

## LEGISLATIVE RETURN

SUBMITTED BY: **Hon. Pauline Frost**



1. On November 22, 2017, Kate White, Member for Takhini-Kopper King

asked the following oral question at page(s) 1764-1765 of *Hansard*

submitted the following written question – WQ No. \_\_\_\_\_

gave notice of the following motion for the production of papers – MPP No. \_\_\_\_\_

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

OR

2. This legislative return relates to a matter outstanding from discussion related to:

\_\_\_\_\_

on \_\_\_\_\_ at page(s) \_\_\_\_\_ of *Hansard*.

The response is as follows:

### QUESTION:

In discussing the practices of Conservation Officers in Alberta, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories to consult with species biologists before making a decision to destroy a bear:

“Does the Department of Environment follow this protocol when there is a conflict with bears in Yukon?”

### ANSWER:

Yukon Conservation Officers operate under a Human-Wildlife Conflict Directive, which guides decision-making of individual Conservation Officers. Wildlife biologists and veterinary staff from the Animal Health Unit have provided input into this directive, and are consulted in some cases where appropriate. However, many responses to human-wildlife conflicts occur outside of regular hours and access to species biologists is not always possible or practical within the timelines for response. Conservation Officers’ responses are based on an assessment of risk to public safety and other factors, including a consideration of the animal’s behaviour, age, sex, reproductive status, and whether the species has been assessed as endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Development of the directive which guides Conservation Officers in these decisions included stakeholder input as well as peer review from wildlife biologists and wildlife conflict experts.

Conservation Officers do consult with biologists on the lethal removal of any species at risk. However, as is consistent with the practice in other jurisdictions, species biologists are not involved in every individual decision and instead inform the development of a response matrix that supports the decision-making of staff in the field. Where available, experts are consulted before making decisions on individual cases such as to make a determination of how likely and whether a cub would thrive in the wild alone. The decision to lethally remove a bear is a decision of last resort in order to protect public safety. Yukon Conservation Officers complete rigorous training to ensure they adhere to the response-matrix and make responsible decisions on each case using their professional judgment.

The Department of Environment has established a Human-Wildlife Conflict Officer position whose role includes minimizing human-wildlife conflicts proactively, including by providing education to the public about ways to manage attractants properly.

QUESTION:

“With a grizzly hunting ban in British Columbia about to come into place, it is likely we will be seeing increased pressures on grizzly hunts in Yukon. If we are to manage and protect our wildlife in Yukon, we need comprehensive and accurate information. What is being done to collect accurate data on grizzly bears?”

ANSWER:

The Department of Environment uses submissions from harvesters to help us build a picture of the distribution and the age structure of Yukon grizzly bear populations. When combined with other information, this data helps us to assess whether current mortality rates for bears are sustainable. This includes an examination of the location, the sex, teeth, and tissue samples of harvested grizzly bears. The Department of Environment has also undertaken two recent projects in the Southern Lakes area and on the Yukon North Slope to update grizzly bear population information. The new Grizzly Bear Management Plan will help guide management practices, and future research and monitoring priorities.

With respect to the concerns expressed about the ban on grizzly trophy hunts in British Columbia placing additional pressure on grizzly hunts in Yukon, all Yukon outfitters are on quota for grizzly bears to ensure that grizzly populations are not vulnerable to over-harvest from non-resident hunters. The quota system is designed so that overall mortality is sustainable.

QUESTION:

... “if Conservation Officers are to make evidence-based decisions on wildlife management, how are they to do that without information from species biologists?”

ANSWER:

Conservation Officers make use of the best available information in carrying out their duties. This information comes from local residents, our First Nations partners, veterinary staff from the Animal Health Unit, and from wildlife biologists and others. This information informed the development of general guidelines for making decisions about management of wildlife in conflict with humans, and continues to be used where appropriate and available to guide decision-making on particular cases.

The new Grizzly Bear Management Plan will help refine existing research and monitoring priorities for grizzly bears and will reflect what we heard from our partners in developing the plan.



Pauline Frost  
Minister of Environment  
27 Nov. 2017