



# KI?LAWNA? GRIZZLY BEAR

## North Cascades Ecosystem

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS- BC

**Q: Are grizzly bears being reintroduced into British Columbia’s North Cascades region? Is this a done deal?**

**A:** Nothing has been fully decided at this stage in the review process. The Joint Nations Grizzly Bear Initiative collaborates with Indigenous Nations, Conservation Northwest, Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative, and the BC Provincial Government. As part of its planning work, this team will review the benefits and challenges of reintroducing grizzly bears into the North Cascades region.

In the coming months, it is expected that there will be a range of opportunities to gather community and stakeholder input and feedback about the potential of grizzly bears being reintroduced into the North Cascades region.

We invite and encourage input and feedback on this critical initiative. We know that there may be hesitation to reintroduce grizzly bears into this region, and we want to have a respectful, authentic, and engaged discussion with those who support and oppose this initiative.

We are committed to actively listening to what communities and other stakeholders say, responding to concerns, fears, and opposition, and speaking with those who support the reintroduction of grizzly bears in the North Cascades.

**Q. We already have black bears; what is so special about having grizzly bears in the North Cascades region?**

**A:** The spiritual connection that Indigenous Peoples have with grizzly bears is not just unique, but also deeply profound and significant. Our individual and collective commitments to Reconciliation include healing the land and restoring the ecosystem, in which grizzly bears play a key role. Taking steps such as reintroducing grizzly bears allows us to move forward with Reconciliation in a positive way.

Grizzly bears have been a part of the North Cascades landscape for thousands of years and are indicators of healthy, resilient, diverse habitats and wilderness quality. Grizzly conservation benefits all the other species that share their habitat as they are an umbrella species. Umbrella species protect themselves and a range of other species in their ecosystems. By conserving these key species, like grizzly bears, we can safeguard others that share their habitats. Umbrella species often have large home ranges and use multiple habitats, overlapping with many other species. This means that efforts to protect them benefit many other species, including those with smaller home ranges or more specific habitat needs, such as amphibians and rodents. Moreover, umbrella species, like the charismatic grizzly bear, attract public attention and support. Their reintroduction in the region would be a step forward in restoring a piece of the Pacific Northwest’s natural and cultural heritage.

**Q: Who is leading this initiative?**

**A:** Okanagan Nations Alliance is leading this project in collaboration with Stó:lō, Nlaka'pamux, St'át'imc, and the Secwepemc Nation, multiple provincial government ministries, the Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative, Conservation Northwest and other subject matter experts to assess the feasibility of grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades.

**Q: Why is this being done now?**

**A:** There are many reasons why the reintroduction of grizzly bears is being considered.

1. Reconciliation with Indigenous People:

Grizzly bears are culturally and spiritually significant to Indigenous Peoples. Reintroducing grizzly bears to unceded territories is an important component of healing the land and restoring the ecosystems, and as such, it is part of the commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous People.

2. US EIS process

The U.S. National Park Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have announced the decision to actively restore grizzly bears to the Southern portion of the North Cascades Ecosystem. There are no natural barriers between the American and Canadian North Cascades ecosystems. Therefore, when the US process moves forward, and grizzly bears are reintroduced, it is likely that the bears will cross over to Canada. The JNGB I will be instrumental in preparing for and responding to the migration of translocated bears. While the work in British Columbia is not being done in response to the U.S.'s actions, the U.S.'s efforts have been a catalyst for considering reintroducing grizzlies into the region.

3. Restoration of Integral ecosystem components

Grizzlies are a key part of the ecosystem of the North Cascades, keeping small animal populations in check and turning soil as they dig for roots and other food – and grizzly conservation benefits all other species that share grizzly habitat.

Grizzly bears are also indicators of healthy, resilient, diverse habitats and wilderness quality—which we all know is crucial—and are linked to landscape resiliency, which is severely threatened by climate change.

**Q: If the U.S. goes ahead, what does that mean?**

**A:** There are no natural barriers in the North Cascade ecosystems. Therefore, wildlife—including grizzly bears—will cross between the US and Canada, including any reintroduced grizzly bears.

