

**For Immediate Release**

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**Group Is Concerned for Grizzly Bear Safety During Controversial Mountain Goat Culling in Grand Teton National Park**

*Grizzly Bears at Risk*

JACKSON, Wyo. — Wyoming Wildlife Advocates is asking Grand Teton National Park (GTNP) to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as is required by the Endangered Species Act on how the upcoming mountain goat culling will affect grizzly bears; an endangered species. The group sent a letter on August 18 to GTNP Supervisor Gopaul Noojibail requesting that before the mountain goat cull is slated to begin, a consultation with the USFWS be conducted to examine the potential impacts that volunteer citizen hunters (a.k.a., “skilled volunteers”) may have on grizzly bears.

The mountain goat culling is scheduled to begin September 14 and end on November 13. This is the same time period when bears are in hyperphagia, a period of increased calorie intake in preparation for hibernation. The skilled citizen volunteers will be in the field without a GTNP staff member accompanying them. Although they will be required to carry bear spray, hunters have been involved in conflicts with grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem at an increased rate with usually fatal outcomes for the bear. Hunters are usually doing many of the activities that people are advised against doing when in bear country like masking their scent, moving stealthily, traveling alone or with only one other person, and being in close proximity to carcasses. We remain concerned that bears will encounter these hunters and would like an assurance from the Park Service that every measure will be taken to ensure bears remain safe within the confines of the boundaries of the park.

Grand Teton National Park had originally planned to have sharpshooters kill the goats from a helicopter during the late winter months to reduce the threat the goats present to the native bighorn sheep. That plan was abandoned when the state of Wyoming objected and called Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt to intervene on behalf of the state. Wyoming would rather have hunters kill the goats than for them to be killed by a sharpshooter from an aircraft. This is despite the fact that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department routinely allow wolves and coyotes to be shot by sharpshooters from the air for “predator control” claiming that the jurisdiction of these animals falls to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

“There is a very real risk to grizzlies and even black bears in a place where these animals are accustomed to remaining safe and rarely encountering humans. If even one grizzly is killed as a result of this culling, it would be a tragic loss for the American people who see our national parks as safe havens for wildlife to exist,” said Kristin Combs, Executive Director of Wyoming Wildlife Advocates. “We would like an assurance that actions will be taken to ensure that grizzly bears are not subjected to harassment or increased risk of death from encounters with the volunteer hunters who will be on the landscape.”

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