Millman  
Director  
**Cape Wildlife Center**  
Barnstable, MA

Janine Motta  
Programs Director  
**Bear Education and Resource Group**  
Manalapan, NJ

Sharon Negri  
Director  
**WildFutures**  
Berkeley, CA

Kent Nelson  
Executive Director  
**Wyoming Wildlife Advocates**  
Wilson, WY

Donna Olsen  
Founder  
**Tri-City Ecology Center**  
Fremont, CA

Tehri Parker  
Executive Director  
**Rocky Mountain Wild**  
Denver, CO

Debra Parsons-Drake  
Senior Director  
Animal Response, Care and Sanctuary  
**The Fund for Animals**  
New York, NY

Jennifer Place  
Program Associate  
**Born Free USA**  
Washington, D.C.

Mike Petersen  
Executive Director  
**The Lands Council**  
Spokane, WA

Patricia G. Randolph  
Director  
**Wisconsin Wildlife Ethic-Vote Our Wildlife**  
Portage, WI

Bonnie Rice  
Senior Representative  
**Our Wild America Campaign, Sierra Club**  
San Francisco, CA

Kirk Robinson, PhD  
Executive Director  
**Western Wildlife Conservancy**  
Salt Lake City, Utah

Susan Russell  
Co-Director  
**League of Humane Voters of New Jersey**  
Manalapan, NJ

Lesley Sampson  
Founding Executive Director  
**Coyote Watch Canada**  
St. Davids, ON

Louise Shimmel  
Executive Director  
**Cascades Raptor Center**  
Eugene, OR

Shelley Silbert  
Executive Director  
**Great Old Broads for Wilderness**  
Durango, CO

Mark Smith  
President  
**Nevada Wildlife Alliance**  
Incline Village, NV

Melissa Smith  
Director  
**Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife**  
Madison, WI

Tabitha Tripp  
Co-Chair  
**Heartwood**  
Bloomington, IN

Melissa Smith  
Director  
**Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance**  
Madison, WI

Lisa Owens Viani  
Director  
**Raptors Are the Solution**  
Berkeley, CA

Sarah B. Stewart  
President  
**Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.**  
263 Concord Ave., Flr#2  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Marilyn Weaver  
Executive Director  
**The League of Humane Voters, Florida**  
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

Wally Sykes  
Co-Founder  
**Northeast Oregon Ecosystems**  
Joseph, OR

Melanie Weberg  
Director  
**League of Humane Voters, Wisconsin**  
Osceola, WI

Marla S. Wilson  
Acting Executive Director  
**Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust**  
Washington, DC

## Sources:

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., David Mattson, Ph.D., "<http://www.Grizzlytimes.Org/#!Honest-Science/C1ch8>". Eric Whitney, Montana Public Radio (4/16), "Biologist: Yellowstone Grizzlies Can't Afford any Increase in Mortality", <http://mtpr.org/post/biologist-yellowstone-grizzlies-cant-afford-any-increase-mortality#stream/0>.

<sup>2</sup> The Humane Society of the United States. "American Voters Oppose Delisting Greater Yellowstone Area Grizzly Bears from Endangered Species Act Protections," April 12, 2016: [http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press\\_releases/2016/04/opposition-yellowstone-grizzly-delisting-041216.html?credit=web\\_id65489811](http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2016/04/opposition-yellowstone-grizzly-delisting-041216.html?credit=web_id65489811)

<sup>3</sup> Szarek, Harmony. "Subjectivity in Expert Decision Making: Risk Assessment, Acceptability, and Cognitive Heuristics Affecting Endangered Species Act Listing Judgments for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear." Electronic Thesis or Dissertation. Ohio State University, 2015. Ohio LINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. 11 Dec 2015.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Endangered Species: Mammals: Grizzly Bear (*Ursus Arctos Horribilis*)," <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/grizzlyBear.php>, (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Charles C. Schwartz, Sterling D. Miller, and M.A. Haroldson, "Grizzly Bear (*Ursus Arctos*)," in *Wild Mammals of North America: Biology, Management, and Conservation*, ed. G.A. Feldhamer, B.C. Thompson, and J.A. Chapman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Endangered Species: Mammals: Grizzly Bear (*Ursus Arctos Horribilis*)."

