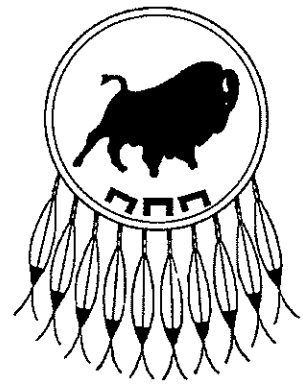


Piikani Nation Chief and Council

P.O. Box 70, Brocket, Alberta T0K 0H0 TELEPHONE: (403) 965-3940 FACSIMILE: (403) 965-3098



July 20, 2015

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

Dear Secretary Jewell:

The Piikani Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy stands in solidarity with our member tribes in opposing the US government's stated intent of delisting the grizzly bear from Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections, and enabling the states of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho to open and profit from trophy hunts of the grizzly.

As a member tribe of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (RMTLC), our Blackfoot Confederacy relatives, the Blackfeet Nation of Montana, supported 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 Piikani Nation recognizes and echoes those concerns.

Respected Blackfeet Spiritual and Sun Dance Leaders, Elders, and Councilpersons have all denounced delisting and trophy hunting the grizzly bear, and warned of the detrimental consequences to our youth and future generations if this should occur. Given the significance of the grizzly bear in the traditional ceremonial practices of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman, Chief of the Siksika Nation, and Blackfeet Councilwoman, Cheryl Little Dog, have both categorized the proposed delisting of the grizzly bear as an act of cultural genocide against our people.

In 2013 the Assembly of First Nations passed a resolution calling for a ban on trophy hunting grizzly bears. The Assembly cited articles from the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) to demonstrate the moral and political force of the First Nations' position. US President Barack Obama supports the UNDRIP, yet his Administration is failing to abide by it in this instance. As a member of the RMTLC, the Blackfeet Nation highlighted a catalog of federal orders, laws and acts the USFWS is in violation of relative to delisting the grizzly bear, and the lack of "meaningful tribal consultation" mandated by those federal charters. We strongly support the Blackfeet Nation in calling for all of these orders, laws and acts to be honored.

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The Blackfoot Nation is in many respects the gatekeeper of the ecosystem our ancestors lived within, nurtured and protected. The struggle over defending the sacred Badger-Two Medicine area is related to the proposed delisting of the grizzly bear. Delisting and trophy hunting grizzly bears in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) will also directly impact the Piikani, Siksika and Kainai of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Councillor Mike Bruised Head of the Kainai Nation recently explained how the grizzly has always been the guardian of our lands, and if the grizzly is delisted how our country will be vulnerable to even more energy leases and the resultant devastation, as the restrictions that exist on the issuance of those leases will no longer be there if the grizzly is delisted.

Any destabilizations in the current NCDE grizzly population will further undermine the grizzly population in Alberta, which in the Spring of 2015 reached an all-time low. With fewer than 700 grizzly bears remaining in fragmented pockets of diminishing habitat, if the current trends continue, some projections show that the grizzly in Alberta could be on the verge of extinction in as few as fifty-years. Alberta is the heartland of the Blackfoot Confederacy, and we cannot stand by and watch our ancestors' legacy pass into oblivion with the sacred grizzly bear, and see our children and future generations robbed once more of a vital part of their culture – that which is represented by the sacred and spiritual power of the grizzly bear.

The leaders of the Blackfoot Confederacy have always made decisions that reflect the best interests of all of our people and our future generations. Those interests are best served today by opposing the USFWS's drive to delist the grizzly bear from ESA protections.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long tail extending to the right.

Chief Stan Grier
Piikani Nation

cc. Chairman Harry R. Barnes, Blackfeet Nation.
Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman, Siksika Nation.
Chief Charles Weasel Head, Blood Nation.
Blackfeet Tribal Business Council Members.
Director Daniel Ashe, US Fish and Wildlife Service.