

“Em-bear-go”: Banning the Grizzly Hunt in British Columbia

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Overview

British Columbia’s New Democratic Party (NDP) government banned the hunting of grizzly bears in December 2017, citing opposition from First Nations, stakeholder groups, and a public survey revealing that 78% of residents supported a ban.

Opponents

Guide outfitters and their trade association argue that the Province did not take their livelihoods into account when making the decision, nor was the decision based on best practices in wildlife management. The B.C. Wildlife Federation agrees, stating there is no scientific basis for the ban, and predicts the death of more prey species like moose, as well as increased grizzly-human conflicts. The B.C. Liberals denounced the decision as well, claiming the NDP was simply trying to appease environmentalists upset about the progression of the Site C dam project.

Proponents

Conservation groups and the B.C. Green Party lauded the decision, stating that this resolution was one of morality and following the will of the people. Proponents also asserted that bear-viewing has a far greater economic impact than hunting. A portion of each guided hunt fee had gone to conservation efforts, so the 70 B.C. bear-watching guides have teamed up to offset this loss with an equal fee on their trips, generating three times as much funding as the hunt had annually.

The provincial government has banned the grizzly bear hunt, maintaining that it no longer aligns with the values of British Columbians. Various interest groups contest this decision.



Annual Grizzly Bear Harvest



Indigenous Perspectives

First Nations retain the right to harvest bears for food, social, or ceremonial purposes under Aboriginal and treaty rights. Not all governments support the ban though, with the Tahltan and Iskut First Nations claiming they were not consulted and voicing concerns about the cultural, economic, and ecological implications of the hunting ban.

Developments

- A class-action lawsuit was filed against the province in 2019 by the Guide Outfitters Association of B.C., and is scheduled to be heard in March 2020.
- Since the hunt was closed, there have been 13 reports of illegal harvest.
- Bear-viewing tourism has continued to grow since the ban was implemented.



BC Average
Annual Grizzly
Bear Hunt

300

BC Grizzly
Bear
Population

15,000