

Mr. Ken Berg
Supervisor
Washington State Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Lacey, Washington 98503

May 18, 2007

Dear Mr. Berg,

We are writing to express our sincere concern for the future of the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE) population of grizzly bears. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has acknowledged that the NCE grizzly bear population - with likely fewer than 10 bears - is in imminent danger of extinction. We must take action now to save this population.

As organizations and individuals concerned about grizzly bears, many of whom have dedicated countless hours and resources to the protection of our natural environment and wildlife legacy in the Pacific Northwest and beyond, the local extinction of grizzly bears in the North Cascades is unacceptable and preventable.

FWS has had a Recovery Plan Chapter for the North Cascades in place since 1997. The Chapter was originally drafted nearly 25 years ago. The document sets forth several "Priority Recovery Actions" that were to be undertaken by FWS within the first five years of the Chapter's finalization. These actions include, among other things, outreach and education, and implementation of the Recovery Plan under the guidance of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*.

As you know, in the near decade since the completion of the NCE Recovery Chapter many of the actions identified by FWS have been completed and/or are ongoing, not the least of which is the very successful educational efforts by the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project (GBOP). We are indebted to FWS, the Washington State Legislature and the many other public and private supporters of this worthwhile project.

In addition, a bear hazard assessment has been completed to determine where bear mortalities and human conflicts may occur and provide recommendations to prevent potential conflicts. Biologists and managers in the North Cascades have delineated Bear Management Units across the recovery zone that provide clear direction to agency managers regarding proposed activities and management actions. Conservation organizations have raised millions of dollars to secure and augment habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife across the region and assess the potential of other lands to contribute to that habitat. Tens of thousands of citizens have contributed to those efforts.†

At least three independent polls completed over the last 10 years have shown strong public support for grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades spanning demographic and geographic lines.

These polls have largely focused on citizens who live within or adjacent to the Recovery Zone and who are potentially most affected by grizzly bear recovery. The latest survey of more than 500 rural residents showed that 79% are supportive of grizzly bear recovery.‡ This support holds even when augmentation is

(Over)

* Servheen, C. US Fish and Wildlife Service, Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. Supplement: North Cascades Ecosystem Recovery Plan Chapter, 1997.

† Loomis Forest and Cascades Conservation Partnership campaigns raised approximately \$16 million and \$60 million respectively in private and public funds to protect habitat in Washington State.

‡ Grizzly Bear Outreach Project, 2003, 2005. Public Knowledge and Attitude Survey

part of a recovery strategy.

The only remaining necessary action is to start a public process that will lead to the implementation of the NCE Recovery Plan. These bears need help and the clock is ticking.

There are many reasons to save grizzly bears in the North Cascades. As the only subpopulation in the lower 48 states outside the Rockies their recovery will contribute significantly to the genetic variability and thus, the resilience of the species. As a species with large area requirements grizzly bears may be considered an umbrella species, the conservation of which will benefit other species such as wolverines. The grizzly is a western icon with strong public support, symbolic of our independence, toughness and love of wildness. Grizzly bears epitomize and safeguard wilderness. Perhaps most importantly, our legacy must be one of conservation and restoration, not extinction.

To allow these animals to become extirpated from this region is not only ecologically unwise but morally reprehensible. We have the habitat and the resources, and a highly educated supportive public to help realize grizzly bear recovery in this area. There are no excuses for continued inaction. When we recover grizzlies, future generations will be grateful for our vision. Action now will help us retain the wild heart of our magnificent North Cascades for decades to come.

We cannot wait any longer before moving forward on this vital recovery effort. We ask that you include a request for an appropriation within 2 years to complete a NEPA process that will lead to recovery of the North Cascades grizzly bear population.

Our groups collectively represent hundreds of thousands of people in Washington and throughout the nation who support grizzly bear recovery and we stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Mitch Friedman, Executive Director
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Bellingham, WA

Lavina Washines, Tribal Chairwoman
Confederated Tribes and Bands
Yakama Nation

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