<sup>7</sup> National Park Service. 2016. Yellowstone: Grizzly Bear Information: Population. <http://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/gbearinfo.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Doak, D. F., and K. Cutler. 2013. Re-Evaluating Evidence for Past Population Trends and Predicted Dynamics of Yellowstone Grizzly Bears. *Conservation Letters* 10.1111/conl.12048; Mattson, D. 2016. <http://www.grizzlytimes.org/#!honest-science/c1ch8>.

<sup>9</sup> 76 Fed. Reg. 42631 (July 19, 2011). See also <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/plants/whitebarkpine/> ("Threats to the whitebark pine include habitat loss and mortality from white pine blister rust, mountain pine beetle, catastrophic fire and fire suppression, environmental effects resulting from climate change, and the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.").

<sup>10</sup> Angus M. Thuermer Jr. "Wyoming says grizzly hunting plan ensures bears forever," January 6, 2016: <http://www.wyofile.com/wyoming-says-grizzly-hunting-plan-ensures-bears-forever/>

- <sup>11</sup> *Genetic diversity* increases a species' chances of long-term survival because negative traits (such as inbreeding) become widespread within a population when that population is left to reproduce only with its own members. *Genetic drift* refers to a population's loss of genes, making a population less vital, more disease prone, and unable to overcome natural disasters.
- <sup>12</sup> See, for example: Wallach, A. D., I. Izhaki, J. D. Toms, W. J. Ripple, and U. Shanas. 2015. What is an apex predator? *Oikos* 124:1453-1461. Weaver, J. L., P. C. Paquet, and L. F. Ruggiero. 1996. Resilience and conservation of large carnivores in the Rocky Mountains. *Conservation Biology* 10:964-976. Wielgus, R. B., D. E. Morrison, H. S. Cooley, and B. Maletzke. 2013. Effects of male trophy hunting on female carnivore population growth and persistence. *Biological Conservation* 167:69-75. Creel, S., M. Becker, D. Christianson, E. Droge, N. Hammerschlag, M. W. Hayward, U. Karanth, A. Loveridge, D. W. Macdonald, W. Matandiko, J. M'Soka, D. Murray, E. Rosenblatt, and P. Schuette. 2015. Questionable policy for large carnivore hunting. *Science* 350:1473-1475.
- <sup>13</sup> R. B. Wielgus et al., "Effects of Male Trophy Hunting on Female Carnivore Population Growth and Persistence," *Biological Conservation* 167, (2013); W. J. Ripple et al., "Status and Ecological Effects of the World's Largest Carnivores," *Science* 343, no. 6167 (2014); A. D. Wallach et al., "What Is an Apex Predator?," *Oikos* 124, no. 11 (2015); Chris T. Darimont et al., "The Unique Ecology of Human Predators," *Science* 349, no. 6250 (2015); Jacinthe Gosselin et al., "The Relative Importance of Direct and Indirect Effects of Hunting Mortality on the Population Dynamics of Brown Bears," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 282, (2015).
- <sup>14</sup> C. T. Darimont et al., "Human Predators Outpace Other Agents of Trait Change in the Wild," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 106, no. 3 (2009); Darimont et al., "The Unique Ecology of Human Predators."
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Wielgus et al., "Effects of Male Trophy Hunting on Female Carnivore Population Growth and Persistence; Gosselin et al., "The Relative Importance of Direct and Indirect Effects of Hunting Mortality on the Population Dynamics of Brown Bears."
- <sup>17</sup> Ordiz, A., O. G. Stoen, S. Saebo, J. Kindberg, M. Delibes, and J. E. Swenson. 2012. Do bears know they are being hunted? *Biological Conservation* 152:21-28.
- <sup>18</sup> Zedrosser, A., F. Pelletier, R. Bischof, M. Festa-Bianchet, and J. E. Swenson. 2013. Determinants of lifetime reproduction in female brown bears: early body mass, longevity, and hunting regulations. *Ecology* 94:231-240.
- <sup>19</sup> McDonough, T. J., and A. M. Christ. 2012. Geographic variation in size, growth, and sexual dimorphism of Alaska brown bears, *Ursus arctos*. *Journal of Mammalogy* 93:686-697. See also Gosselin, et al. 2015.
- <sup>20</sup> Gosselin, et al. 2015.
- <sup>21</sup> <http://nrmsc.usgs.gov/science/igbst/2015mort>
- <sup>22</sup> Schwartz et al.