



**Office of the Chief  
Government of Siksika Nation**

Secretary Sally Jewell,  
US Dept. of Interior,  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240

July 24, 2015

Dear Secretary Jewell,

We, the First Nations' people, are the stewards of this land, and the grizzly bear has always been the guardian of our Blackfoot Confederacy territory.

The Siksika Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy stands in solidarity with our member tribes in opposing the US government's proposed delisting of the grizzly bear from Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections, and enabling the states of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho to open trophy hunting seasons on the grizzly, a sacred being in our culture since time immemorial.

In their recent letters, Chief Charles Weasel Head of the Kainai (Blood) Nation and Chief Stanley Grier of the Piikani Nation outlined the objections our people have to delisting and trophy hunting the grizzly bear, and we fully concur with the proclamations of these Blackfoot Confederacy leaders on this issue.

The delisting of the grizzly bear will directly impact and undermine the Blackfoot Confederacy efforts to protect the sacred lands of the Badger-Two Medicine. If the wishes of the US and the states are carried out and the grizzly bear is delisted, our protections will disappear with the grizzly's, as the US government restrictions on providing energy leases upon the lands of the Blackfeet Nation will be relaxed with the grizzly's delisting from the ESA. The grizzly will no longer be able to protect our lands if it, itself, is no longer protected. Without the grizzly, what will become of our lands and water? "Fracking" will not feed our children. Gas cannot be our oxygen. Petroleum will not quench our thirst.

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## Office of the Chief

# Government of Siksika Nation

The Siksika Nation is a member tribe of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (RMTLC) aside our Blackfoot Confederacy relatives, the Blackfeet Nation of Montana, the Piikani Nation, and the Kainai Nation. Councilman Bill Old Chief of the Blackfeet Nation was instrumental in ensuring that the RMTLC passed an official resolution opposing the delisting of the grizzly bear on religious and spiritual grounds, potential threats to tribal sovereignty, negative economic impacts, and questions as to the validity of the "science" being presented by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to rationalize delisting.

The Siksika Nation unequivocally supports the RMTLC resolution. This is a powerful document that honors our ancestors and defends our future generations by rejecting the delisting and trophy hunting of this sacred being that is, and always has been, integral to our culture.

The grizzly bear is central to some of our oldest and most sacred narratives, accounts that speak to the creation of constellations and the coming of sacred bundles. The circumstances do not exist that would make us, the stewards of this land, turn on our relative, the grizzly bear, to satisfy the US government, state game agencies, and affluent white trophy hunters. The RMTLC resolution cited federal orders, laws and acts that the USFWS is in violation of relative to delisting the grizzly bear, and the lack of "meaningful tribal consultation" mandated by them. We repeat the call for the USFWS to honor those orders, laws and acts. If you hear our voices, you will learn of our objections, and with our help see another way forward.

The Blackfoot Confederacy intends to develop a viable alternative to the colonial practices of the US government and state game agencies that consider killing to be a preferred grizzly bear management option. Our model will offer economic opportunity to our people and cultural revitalization that will have the potential to improve the lives of our youth. Incorporating the precedent established by the Northern Tribes Bison Treaty, if, as the USFWS claims, both the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystems (NCDE) are at "carrying capacity," the Blackfoot Confederacy advocates for grizzlies from those areas to be reintroduced into our traditional country where the grizzly once roamed. The grizzly population in the present-day country of the Siksika, Kainai and Piikani is at an all-time low. Experts have projected that if current trends continue, the fewer than 700 grizzly bears in Alberta could be extinct in as little as fifty-years.

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Any delisting of the grizzly bear in the Blackfeet Nation of Montana will also directly impact the Piikani, Siksika and Kainai of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Our culture will be dramatically and detrimentally impacted, potential economic opportunity for our people derived from eco-tourism will be destroyed, and the vulnerable grizzly population in Alberta will be further destabilized.

We cannot allow our children and future generations to suffer like those of us who walked before them. If the grizzly bear, such a vital part of our culture, is delisted and trophy hunted, like us, our children will become the victims of the theft of the sacred, when another crucial piece of their culture and heritage is taken with every life of a grizzly lost to trophy hunters' guns.

Thank you.



Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman -  
Siksika Nation.

cc. Chairman Harry R. Barnes, Blackfeet Nation.  
Chief Charles Weasel Head, Kainai Nation.  
Chief Stanley Grier, Piikani Nation.  
Blackfeet Tribal Business Council Members.  
Director Daniel Ashe, US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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