

March 15, 2022

The Honorable Deborah Haaland
U.S. Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Martha Williams
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Hilary Cooley
Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 84112

Secretary Haaland, Director Williams and Ms. Cooley:

We request that you take immediate action on an urgent situation with a very short timeline. A female grizzly bear “Lavelle” and her three cubs have taken up residence in the vicinity of the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness just outside of Missoula, Montana and they were spotted on the edge of the urban area last Fall. They obtained human-related foods that were improperly stored. These bears are of potentially great importance to efforts to connect isolated populations of grizzly bears as well as natural migration into the Bitterroot Ecosystem.

As you know the State of Montana has adopted a policy of not relocating grizzly bears that are trapped in management actions. We are concerned that after Lavelle emerges from the den she and her cubs may get into human foods and be trapped and all of them destroyed by the State of Montana. It is therefore urgent that you intervene by contacting the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to coordinate monitoring of these bears and prepare to have U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel take possession of the bears if they are trapped by the State of Montana so that they can be relocated to a remote area.

Due to the highly valuable nature of having female grizzly bears between the Grizzly Bear Recovery Areas these bears deserve an extra chance. Moreover, these bears have provided urgency to citizen and local government efforts to enact greatly needed Bear-Wise and Bear Smart efforts in the Missoula area. They are much more inspirational alive than dead.

You might consider the Sapphire-Pintler-John Long Mountains as a possible relocation site. It is within and adjacent to the NCDE distribution area and there are hundreds of thousands of acres

of Wilderness and inventoried roadless areas. Scientists have also documented suitable habitat for grizzly bears with abundant natural food sources and denning areas. However, we want to make clear we write you in an effort to save Lavelle and her family and we are not suggesting that grizzly bears be trapped and relocated for non-management action purposes.

Sincerely,

Mike Bader, Wildlife Consultant

Missoula, Montana

Larry Campbell, Friends of the Bitterroot

Hamilton, Montana

Jeff Juel, Friends of the Clearwater

Missoula, Montana

Brett Haverstick, Wilderness Watch

Missoula, Montana

Patty Ames, Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force

Missoula, Montana

Adam Rissien, WildEarth Guardians

Missoula, Montana

Jocelyn Leroux, Western Watersheds Project

Missoula, Montana

Stephen Capra, Footloose Montana

Missoula, Montana

Denise Boggs, Conservation Congress

Great Falls, Montana

Keith Hammer, Swan View Coalition

Kalispell, Montana

Rick Bass, Yaak Valley Forest Council

Troy, Montana

Arlene Montgomery, Friends of the Wild Swan

Bigfork, Montana

Mike Garrity, Alliance for the Wild Rockies

Helena, Montana

Linda Healow, Bozeman Broadband – Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Bozeman, Montana

Phil Knight, Montanans for Gallatin Wilderness

Bozeman, Montana

Joseph Scalia, Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance

Bozeman, Montana

Clint Nagel, Gallatin Wildlife Association

Bozeman, Montana

Doug Peacock, Save the Yellowstone Grizzly

Livingston, Montana

Louisa Willcox, Grizzly Times

Livingston, Montana

Jason Christensen, Yellowstone to Uintas Connection

Paris, Idaho

Janet Torline, Eco-Integrity Alliance

Harrison, Idaho

Brooks Fahy, Predator Defense

Eugene, Oregon

George Wuerthner, Public Lands Media

Bend, Oregon

Paula Hood, Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project

Fossil, Oregon

Ara Marderosian, Sequoia ForestKeeper

Kernville, California

Sam Stearns, Friends of Bell Smith Springs

Stonefort, Illinois