



August 1, 2023

To:

Honourable Bruce Ralston
Ministry of Forests
Government of British Columbia
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Regarding: Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework Survey, Commercial Bear-Viewing Questionnaire

Honourable Bruce Ralston,

On July 12, 2023, the B.C. government asked British Columbians to read and provide feedback on two draft documents: the Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework (75 pages) and the Commercial Bear-Viewing Strategy (46 pages).

While we recognize the effort that has gone into the development of these documents we are concerned about the timing of the release, the lack of publicity leading up to the survey, the extremely short public response period, and the length and complexity of the documents that are required reading prior to completing the survey or questionnaire.

- Releasing the reports and survey mid-summer, during a time when many people are seasonally employed or occupied (particularly people with a vested interest in wildlife management, tourism operators, guides, biologists, etc), does not allow for adequate time to review and submit.
- Amongst those who have read the Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework in its entirety and undertook the feedback survey, it was noted that the time investment was close to three hours - and these are individuals well-versed in grizzly bear stewardship. To suggest to the public that 20 minutes is what is required to complete the survey is disingenuous and will lead to steep drop-offs in survey completion once the actual time requirement is understood.
- Because survey questions relate to entire sections of the 75-page framework rather than key points, it was difficult to complete the survey without having the two documents open on different screens or windows.

We ask for the following to allow for the best possible public feedback on these surveys:

1. Since the public comment period has already been launched, extend the feedback period to November 15, 2023 to ensure that the public, key stakeholders and knowledge-keepers have

- a more fulsome opportunity to participate in the process;
2. A better engagement process to increase understanding and potential for public participation.
 - a. Information sessions held in communities or online would be beneficial. Other public input processes, such as for Marine Protected Areas, have also included public forums where educational presentations and information are hosted in person in addition to online (ie. webinars).
 - b. Update the introduction page for each public survey to state the number of pages in the review documents and note that it is possible to work on feedback over a period of multiple sessions rather than over one long session.
 - c. Ensuring there are adequate fields for comment in the survey.

We agree that a public engagement process for these strategic documents is critical in determining how we, as a province, move forward with grizzly bear management and coexistence.

If the government is serious about wanting the input of British Columbians, especially those with a stake in grizzly bear stewardship (scientists, bear viewing guides, amongst others working in the field during this time), then extending the due date for public input, and including opportunities for education in communities, will build trust and participation in this process.

The fight to end trophy hunting of grizzly bears, a decades-long effort, represents the will of the vast majority of British Columbians, over 85% of whom said they oppose the hunting of grizzly bears for sport and trophies. These are people who care deeply about stewardship of grizzly bears, an iconic species in our province. This same public needs to be accorded an adequate time frame to respond, and an extension of the time frame also allows for wildlife organizations, businesses, and community members to have the time to encourage engagement from their networks, especially given that there was little, if any, knowledge of the survey leading up to July 12th. The onus lies on the government to raise awareness about public input opportunities and we feel in this case, this was not sufficient.

We believe we represent an important and diverse cross-section of people interested in a healthy future for bears in British Columbia, and meeting the requests outlined above would go a long way to increasing participation and trust between the public and the elected officials responsible for safeguarding wildlife in our province.

Sincerely,

Karen McAllister, Executive Director, Pacific Wild Alliance, BC
Trish Boyum, Marketing director and Photographer, Ocean Adventures Charter Co., BC
Dr. Gosia Bryja, Conservation Scientist, BC
Ellie Lamb, Bear Behaviour Educator and Bear Viewing Guide, BC
Barb Murray, Bears Matter, BC

Neville Abbott – Lions Bay Bear Smart Committee Chair & Member of Council (signed in my personal capacity), BC
Arrowsmith Naturalists, B.C.
Hannah Barron, Conservation Director, Wolf Awareness, BC
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Joe Duff, Executive Director, Wild Aid Canada, BC
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Ross Peterson, M.Sc, Biologist (retired), BC
Stewart Phillips, Grand Chief and President, Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), BC
Jordan Reichert, Deputy Leader, Animal Protection Party of Canada, BC
Beat Steiner, Owner, Tweedsmuir Park Lodge, BC
Holly Arntzen and Kevin Wright, Artist Response Team, BC

G.A. Bradshaw, Ph.D, Author "Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell" OR
Kelly Butler, Humane Society International, QC
Catherine Clail, Bear With Us/Education and Outreach, ON
Jeff Gailus, Author of Grizzly Bear Manifesto, MT
Dr. Michael Gibeau, Carnivore Specialist (retired), Parks Canada, AB
Judy Malone, Bear Advocate, Founder of Tourists Against Trophy Hunting, ON
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