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Good Morning Team,

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Lawsuit Filed Against Wyoming for Rushing to Open Season to Trophy Hunt Grizzly Bears

CHEYENNE, Wyo.— Today, Jim Laybourn (a Wyoming wildlife filmmaker), The Humane Society of the United States, and the Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit challenging the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission's illegal efforts to limit public comment in order to fast-track approval of the state's first trophy hunt of [grizzly bears](#) in 40 years.

Citizens concerned with the slaughter of the bears were only given 30 days to review the proposed management plan for the trophy hunt, and shortly thereafter the Commission voted unanimously to approve the plan. The Commission simultaneously adopted a tri-state memorandum of agreement with Idaho and Montana to formalize quotas for grizzly hunts, allocating over 50% of the quota to Wyoming.

Jim Laybourn, a lifelong Wyoming resident who has spent thousands of hours observing grizzly bears in the field, said "I am deeply concerned about the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission's apparent lack of respect for the will of the public. Grizzly bears are the keystone species of both our ecosystem and our economy, worth tens of millions in tourism dollars each year. The management plan will remain fatally flawed until the Commission gives the community whose livelihood depends on grizzlies an opportunity to make their voices heard."

The long-term harm caused by trophy hunting has been well established by scientific research. By specifically targeting the biggest and strongest males, trophy hunting reduces the genetic viability of a species and has cascading impacts on the social dynamics of apex predators, including increasing infanticide. And a recent [study](#) demonstrated that when states allow recreational trophy hunting of carnivores, it increases the rate of poaching by normalizing killing.

"The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has once again ignored scientific evidence and promoted the persecution of large carnivores," said Anna Frostic, senior attorney for wildlife litigation at The Humane Society of the United States. "The public must be given ample time to scrutinize any proposal to commercialize our wildlife heritage."

In March of this year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [proposed](#) to delist grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem and turn their management over to the states. In return, Wyoming has rushed to approve a trophy-hunting season that puts the recovery of grizzly bears in and around Yellowstone in jeopardy. As soon as bears leave Yellowstone National Park, they will be in danger of being shot. This unsustainable scheme will prevent the Yellowstone population from connecting to any other bear populations, a connectivity the Service has acknowledged Yellowstone bears need to ensure long-term genetic health.

"This trigger-happy plan allows hunters to specifically target the very grizzly bears that are key to creating the genetic connectivity with other grizzly populations that's absolutely needed to protect the long-term genetic health of Yellowstone grizzlies," said Andrea Santarsiere, a staff attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "By putting these important bears at great risk the second they step outside park boundaries, this plan threatens the long-term recovery of grizzly bears in the northern Rockies."

The plaintiffs are seeking to reopen the comment period on the state proposals in order to allow members of the public the appropriate time to express their views on whether this majestic animal should be managed by the best-available science or by states anxious to attract globetrotting trophy hunters.

The plaintiffs are represented by attorneys from The Humane Society of the United States, the Center for Biological Diversity, and local counsel Megan Hayes.

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