



Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma

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OFFICE OF THE LADY CHAIRMAN

October 10, 2014

GOAL Tribal Coalition
PO Box 30,000, #360
Jackson, WY 83002

Respectful GOAL Tribal Coalition Representative,

With Regard to and/or all parties concerned to the GOAL Coalition's efforts towards its endeavors. The Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma supports the mission of Guardians of Our Ancestors' Legacy (GOAL) Tribal Coalition to preserve and protect the endangered Yellowstone grizzly bear. In doing so, we will help to ensure that Native American spiritual rights are upheld, and our sovereignty defended.

The area now known as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem with Yellowstone National Park at its heart is the ancestral homeland of the Kiowa. It was in this region that our ancestors first established sacred kinship with the grizzly bear.

Our respect and reverence for the grizzly bear is reflected in many Kiowa names; some of the greatest leaders in Kiowa history carried names inspired by the grizzly bear, including Set-tain-te (Satanta) and Set-angya (Satank), and the importance of the bear in our traditional culture can still be heard in our names today.

Narratives pertaining to the grizzly bear are fundamental to many of our sacred sites in what is now Wyoming, and what was once our homeland. We oppose the present attempts by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho to remove Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections from the Yellowstone grizzly bear.

The Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma rejects the notion that the sacred grizzly bear should be considered a "trophy game animal" and hunted in our ancestral homeland.

We agree that the FWS's determination to remove the Yellowstone grizzly bear from ESA protection without thorough consultation with the affected tribes identified as possessing an ancestral connection to Yellowstone contravenes the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (PL-95-341). There has been no discussion related to the impact

delisting the grizzly, and the subsequent trophy hunting of the bear, will have on American Indian spirituality, namely the religious practices of traditional tribal people, protected by PL-95-341.

We further agree that by ignoring the affected tribes, the FWS is also in contravention of the Secretarial Order issued by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531), which sets forth the framework to be followed when actions taken under authority of the ESA affect tribes.

The American Indian Tribal Rights, Federal-Tribal Trust Responsibilities, and the Endangered Species Act Order explicitly states: “The Departments shall take into consideration the impacts of their actions and policies under the Act on Indian use of listed species for cultural and religious purposes (Sec. 5 #4). The Order also directs the FWS to “solicit traditional knowledge, and comments from, and utilize the expertise of, affected Indian tribes” during consultation processes. This has yet to happen.

Not consulting with the affected tribes is not only a breach of PL-95-341 and 16 U.S.C. 1531, it constitutes an infringement of our sovereignty.

Clearly the grizzly bear is not recovered under the criteria set forth by the Endangered Species Act. A population of between 500–700 grizzlies surviving on less than 1% of their original range pre-contact could not be considered recovered even if it were not genetically isolated and threatened by the loss of keystone food sources, which the Yellowstone grizzly bear is.

It is essential that the FWS finally makes the data it is basing its conclusions upon available, not only to the affected tribes, but crucially, to the scientific community for independent analysis and review. The affected tribes are entitled to the information under 16 U.S.C. 1531.

By protecting the sacred grizzly bear and in the process defending our religious freedom and sovereignty we honor our ancestors. The tribal heritage of Rain Bear Stands Last, the founder of GOAL, includes Kiowa. One of his ancestors, the great Cheyenne leader, Sleeping Bear, once presented the legendary Kiowa chief, Téh-tóot-sah (Little Bluff), with a famous painted tipi.

This exchange began a tradition amongst our peoples. In supporting GOAL and this effort, we continue that tradition, and in the spirit of our ancestors attempt to ensure that

our children and future generations will grow-up in a world where grizzlies still roam our ancestral homeland so that a large part of our culture and history will remain intact.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber C. Toppah

Amber C. Toppah, Lady Chairman
Kiowa Business Committee
Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma

