

January 27, 2015.

To: Chair & Directors of the CCRD

Please consider the following in rebuttal to the 'Bear Events in Bella Coola 2014' ~ Mr. R. Parr & Ms. C. Hoppe, and 'Human/Bear Conflict In Bella Coola Valley BC, Canada' ~ James Gary Shelton documents submitted for your consideration.

'Bear Events Bella Coola 2014' recorded by Mr. Ryan Parr & Ms. Christina Hoppe

A subjective chronology of bear sightings, and "events" with documentation of the availability of attractants in many cases including: chickens, fish tubs, carrion (hanging deer/game meat), garbage, turkeys, smokehouses, and crabapples. This writer was also witness to 6 fresh grizzly scat piles on Hwy 20 on September trips along the stretch between SAMS (public high school) entry driveway and the turnoff to Hagensborg Post Office. These were solely the fecal remains of domestic apples with some mountain ash berries for colour. This writer was also an eye witness to a grizzly Mother with single cub of the year in the domestic apple trees directly adjacent to Mecham's Service propane tanks on Friday September 5, 2014 (approx. 12:10 pm) (photographs are available).

'Human/Bear Conflict In Bella Coola Valley BC, Canada' authored by Mr. James Gary Shelton

Any suggestion of a genetic basis for aggressive behaviour is merely Mr. Shelton's opinion and/or conjecture. It is not fact, or science. I am not aware of any evidence-based peer-reviewed science to back this sort of assertion up. Nor does Mr. Shelton cite any references. If anything, one could posit the opposite: aggressive bears are more likely to die early or suffer permanent injury than bears that avoid physical conflict. Hence the peaceful behaviour of most bears and the tendency to use threat displays

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and bluff attacks when they feel threatened. But this theory has also not been scientifically tested - the point being that dispassionate observation of bear behaviours would tend to support the non-aggressive premise more consistently than Mr. Shelton's war-on-nature interpretation. Yes there have been some unfortunate incidents however, there is no record, ever, of a human fatality in the Bella Coola Valley as a result of conflict with wildlife.

Bears become dangerous when their obsessive pursuit of quality food and our sloppy living habits lead them to associate us with food. They also can become dangerous when surprised at close range, but only when they also associate us with danger. That's why bear hunting and aggressive hazing of bears can make matters worse not better. Hunting proponents say hunting will keep bears scared of humans. Mr. Shelton promotes this thinking as his "Man Wise" modified behaviour. If they are right, then they are saying it will make bears more dangerous because it's scared bears that account for most defensive attacks. The third way to make a bear dangerous is to wound it - hence the stats on hunters mauled by bears. Since 1992, Dr. Stephen Herrero investigated incidents of defending grizzly bear attacks with firearms. In 50% of the cases, humans suffered physical injury and death. Dr. Herrero's research also concluded that chance of serious human injury is twice as great with the use of firearms over pepper spray. (See U.S. Fish & Wildlife Fact Sheet NO. 8). Also see Journal of Wildlife Management (2008) - "Efficiency of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska" ~ Tom Smith et al (Herrero, Higgins)

1985- 2006, 83 incidents - 61 grizzly, 20 black, 2 polar

Grizzly bears - pepper spray 92% effective, 3 people injured, none seriously

Black bears - pepper spray 90% effective

Polar bears - pepper spray 100% effective

Mr. Shelton did not provide this critical safety knowledge during his 'course', or in his writings. In all the above cases, the bears aren't "genetically predisposed" to be aggressive to us - the behaviour is triggered by human actions. Also, Mr. Shelton wrongly defines 'food conditioned' (or garbage conditioned). Please see cited accurate definition for 'food conditioned' below.

Further discussion to follow of 'Human/Bear Conflict In Bella Coola Valley BC, Canada' material will be noted in point form in response to page number:

1/ Page 5 - 'CONFLICT ZONE MAP' (last paragraph):

"Conflict Zone 3 - Park Boundary to foot of the Hill - this zone has a large number of grizzly bears and other large carnivores. There are only a few permanent residents in this zone and no farming, fruit trees or gardening of any consequence."

Comments: Majority of residents within "Conflict Zone 3" have made their gardens and fruit trees inaccessible to wildlife/bears. They live without 'conflict'. Vast numbers of Parks visitors also have had zero conflict with wildlife.

BC Parks now manages human behaviour at a wildlife viewing platform (ground level - "CONFLICT ZONE 3"), keeping both people and bears safe using a four strand electric fence. They have no record of 'conflict'.

2/ Page 6 - *"not food conditioned behaviours because it takes many years for this to develop."*

Comments: COMPLETELY FALSE - 'food conditioning' takes a single 'reward' event i.e. successful access, one time.

