

A:shiwí

Zuni Religious Societies

PO Box 789 Zuni NM 87327

President Barack Obama,
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.,
Washington, DC 20500

Hon. Sally Jewell,
Interior Secretary –
US Dept. of Interior.

Director Daniel Ashe,
US Fish and Wildlife Service.
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

October 7, 2015.

RE – AHUN:SHEA/Delisting and trophy hunting of the sacred grizzly bear.

Dear President Obama, Secretary Jewell and Director Ashe:

We, the undersigned leaders and members of the Zuni Religious Societies, formally oppose the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (hereafter USFWS) proposed delisting of the grizzly bear from the Endangered Species Act (hereafter ESA), and object in the strongest terms to the federal government enabling the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho to initiate trophy hunting seasons on the grizzly bear.

In common with the forty-two federally recognized tribal governments that already oppose this policy, and the many tribal spiritual leaders and traditional clans, the grizzly bear is sacred to the Zuni people. Within Zuni Religious Societies, traditional practitioners of our way of life become as the grizzly bear when in the sacred realm. Ahun:shea, the Bear, particularly the grizzly as the most powerful of bears, is venerated in Zuni religion.

The Zuni religion is the lifeblood of the Zuni people; to remove protections from the few grizzly bears that remain to allow rich white trophy hunters to kill them is akin to killing us. In the Zuni way, we do not kill grizzly bears – it is a taboo to kill a bear, with serious consequences. The idea that the federal government will remove protections to allow trophy hunters to kill grizzly bears for “sport” is abhorrent to us, and an attack on our religious beliefs and religious rights, supposedly protected by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

The Zuni people have been here in the Middle Place since time immemorial. Our ancestors were the original keepers of wisdom, and as members of the Zuni Religious Societies we now carry that responsibility. The Zuni people, like the other impacted tribal peoples, must have a voice in this issue. President Obama recently told Alaska Native leaders (9/1/15), “One of the things that we’ve been focused on is how can we work together and improve communication, consultation, collaboration and participation in dealing with issues that face Native communities.” This pledge has not been honored in regard to tribes and the delisting of the grizzly bear.

President Obama also told Alaska Native leaders (9/1/15), “One of the biggest things I heard during this discussion was the need for us to work more intensively and collaboratively” with tribal communities, yet the President’s Administration and the USFWS is failing to do so on the issue of delisting and trophy hunting the sacred grizzly bear. In addition, President Obama informed Alaska Native leaders (9/1/15), “My administration also is taking new action to make sure that Alaska Natives have direct input into the management of Chinook salmon stocks, something that has been of great concern here.” We, the Zuni Religious Societies, hereby express our “great concern” over the grizzly, and request “direct input into the management” of the grizzly.

By USFWS’s own data, fewer than 1,400 grizzly bears remain in the lower-48 states, where once, pre-contact, there were estimated to be 100,000. In a little more than a century Euro-American immigrants wiped out those grizzlies from our homelands. It would not take a decade for the surviving 1,400 to be exterminated. Grizzlies in the two pockets where they survive are suffering catastrophic losses of their food sources, and they continue to be island populations, genetically isolated from one another. Many experts, a number of them former government biologists, categorically state that the grizzly bear is not recovered by the scientific criteria and should not be delisted.

In the land our ancestors knew intimately, in what is now called the US Southwest, at least 110,000 square miles of viable grizzly habitat exists. Our ancestors walked there with the grizzly, and the grizzly should walk there again. If the grizzly bear is delisted by


the federal government it will never walk there again, and, like our land, our people will be denied the right bestowed upon us by our deities to live upon our mother in her fullness, in the physical and spiritual realms.

Our ancestors were stewards of this land, as we are today. The potential devastation of the ancestral landscapes of many tribal people by multi-national energy companies if ESA protections are removed from the grizzly bear is of great concern to the Zuni Religious Societies. Removing protections from the grizzly removes protections from the land, and as the grizzly and the land will be devastated, so will our culture.

Ellah:kwa.

Arlene Peina - Turkey
Red Art Society Sun Clan

SIGNED:

Darden Vacit	Bear Clan
Linda Matiza	Snake Society
Michael Sundry	Longhorn Society
Delbert Horn	Bear Clan
Vincent Hoare	Bear Clan
	Rain Priest TO THE North
Bern Kesterson	Shumman: Kue
Perry Tsudiasi	Bow priest / Big bow Charcoal Society
George Yumakre	Snake Society / Galaxy Society
Harvey Chmond	Small Kiva leader / Ah:kommosi (Kachinas) leaders
William Niha	Galaxy Society / Kohibekwi / Fire God Society leader
Mary Garute	Art Society
Jamie Niha	Galaxy / Clown Society
Bobby Shreck	Rain Priest
Dicky Shreck	Rain Priest
Daryle Shreck	Rain Priest
Robert Shreck	Rain Priest
YUGO Sanchez	Rain Priest
Rosame Galate	Eagle Clan
Amey Boukney	Badger Clan / Fire God Society / Kiva leader Group.