

CROW TRIBE EXECUTIVE BRANCH



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To all parties concerned:

The area now known as Greater Yellowstone lays within the boundaries of Crow Country that were defined by Chief Sits in the Middle of the Land at the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty Council. For centuries, the Crow people have had a deep spiritual connection to the landscape, a relationship that continues to this day. Today, right in the heart of Crow country, exactly where Chief Sits in the Middle of the Land described, the federal government intends to delist the grizzly bear from Endangered Species Act protections and permit the State of Wyoming to open high-dollar trophy hunting seasons on the grizzly.

In common with the land, the Crow People have an ancient relationship with the grizzly bear. In Crow culture, the grizzly bear is referred to as *biiké*, elder brother, which connotes great respect for the bear. From the stars to the rocks, images of the bear communicate that sacred relationship the Crow people have with the grizzly, knowledge that was preserved by Crow elders and passed on to future generations. For example, *Daxpitcheeshuulissúua*, the Bear Song Dance, was one of the most sacred ceremonies of our people. The grizzly bear is a significant symbol for ceremonies for certain families in the Crow Tribe. The symbolic parts of a grizzly bear are used during ceremonies for healing. These parts of the grizzly bear has been handed down generation to generation and also used during competitions such as the handgames and other Crow traditional games. The elders say that a bear symbol can be seen in the palms of hands signifying power of the grizzly bear.

Though this proposed action is to take place on traditional Crow land, the Crow Tribe has yet to be consulted. As one of the 26 tribal nations the federal government openly acknowledges has an ancestral connection to Yellowstone, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is required to consult with the Crow Tribe, like many of the other affected tribes. Due to the cultural significance of the grizzly bear, the Crow people will be detrimentally impacted if the grizzly is delisted and subsequently trophy hunted.

The Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, the historic allies of the Crow people, articulated the issues arising from the proposed delisting of the grizzly bear in its declaration of 10/10/14 and the Crow Tribe supports those positions.

The Crow Tribe is entitled to review the data the FWS is basing its conclusions on under 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). The Crow Tribe joins with the other affected tribal nations that have called upon the FWS to release that data not only to the tribes, but also to independent scientists

for analysis and review. Transparency is essential if tribal members and the public at large are to have confidence in the outcome.

The Guardians of Ancestors Legacy (GOAL) Tribal Coalition is doing valuable work in its efforts to preserve and protect the Yellowstone grizzly bear and in the process defend tribal sovereignty and spiritual rights.

Sincerely,



Darrin Old Coyote, Chairman
Crow Tribe