

## **38 SIGNATORS SAY GRIZZLY 'MEAT' HUNT WILL BE A TROPHY HUNT IN DISGUISE**

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**New Denver, BC** - Thirty-eight environmental and animal welfare organizations, along with wildlife-based businesses and prominent activists, have signed an Open Letter to the BC Government opposing the continuation of grizzly bear hunting for meat. "The BC government is planning to end trophy hunting of grizzly bears, but will allow them to be hunted for meat across most of the province, except for a 230,000-hectare portion of the Great Bear Rainforest," says Ian McAllister of Pacific Wild. "We are asking for a complete ban on hunting grizzly bears all over BC."

The Open Letter says there has never been significant hunting of grizzly bears for meat in BC. "Previously grizzly bears were classified by BC Fish & Wildlife with non-game animals such as wolverines, wolves and cougars," says Alan Burger of BC Nature. "Hunters were specifically allowed under law to leave the meat on the ground and take only the trophy parts. Many British Columbians are appalled that the government has now invented a grizzly bear meat hunt."

"People don't travel hundreds or thousands of kilometres, pay tens of thousands of dollars, and risk their lives shooting at grizzly bears to put meat on the table," the Open Letter states. "They largely do it only for trophies and sport. Even if they have to leave the head, hide and claws behind, they take away trophy videos, photographs and bragging rights. The bears will still be killed for sport".

The Open Letter disputes the BC government's claim that hunting grizzly bears is sustainable. "Grizzly bears are a species at risk," says Wayne McCrory, a bear biologist and Valhalla Wilderness Society director. "For years independent scientists have warned the government that BC may have far fewer grizzly bears than we think".

"We have thriving grizzly bear viewing and photography businesses in the Interior, just like on the coast," says famed Kootenay wildlife photographer, Jim Lawrence. "People are thrilled to see these magnificent animals alive and in photographs.

"Stop the Grizzly Killing Society receives comments from many hundreds of people," says Trish Boyum, who has campaigned tirelessly to protect grizzlies. "It is clear that British Columbians want a total ban on killing grizzly bears across BC, except where they would be hunted by some First Nations People for sustenance and ceremonial purposes."

"Collectively, our organizations, which represent the majority of British Columbians, urge the BC government not to authorize any further grizzly bear hunting until it has done a full review of public input and the soon-to-be released Auditor General's report. This is a very critical conservation issue in our province and we have an opportunity to do it right," says Dr. Sara Dubois, Chief Scientific Officer of the BC SPCA.