

# Species at Risk

## 2012-13 Recovery Action Summary

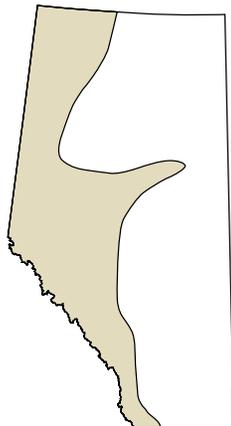


## Grizzly Bear



### Background

The grizzly bear is considered Threatened under the provincial Wildlife Act. Nationally, it has been assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as Special Concern. The Alberta population is considered to be small, with recent DNA surveys indicating a population of approximately 700 bears. Human-caused mortality is believed to be the most significant limiting factor for grizzly bears in Alberta. Extensive human use of the landscape for agriculture, industrial activity, and recreation results in human-bear conflicts, bear relocations, and mortalities. Improving knowledge of grizzly bears in Alberta is imperative to reducing these human-bear conflicts and associated mortality.



Grizzly bear range

### Recovery Plan

*The Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan 2008-2013* was produced by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD), with the assistance of a multi-stakeholder recovery team.

### Recovery Goal

The primary recovery goal is to restore and ensure the long-term viability of a self-sustaining grizzly bear population in Alberta.

### Strategies

Progress on recovery will be achieved through the following seven strategies:

1. Reduce Human-caused Mortality;
2. Improve Knowledge of Grizzly Bears;
3. Reduce Human/bear Conflicts;
4. Improve and Deliver Education and Outreach Programs;
5. Identify, Track, and Maintain Habitat;
6. Improve Inter-jurisdictional Cooperation; and
7. Apply Regulations and/or Legislation.



## Actions

Numerous actions are presented in the recovery plan, which are delivered by ESRD. The most recent actions are listed below, organized by the seven strategies.

### Reduce Human-caused Mortality

- The suspension of grizzly bear hunting (established in 2006) continues. The number of known, human-caused grizzly bear mortalities has averaged 15 per year since the instatement of the hunting suspension. This is a 45 per cent reduction from before the suspension.
- Monitoring, reporting, and analyzing grizzly bear mortality data is ongoing.
- Strategies for managing motorized access in core and secondary grizzly bear areas continue to be reviewed.
- Government staff recorded 505 grizzly bear occurrences in 2012. Of these cases, 79 per cent were resolved without attempt to capture and relocate the bear.

### Improve Knowledge of Grizzly Bears

- In 2008, ESRD created a grizzly bear "Science Advisory Committee", which developed a list of priority research topics to help inform grizzly bear recovery actions.
- A project aimed at finding a long-term solution to grizzly bear monitoring in southwest Alberta began in 2011. In 2012, 831 grizzly bear rub objects were monitored, yielding approximately 4 200 hair samples.
- Since 2004, 31 translocated grizzly bears have been fitted with satellite collars and monitored for one or more years.
- In 2010, ESRD and the Alberta Conservation Association produced *The Status of the Grizzly Bear in Canada (2010)*, which summarizes over a decade of research and five years of DNA-based population surveys. This document helped inform the decision to list grizzly bears as Threatened in 2010.
- Research conducted by the University of Alberta and the Foothills Research Institute continues to explore new techniques to investigate overall grizzly bear health and the impacts of mining, mountain pine beetle management, and road access on grizzly bears.

### Reduce Human/bear Conflicts

- Government staff continue to work with landowners, industrial users, agricultural producers, rural residents, and recreationalists to prevent and reduce conflicts with grizzly bears.
- The Alberta BearSmart program provides educational services, removal of bear attractants, electric fencing, and aversive conditioning.

- Each year, as part of the Spring Intercept Program, approximately 150 road-killed ungulates are transferred to 14 high-elevation sites. This program aims to reduce conflicts with agricultural producers by encouraging bears to stay in remote areas.
- An ongoing aversive conditioning program in the Bow/Kananaskis area works to prevent habituation of grizzly bears that frequent areas of high use by recreationalists.
- Karelian Bear Dogs not only prevent and respond to human-bear conflicts, but they serve as ambassadors for education at public events. They help reduce the need to relocate or euthanize bears.

### Improve and Deliver Education and Outreach Programs

- The BearSmart Program provides educational information for residents in bear country, industrial workers, recreationalists, hunters, and agricultural producers. Messaging occurs through print and social media, public presentations, and booths at trade shows and community events.
- Community BearSmart programs are being developed for many new areas of the province, and ESRD hosts a workshop each year to facilitate information exchange with community volunteers.

### Identify, Track, and Maintain Habitat

- Grizzly bear range has been mapped in all bear management areas (BMAs).
- In 2012, ESRD collaborated with the University of Alberta and Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association to analyze 13 years of grizzly sighting and conflict records. A gradual eastward expansion appears to be occurring in southwestern Alberta.

### Improve Inter-jurisdictional Communication

- ESRD staff continue to participate on the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee and consult frequently with biologists and managers from neighbouring provinces, states, and National Parks.

### Apply Regulations and/or Legislation

- Over the past several years, ESRD has adjusted baiting regulations for black bears, wolves, and coyotes within grizzly bear range, in an effort to reduce the potential for conflicts.
- The maximum penalties for grizzly bear poaching have been increased.
- ESRD continues to encourage municipal governments to enact bylaws that require securing important bear attractants, such as garbage, birdfeeders, and barbecues.

## Upcoming

An update to the 2008 recovery plan will be prepared in 2013/14. Efforts in human-bear conflict, research, and public education are ongoing. For further information on grizzly bears, visit <http://srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/WildlifeManagement/BearManagement/GrizzlyBears>