

**YUKON FISH AND WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT BOARD**



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December 10, 2018

Charles Shewen, President
Yukon Fish and Game Association
509 Strickland Street.
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Mr. Shewen,

Re: YFGA comment on Draft Grizzly Bear Conservation Plan

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board would like to address the Yukon Fish and Game Association's comments that were received during the public engagement period to review the Draft Grizzly Bear Conservation Plan. The Board does not typically respond directly to individual comments but has done so in this case given the YFGA's significant membership of over 3,000 licensed hunters and respected position in the hunting community.

The Board would like to clarify some statements contained in the submission made by YFGA, in the hopes of providing further insight in to both the content and the process of the Draft Plan.

First, the Board understands clearly the common practice by Yukoners of purchasing a grizzly bear tag for "just in case" situations. The Plan's recommendation of implementing an annual allowable harvest would still allow hunters to purchase a tag without the direct intent to hunt a grizzly bear, though this number would be limited on a per Bear Management Unit basis. The annual allowable harvest, as well as all the other recommendations in the Plan, would not interfere with any person's ability to protect themselves in a situation of a Defense of Life or Property. The insinuation that plan's authors do not understand that grizzly bears are top level predators that at times pose a risk to human life, by bringing up the tragic incident that occurred to the Roesholt family in late November, is disrespectful.

Second, the wording of "respect" within the Plan was not meant to imply that all licensed hunters are currently disrespectful, and the Board recognizes that this wording could be improved. Respect for bears is a strong focus because the Board believes the Yukon values of respect for all wildlife needs to be passed on to the next generation. The recommendation of developing additional hunting education and ethics materials specifically for grizzly bear hunting is to target messaging to reinforce the respect that currently exists, so that it is

provided to people who have not hunted grizzly bears before and people who are not used to living in bear country.

Finally, the Grizzly Bear Conservation Plan working group, who authored the Draft Plan, received input from licensed Yukon hunters the entire length of this planning process. The working group heard from licensed hunters at all the community meetings held over the 2 ½ year process across the territory. The YFGA was invited and did attend multiple meetings with the working group during the development of the Draft Plan, the same as the Yukon Outfitters Association and other groups. Yukon First Nations were provided with an advance copy of the Draft Plan due to requirements under the Government to Government consultations that are conducted by the Yukon Government. No associations were provided with an advance copy of the Draft Plan before it was released to the public in August 2018. In conducting the public engagement to review the Draft Plan, the Board has heard from many licensed hunters, in community meetings as well as through individual submissions, which were open to all the general public.

Beyond their ecological value, fish and wildlife, including grizzly bears, hold strong cultural, emotional, and social importance for Yukoners. Ultimately, the Board is an advisory body that is concerned with conservation of fish and wildlife but must balance many different and valid perspectives, opinions, and values, alongside technical and scientific information, as is mandated within the Umbrella Final Agreement.

Thank you for providing the perspective of your membership to the Board during this review process – we look forward to continuing to work with the YFGA on fish and wildlife conservation and management matters in the future.

Sincerely,



John Burdek
Chair, YFWMB