3/ Page 6 - (bold type) "Provincial Government managing bears based on belief that what we saw in 2014 are bears in the same category as

food conditioned bears and caused by people's careless handling of attractants."

Comments: EXACTLY - see Parr/Hoppe accounts for 2014 "chickens, compost, hanging deer, fish tubs, crab apples, turkeys, garbage"

4/ Page 9 - 'VALLEY GRIZZLY BEAR POPULATIONS OVER TIME'

"It doesn't matter whether or not the population estimates represent the exact number of grizzly bears. We don't need a bear study to determine how many grizzlies there are. Human safety trumps all other concerns, and all we need is common sense applied to the following four questions: How much human/bear conflict is taking place? How many bear attacks are happening? How many bears are people seeing? What kind of behaviors are bears exhibiting? We don't need any other information for determining what is needed to reduce risk to people."

Comments: Critical question NOT asked in this paragraph: Why are so many grizzlies lingering in people's backyards?

Fortunately Mr. Shelton provides the answer later on Page 10:

"These bears were killed in relation to milk cows, beef steak, sheep, hogs, chickens, orchards and gardens."

As do Mr. Parr and Ms. Hoppe in their documentation of the availability of attractants 'Bear Events In Bella Coola 2014': chickens, fish tubs, carrion (hanging deer/game meat), garbage, turkeys, smokehouses, and crabapples.

5/ Page 10 'VALLEY GRIZZLY BEAR POPULATIONS OVER TIME' graph & "MAXIMUM PHASE GRIZZLY POPULATION"

Comments: Both this graph and Mr. Shelton's expression are pure conjecture. He cannot substantiate his numbers or his statement.

There is no mention of the the biology/ecology of grizzly bear reproduction and/or population characteristics. The following is taken directly from the Commercial Bear Viewing Association of BC training course. Authors of this resource manual include but are not limited to: Grant MacHutchon, Dr. Barrie Gilbert, Wayne McCrory, Dr. Stephen Herrero etc.

"Litter size can vary from 1-4 cubs, but two cubs are most common. Litters as large as 6 cubs have been documented. Cubs are weaned at 5 months of age but remain with the mother until at least their second spring (and usually until the third or fourth year).

Consequently, a female's inter-birth interval is often 3-4 years so she may only give birth to 7-13 cubs during her lifetime, 30-40% which likely die within a year."

We, the human inhabitants of this beautiful Valley, do not live in a 'rural' environment. The Bella Coola Valley is wilderness interface. The presence of other apex mammals living here defines that. The year is 2015. 'Fear' is real. It is inner emotional/psychological conflict (inside the self) projected out onto the world in words and behaviours. To promote 'fear' with inflammatory language such as "Community under siege", "drawn into battle" and behavioural tactics such as name calling, is irresponsible and damaging. To suggest eradication programs; to speak of 'control' and 'management' of our surrounding environment with " exclusion zones" using violence and brutal death is no solution. Fear, ignorance, and apathy do not empower us as individuals, families, or Communities. These are the divisive, destructive tools, or tactics, of 'war'. It is time for us to accept the challenge of respectful coexistence. Protection of our habitat, our homes/ children with knowledgable and physical boundaries. Our foods, our families wish to be 'safe'. Clean up our minds, our mouths and our lives and then let us determine how much 'conflict' we truly have.

Factual knowledge and positive empowerment are the qualities represented in effective 'leadership'. Science and 'good' rules of respect (e.g. **Section 33.1 B.C. Wildlife Act) have proven this time and time again.

"Divide and rule, a sound motto. Unite and lead, a better one." ~ Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

'Management Plan'

Management plan already exists. Apply it.

CCRD to endorse and support the science based knowledge, rules (read 'laws'), and actions of the Conservation Officer's Service of BC, WildSafe BC, Bear Smart, Bella Coola Valley Bear Working Group and accredited bear/wildlife scientists.

Human safety is most important to all. Compliance - be responsible for our lives and those of our children. Control and manage our own personal behaviour. Reflect due diligence in keeping our "attractants" - foods/garbage/stuff (e.g. BBQ's, bird feeders, pet food, pets, livestock) out of reach of bears, cougars, wolves, etc..

Recognize and accept that the greatest risk for 'conflict' in the lower Valley does NOT come from "habituation" (see definition below). It is from 'food conditioning' (see definition below) - due to "attractants, "non-natural attractants", "unnatural attractants", "anthropogenic food" (i.e. human provided stuff).

Definitions (as taken directly from 'Bear-People Conflicts Workshop' manual presented November 15-17, 2009 Canmore Alberta):

'Habituation' - type of learning in which bear no longer responds to presence of a stimulus; "learned indifference."

