



November 13, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a national advocacy organization representing 634 First Nations in Canada. As National Chief of the AFN, I am writing to support a request made by recognized Indian Tribes to your administration to reconsider the decision to delist the grizzly bear from the *Endangered Species Act (ESA)* and to permit States to profit from trophy hunts of this sacred being. The delisting of the grizzly bear from *ESA* protection is of great concern to a number of recognized Indian Tribes who have voiced their opposition to the proposal and to several First Nations in Canada. The AFN understands that recognized Indian Tribes have raised serious concerns that the “best available science” is not being used in the delisting determination.

Among First Nations in Canada, the Siksika, Kainaiwa and Piikani of the Blackfoot Confederacy are members of the Montana-based Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council. In collaboration with the Blackfoot Nation, the tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy are developing a viable alternative to State approaches that consider killing these sacred beings as the preferred option for grizzly bear management. The Blackfoot Confederacy model promises innovative and sound conservation strategy, and incorporates the precedent established by the Northern Tribes Bison Treaty. This model will nurture cultural revitalization, and also offer economic opportunity to Native Americans, that in turn has the potential to improve the lives of American Indian youth.

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Delisting the grizzly bear in the territory of the Blackfoot Nation of Montana, and in Greater Yellowstone will have negative impacts on the Blackfoot Confederacy and directly impact First Nations in Canada. Should the grizzly bear lose federal protections and trophy hunting be permitted, the population will be confined to two small, genetically isolated pockets, and may never repopulate areas of biologically suitable habitat across their historic range. I understand that fewer than 1,400 grizzly bears occupy the contiguous United States, whereas pre-Lewis and Clark there were over 100,000. Given these statistics, the AFN supports the position of the recognized Indian Tribes that the grizzly bear cannot reasonably be considered a recovered species and that species should not be delisted in a "piecemeal" way.

The demand to preserve protections for the grizzly bear is also being pursued by First Nations governments in Canada. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) said of the trophy hunting of grizzly bears in British Columbia, "It is absolutely barbaric, that we allow rich people to come in and slaughter the bears". The AFN fully supports the positions of the recognized Indian Tribes in the United States who share this position.

The Assembly of First Nations understands that many of the American Indian Nations in opposition to delisting have called upon your administration to institute a moratorium on implementing this decision, until all of the impacted recognized Indian tribes can be consulted, and accommodated through a full and meaningful consultation process. A moratorium would provide an opportunity for recognized Indian Tribes and independent scientists to review the raw data upon which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is basing its conclusions about delisting the grizzly bear.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Perry Bellegarde  
National Chief

c.c.: AFN National Executive  
Grand Chief Charles Weasel Head  
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip  
Brian Cladoosby, President NCAI  
The Honourable Stephane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of the Environment and  
Climate Change  
The Honourable Sally Jewell, Interior Secretary

