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Subject: Tribal Leaders Concerned that Feds' "Grizzly Bear Czar" is "Belittling" Tribal Opposition to Delisting the Great Bear
Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2015 2:29:27 PM

Apologies this is late. This was not captured by the news clips and just came across my desk. -Ryan

Tribal Leaders Concerned that Feds' "Grizzly Bear Czar" is "Belittling" Tribal Opposition to Delisting the Great Bear

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Tribal leaders want to see grizzly bears left on endangered list

BILLINGS, MONTANA — In a strongly worded letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Senator John Tester (D-MT), Senator Steve Daines (R-MT), and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council has voiced misgivings about the impartiality of Dr. Christopher Servheen in any proposed tribal consultation process over the government's planned delisting of the Yellowstone grizzly bear.

Servheen, long-dubbed the government's "grizzly bear czar," has the title of Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator in the FWS. Servheen first advocated removing Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections from the Yellowstone grizzly bear in the 1990s.

"Concerns have been raised with this office about the presence of Dr. Christopher Servheen in any consultation process," writes Ivan D. Posey, Chairman of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders

Council.

"Dr. Servheen's recent comments to the press have been interpreted by some as belittling the tribes' opposition to the proposed delisting of the Yellowstone grizzly bear," cautioned Chairman Posey.

In response to questions from the press at the turn of the year about the lack of tribal consultation in FWS's move to delist the Yellowstone grizzly from the ESA, Dr. Servheen claimed that his office had done what they were required to do.

Recent letters from FWS Deputy Regional Director John Bryan to the Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council and GOAL Tribal Coalition appear to contradict that claim.

In those letters, Bryan offers to facilitate three consultation meetings on the issue. Dr. Servheen previously stated that he had written to all of the affected tribes.

Disclosures subsequently revealed that Servheen had only written to four of the twenty-six affected tribes in April 2014.

"I know for a fact that three out of the four tribal chairmen Servheen wrote to never had sight of his letter," said Sara Atiqtalik, GOAL Tribal Coalition's national coordinator.

"I had a journalist from Servheen's home base, Missoula, call me to comment but it was more like a defense of Servheen than an interview. He told me that Servheen had consulted with all of the tribes. 'All' turned out to be only four,"

Atiqtalik continued. "I immediately called Chairman Nathan Small of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of Idaho, one of the nation's Servheen had supposedly contacted, and Chairman Small told me categorically that he had never received or seen such a letter," she recalled. Atiqtalik said the journalist from the Missoulian relayed to her Servheen's view that "the tribes looked silly" for opposing the delisting and trophy hunting of the Yellowstone grizzly bear. Dr. Servheen has made repeated statements to the media that he never received any response to those letters.

"That is patently false," insisted R. Bear Stands Last, co-founder of GOAL.

"The Eastern Shoshone Tribe responded to FWS's intent to proceed with delisting by issuing their resolution in opposition on 10/28/14. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of Idaho did similarly 11/4/14, and as a member tribe of the Montana & Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council (TLC) the Northern Arapaho did the same when the TLC issued a resolution opposing delisting on 12/11/14," he cataloged.

Dr. Servheen released his April 2014 letter to Eastern Shoshone Tribal Chairman, Darwin St. Clair, to the press. Servheen continued to claim that he received no response, despite the official resolution against delisting the grizzly bear passed by the Eastern Shoshone Business Council.

"If you are aware of others who should also receive this request, either within your tribe or with another tribe, please forward this letter," Dr. Servheen bade Chairman St. Clair.

"This attitude is very revealing," said Bear Stands Last. "Since when has a tribal chairman become a 'gofer' for a federal department regional coordinator?"

FWS's February letters to the Montana & Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council and GOAL informed both that all "Tribal information regarding Yellowstone grizzly bears" was to be submitted to Dr. Servheen by March 31.

"Why would any political, traditional or spiritual leader, or elder, or storyteller do that?" asked Bear Stands Last.

"Is Servheen the arbiter of the validity of the tribes' knowledge of the grizzly bear which has been amassed since time immemorial? No, he's just the latest federal employee to publicly deride the tribes' positions on sovereignty, specifically in regard to this issue," he said.

"Tribal leaders are not boy scouts he can boss about," concluded Bear Stands Last.

Dr. Servheen is Scoutmaster of BSA Troop 1911 in Missoula, Montana. There are no Native American members in Dr. Servheen's troop.

Native Americans comprise the largest minority population in Missoula County. The Flathead Indian Reservation of the Selish Ktunaxa is twenty-miles north of Missoula.

Dr. Servheen's troop promotes a religious emblems program. The troop's policies and procedures handbook advocates "opportunities for Scouts to grow in their duty to God."

Citing violations of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, spiritual rights and sovereignty infringements, 32 tribal nations have so far issued resolutions, declarations and letters officially opposing the government's intent to delist the Yellowstone grizzly bear from the Endangered Species Act.

http://nativenewsonline.net/currents/tribal-leaders-concerned-that-feds-grizzly-bear-czar-is-belittling-tribal-opposition-to-delisting-the-great-bear/print/#comments_controls

Thanks,
-Ryan

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