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Groups Challenge New Law Allowing Wyoming to OK Grizzly Bear Hunts

New State Law Ignores Federal Court Ruling, Enables Grizzly Hunts

CHEYENNE, Wyo.— Conservation groups today filed a [notice of intent](#) to sue over a new state law that would give the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission authority to manage grizzlies, including the authorization of a hunting season as early as this spring.

“This is an egregious attempt to ignore federal law protecting Yellowstone’s iconic grizzly bears,” said Bonnie Rice, Senior Representative with Sierra Club’s Our Wild America campaign. “We will not idly stand by while Wyoming moves to illegally take authority for managing grizzly bears and subject them to trophy hunts.”

Grizzly bears in Wyoming are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. In September, a federal judge struck down an attempt by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove federal protection for grizzlies in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, thwarting Wyoming’s plan to hold a fall hunting season.

“Wyoming seems to be stuck in a 19th-Century mindset in which the response to every situation is to kill off native predators,” said Erik Molvar, a wildlife biologist and Executive Director with Western Watersheds Project. “It’s a good thing we have federal laws like the Endangered Species Act to limit the harm from states like Wyoming that seem bent on marking certain wildlife for eradication.”

In response, last week the Wyoming Legislature passed bill SF0093, which purports to give the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission authority to ignore the federal court’s decision. Governor Mark Gordon has signed the bill into law.

That bill would enable the commission to plan future grizzly bear hunts if it decides that a hunt “would be beneficial for managing Wyoming’s wildlife and for protecting Wyoming workers and other citizens and tourists of the state.”

“It’s outrageous that Wyoming would blatantly ignore federal law to satisfy its thirst to kill grizzly bears,” said Noah Greenwald, the Center’s endangered species director. “Moves like this show that the state is far from ready to manage grizzlies.”

Today's notice of intent to sue says the Wyoming law violates the Endangered Species Act and the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution, which requires that federal law must supersede state law.

"This state law directly and unlawfully conflicts with the clear mandate of the federal Endangered Species Act that grizzly bears not be shot by trophy hunters seeking their heads and hides for bragging rights," said Nicholas Arrivo, Staff Attorney with the Humane Society of the United States.

"The state of Wyoming has continually made it clear that they want to offer sport hunting of grizzlies for "recreational opportunity." Going so far as to defy federal law to cater to the bloodlust of trophy hunters is incomprehensible," said Kristin Combs, program director at Wyoming Wildlife Advocates.

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.5 million members and supporters nationwide. In addition to creating opportunities for people of all ages, levels and locations to have meaningful outdoor experiences, the Sierra Club works to safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and litigation. For more information, visit <http://www.sierraclub.org>.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.4 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

Western Watersheds Project is a nonprofit environmental organization that works to protect and restore watersheds and wildlife throughout the West.

Wyoming Wildlife Advocates is a non-profit organization focused on informing, educating, and empowering communities to preserve our wild legacy and protect our shared wildlife resources. We envision a Wyoming that leads the nation in exceptional and innovative wildlife management; all stakeholders are valued equally, and management decisions are driven by the best available science. Headquartered in Jackson, Wyoming, WWA has thousands of supporters in Wyoming, the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and nationwide.

The Humane Society of the United States is the [most effective](#) animal protection organization, as rated by our peers. For more than 60 years, we have celebrated the protection of all animals and confronted all forms of cruelty. We and our affiliates are the nation's largest provider of [hands-on services](#) for animals, caring for more than 100,000 animals each year, and we prevent cruelty to millions more through our [advocacy campaigns](#). Read about our more than 60 years of [transformational change](#) for animals and people at HumaneSociety.org.