April 18, 2016

Dear Director Ashe:

Yellowstone's grizzlies, once teetering on the brink of extinction, are only now starting to recover. But your recently announced proposal to remove federal protections under the Endangered Species Act is premature and comes at a time where only 700 of these iconic bears are known to exist in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and shockingly only 1,400 to 1,700 bears in the entire lower 48 states. We stand with The Humane Society of the United States in urging you to keep grizzly bears protected.

If the proposal to delist is successful, the future of Yellowstone's grizzly bears will be placed in the hands of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho state wildlife managers who have already made clear their intentions to open up the population to trophy hunting. Grizzly bears are an iconic species, representing the natural beauty and magnificence in many of our country's last remaining wild spaces. This holds true no more than in Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding region, where grizzly bears are cherished by both tourists and locals alike. Killing these animals in order to stuff them for display and bragging rights is shameful and will only set back our efforts to help the population recover.

We cannot let history repeat itself. Grizzlies were once an abundant species in the Yellowstone region but suffered from overwhelming persecution by hunters up until recent decades. This resulted in the need to list Yellowstone grizzlies as threatened under the ESA in the 1970's when their number dipped to 136 individuals and the population is faced yet again with a threat to its very existence from trophy hunting if this proposal goes forward.

Yellowstone grizzly bears still need our help. They continue to face critical challenges such as habitat loss and climate change. Removing protections for Yellowstone grizzlies now will leave the population with little hope of recovery. You and your predecessors have invested too much into the recovery of this national icon to give up on them. Please keep the Yellowstone grizzly bear listed as a threatened species under the ESA and prevent history from repeating itself.

Sincerely,



Ian Somerhalder