The U.S. activity provides an essential opportunity for collaboration with the U.S., First Nations, and the Province of BC, coming to the table to reintroduce grizzly bears on both sides of the border in a way that benefits the environment, Indigenous culture, and Reconciliation – and that moves us forward in making the land whole again. The grizzly bears are an essential part of the ecosystem in this region. Now that things are moving ahead on the U.S. side, we will continue to participate in the planning and implementation to have a voice and decision-making abilities in this critical initiative.

**Q: What if the U.S. doesn't go ahead? What does that mean?**

**A:** The BC process will continue, even if the U.S. does not. We have specific processes for reintroducing the grizzly bear in BC and data- and reconciliation-based reasons for doing so. Communication with our U.S. partners will be critical as we move forward because grizzly bears do not respect administrative boundaries and could easily cross the border if reintroduction occurs in Canada.

**Q: This was proposed and never moved forward in 2004; why are we even discussing this again?**

**A:** Grizzly bear reintroduction was proposed in 2004. This process did not progress due to a government change and a lack of proper communication and engagement. The team learned a great deal about community engagement from that process. These learnings are being applied to the current research, planning, and approach, aiming to include different perspectives and engage with local communities on the approach to grizzly bear recovery.

Over nearly twenty years, we have gained much knowledge, understanding, and perspective through lessons from the 2004 initiative. The BC government now has a deeper understanding of the importance of the grizzly bear to Indigenous Peoples. Individual and collective commitments to Reconciliation are also at the forefront of this current process. Reconciliation includes healing the land and restoring ecosystems, in which grizzly bears play a crucial role. Reintroducing the grizzly bear in the North Cascades is essential in rebuilding trust and connection with the Indigenous Peoples of the region and throughout Canada.

In addition, grizzly bears have been a part of the North Cascades landscape for thousands of years. Their reintroduction in the region would be a step forward in restoring a piece of the Pacific Northwest's natural and cultural heritage.

**Q: How much is this going to cost?**

**A:** The team is currently in the planning stages of this initiative, so the costs are not yet fully defined. Ongoing work will include a multiple-accounts analysis, following which a budget will be developed and communicated.

**Q: Won't this put people in the area at risk?**

**A:** Bear safety is an essential component of community engagement and will be a priority for the communities in the region, for ranchers and others working on the land, and for those who use the area for recreation. The region currently has grizzly bears and a healthy population of black bears. If the U.S. begins reintroducing grizzly bears, communities, governments, and recreationists will need to make changes to improve human-bear coexistence. The JNGBI has developed a draft stewardship strategy that includes the following initiatives around human-bear risk management.

1. Developing adequate educational information, access to tools, and opportunities for training in "bear smart" practices and approaches
2. Promoting or enhancing existing outreach programs that support community members, landowners, recreationists, and interest holders.
3. Enhancing compensation programs for confirmed livestock loss and working with landowners to manage carcass and feed attractants within the grizzly bear habitat.
4. Managing two critical factors in human-related grizzly bear mortalities:
  - I. The frequency of encounters between humans and bears in front-country and back-country; and
  - II. potential lethality for bears encountering humans (e.g., motorized users, those in the backcountry with guns).

**Q: How much will the reintroduction of Grizzly bears impact recreational wilderness users? What will change?**

**A:** Human/bear coexistence has been successful in other regions (e.g., Jasper, Banff, Canmore, and Whistler) that host upwards of 2 million visitors annually. We will use lessons from those achievements to put processes, educational campaigns, and other elements in place to support the impacted communities.

**Q: How much will the reintroduction of Grizzly bears impact ranchers? What will change? Will there be compensation for putting up electric fences or for losing cattle?**

**A:** We are in this initiative's early stages, but awareness and safety are priorities. We will work with various individuals, organizations, and stakeholders to mitigate risks to human beings and livestock. Compensation will be discussed based on input and feedback from key communities and stakeholders. We want to implement Predator compensation programs that the ranching community will support and that meet their needs. We will work collaboratively with the ranching communities and other stakeholders to ensure a program is implemented and stakeholder groups are created within these communities to provide avenues for discussion and input. Grizzly bears in the North Cascades will also fall under the Agriculture Wildlife Program that already exists, which allows agriculture producers to get compensation due to wildlife damage to some harvested and unharvested crops.

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