



December 13, 2018

Honourable Pauline Frost, Minister of Environment
Department of Environment
Government of Yukon
Box 2703 (V-3A)
Whitehorse, Yukon

Dear Minister Frost,

Re: Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommendations regarding “A Conservation Plan for Grizzly Bears (*Ursus arctos*) in Yukon”

As you are well aware, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board has been working with the Department of Environment since 2015 on developing “A Conservation Plan for Grizzly Bears in Yukon” (hereafter referred to as the Plan). The rationale for Board’s involvement in the development of the Plan is described in objective 16.7.12.2 of the Umbrella Final Agreement, whereby the Board “may make recommendations to the Minister on the need for and the content and timing of all Yukon fish and wildlife management plans for species including international agreements, threatened species or populations, species or populations declared by the Minister as being of a territorial, national or international interest, and transplanted populations and exotic species”.

The Board wishes to acknowledge the immense amount of work that has gone in to this plan from the Grizzly Bear Conservation and Management Plan Working Group and Department and Board staff. The Board also recognizes that this plan would not have been possible without the contributions of First Nations, Renewable Resource Councils, other organizations, communities, and members of the public, throughout the planning process. It was heard loud and clear that grizzly bears are an important species to Yukoners, for cultural, social, and ecological reasons.

The Plan’s vision is to maintain healthy and healthy and viable grizzly bear populations throughout their natural range in Yukon, for future generations of people and bears. With this vision, the goals of the plan speak to seven distinct themes: culture and respect, habitat, data and knowledge, human-grizzly bear conflict, harvest, viewing, and research in to the human dimensions of grizzly bear conservation. Ultimately, the Plan is meant to provide a road map for future decisions by many different parties, including Yukon Government, on grizzly bear conservation and management. A central component of this is that the Plan supports local communities to undertake their own actions for grizzly bear conservation and management

issues, as we have heard time and again that local community perspective and values need to drive these decisions. The Plan will also provide Yukon-specific context and guidance to support a national grizzly bear management plan (SARA) and international commitments for trade (CITES).

The Board would like to highlight the success and benefit of this planning process, which provided continued opportunities for the public to be involved in the conservation of grizzly bears. During the planning process, the Working Group conducted many regional community meetings across the territory and in transboundary communities, to hear from Yukoners in their own words. Additionally, a public survey on various aspects of grizzly bear conservation was conducted in 2017, where over 1400 responses were received. All of these sources of knowledge, as well as input from experts and wildlife managers, were considered when drafting the Plan.

The Draft Plan was released to the public by the Board and Yukon Government in August 2018. As per the Board's responsibility under 16.7.6 of the UFA, "make provisions for public involvement in the development of its decisions and its recommendations", a public engagement period on the Draft Plan was conducted from October 3 to December 3, 2018, to solicit feedback on the Draft before formation of the Board's recommendations. During this public engagement process, the Board facilitated community meetings in Mayo, Burwash Landing, Tagish, Teslin, Dawson City, Whitehorse, and Haines Junction, received submissions from many RRCs, various associations, and individuals, and released a public feedback form that was available on the Board's website and engageyukon.ca. The results of this public engagement period were discussed at the December Board meeting, which was attended by Department staff, many of whom contributed to the development of the Plan.

All of the feedback received during this period, as well as the information and knowledge that was gathered during the planning process, has been taken into consideration in the development of the following recommendations:

The Board recommends that the Minister finalize "A Conservation Plan for Grizzly Bears (*Ursus arctos*) in Yukon", as written. Passed by Motion #xx, moved by Ron Chambers, seconded by Frank Thomas. Passed by unanimous consent. The version of the Plan approved for recommendation by the Board is attached to this letter.

Looking ahead, the Board hopes to be a strong partner with the Department in the implementation of the Plan. In developing implementation priorities, the Board particularly wishes to highlight the following:



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- **Education about Defense of Life or Property** – Developing consistent and clear public education about the DLP process (Action 4.1) from Conservation Officer Services is essential in order to minimize the number of DLP kills.
 - **Management of tags** – With the implementation of an annual allowable harvest (Action 5.1), the number of tags should not be capped. The Board understands the issue of Yukoners purchasing grizzly bear tags with the intent of safety, and this issue should be addressed through education and outreach by CO Services.
 - **Bear Management Unit designations** –The review of BMU designations (Action 3.1) should be undertaken as soon as possible, and the Board would like to be directly involved in this process.
 - **Communication strategy about human-bear occurrences in Yukon** – The Board understands that the Department is working on managing communications related to bear occurrences and hopes that the Department understands the strong desire from Yukoners to be informed in a more detailed and timely manner about the incidence and severity of human-bear occurrences in their communities.

Thank you for your consideration of the above recommendations. We look forward to your response, and to providing Yukoners with a way forward for grizzly bear conservation in the territory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Burdek', written in a cursive style.

John Burdek
Chair, YFWMB