'Food conditioning' - form of operant conditioning in which bears learn to associate sources of food with humans or their infrastructure.

Community plans/initiatives/programs to include:

1/ Continuing Education Component - COS, WildSafeBC, Bear Smart, etc. presentations within the schools

2/ Social media - COS, WildSafeBC Bella Coola education & awareness on FaceBook

3/ Continuation of E-Fencing clinics presented through Bella Coola Valley Bear Working Group

4/ "Attractant Audits" - residents demanding proactive assessments of their properties by COS/WildSafe BC for compliance to the BC WildLife Act (Section 33.1) in order to increase personal and neighbourhood safety, while also reducing risk of wildlife conflict and negating penalties/fines.

5/ COS enforcement of penalties for negligent compliance to the BC Wildlife Act.

6/ COS determination and management of potential, and/or actual 'problem' wildlife.

7/ CCRD make formal written request to RCMP for education and enforcement in the legal use of firearms by the public i.e. within our Community.

(eg. School presentations, Coast Mountain News articles, accurate description of laws and legal usage added to previously recommended COS and/or WildSafeBC social media e.g.. FaceBook page)

8/ CCRD member presence on Bella Coola Valley Bear Working Group

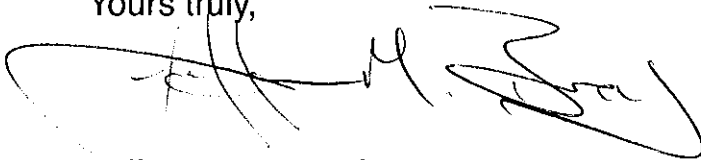
9/ Proactive, positive, legal ideas and actions to promote respectful coexistence and celebration of this wonderful place we all are so very fortunate to call 'home'.

What legal, science based proactive actions listed above (see 'Community plans/initiatives/programs' 1-9 above) is the CCRD willing to support/endorse?

What other legal, science based proactive actions might the CCRD also include?

I look forward to your response. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jefferson Bray', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Jefferson Bray B.Sc.

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Bear Spray vs. Bullets

Which offers better protection?

At first glance, this question may seem like a no-brainer. After all, aren't guns made to kill, while pepper spray (so-called "bear spray," when it comes in big cans) does not? Unlike an attack by a human assailant, who may be able to use your own weapon against you, that safety/survival argument for using pepper spray doesn't apply to a human-bear encounter... or does it?

When it comes to self defense against grizzly bears, the answer is not as obvious as it may seem. In fact, experienced hunters are surprised to find that despite the use of firearms against a charging bear, they were attacked and badly hurt. Evidence of human-bear encounters even suggests that shooting a bear can escalate the seriousness of an attack, while encounters where firearms are not used are less likely to result in injury or death of the human or the bear. While firearms can kill a bear, can a bullet kill quickly enough -- and can the shooter be accurate enough -- to prevent a dangerous, even fatal, attack?

The question is not one of marksmanship or clear thinking in the face of a growling bear, for even a skilled marksman with steady nerves may have a slim chance of deterring a bear attack with a gun. Law enforcement agents for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have experience that supports this reality -- based on their investigations of human-bear encounters since 1992, persons encountering grizzlies and defending themselves with firearms suffer injury about 50% of the time. During the same period, persons defending themselves with pepper spray escaped injury most of the time, and those that were injured experienced shorter duration attacks and less severe injuries. Canadian bear biologist Dr. Stephen Herrero reached similar conclusions based on his own research -- a person's chance of incurring serious injury from a charging grizzly doubles when bullets are fired versus when bear spray is used.

Awareness of bear behavior is the key to mitigating potential danger. Detecting signs of a bear and avoiding interaction, or understanding defensive bear behaviors, like bluff charges, are the best ways of escaping injury. The Service supports the pepper spray policy of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, which states that bear spray is not a substitute for following proper bear avoidance safety techniques, and that bear spray should be used as a deterrent only in an aggressive or attacking confrontation with a bear.

Like seatbelts, bear spray saves lives. But just as seatbelts don't make driving off a bridge safe, bear spray is not a shield against deliberately seeking out or attracting a grizzly bear. No deterrent is 100% effective, but compared to all others, including firearms, proper use of bear spray has proven to be the best method for fending off threatening and attacking bears, and for preventing injury to the person and animal involved.

Because the grizzly bear is federally protected in the Lower 48 States as a threatened species, it is a violation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to shoot one, except in self defense and defense of others during an imminent attack. Penalties under the ESA include up to 6 months in prison and a \$100,000 fine. Additional penalties may also apply to violations of state law. For more information about bear spray and its effectiveness, see: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc>