



A Voice for Nature

RED DEER RIVER NATURALISTS

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TO: Minister Todd Loewen

fp.minister@gov.ab.ca

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Dear Minister Loewen:

The Red Deer River Naturalists are the oldest natural history organization in Alberta. We have been actively involved in conservation issues in the province for 126 years.

Our organization is very concerned about current wildlife policy changes, especially as it relates to grizzly bear hunting.

To quote one of the most respected retired biologists and conservationists in Alberta, Lorne Fitch:

Alberta used to demonstrate how science-based conservation was supposed to work. Today, what used to be management guided by experienced, professionally trained biologists has been sidelined, or worse, taken over by politicians and lobbyists who either don't understand science or don't want to, who don't trust biologists and the data or who have a vested economic interest in pursuing their own agenda.

In Alberta grizzly bears are a *Threatened* species. Despite this, in a politically directed, administrative sleight of hand, your office approved a hunt initiated under the contrived guise of "Protection of life and property from problem wildlife." "Hunters" can be drawn to provide a rapid response and will be able to keep the carcass. Grizzly bear experts are unanimous that sport hunting, contrary to assertions, will not minimize depredations against private property or human/bear conflicts.

We are also concerned about cougar hunting. We oppose cougar hunting using dogs and were alarmed to learn that, near the end of a recent season there was political intervention to increase the quotas, even for female cats, and open new areas to hunting, including a provincial park. All was contrary to the management plan and was a wild deviation from the scientific objectives.

It appears that quotas for mule deer, mountain goat and moose hunting have also been manipulated to appease special interests. This is inconsistent with the way quotas should be derived from an evidence-based position based on aerial surveys.

Despite no solid evidence that control measures work to protect game fish populations, a politically inspired cormorant season was opened, under the shield of a "damage control license."

We are concerned that these recent changes in wildlife management are more about supporting sport hunters and business interests than about biology and conservation.

We agree with Mr. Fitch in his conclusion that "*What we are now seeing is a full-blown contagion of political meddling in fish and wildlife management.*"

We trust that your government will return to wildlife management based on science and the input of wildlife biologists.

Yours truly,

Rick Tallas
President