



June 20, 2014

Scott Talbott, Chair  
Tammy Whittington, Vice-Chair  
Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee  
200 East Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Mr. Talbott and Ms. Whittington,

Concerns have recently been raised relative to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee's (IGBC) bear-resistant container testing program and its consideration of approval for a new product. In my role as IGBC advisor providing oversight to this program, I offer the following as a means of providing additional information and addressing these concerns.

With bear populations increasing in many areas and more people living and recreating within the range of grizzly bears, the goal of human/bear conflict minimization through attractant management remains a high priority that is strongly supported by IGBC members. For 25 years the IGBC has provided guidance and leadership relative to bear-resistant container testing as a means of reducing conflicts and promoting grizzly bear conservation and recovery. Toward that end, the IGBC's bear-resistant container testing program has evaluated approximately 500 commercially-available products and has approved over 150 of them as bear-resistant. This approval means that the products have met minimum standards related to the effort that must be expended by grizzly bears to access the container's contents. Products tested and approved include small containers for backpacking, panniers and kitchen boxes for use with pack animals, coolers and dry boxes, food storage lockers, garbage containers and recycling units. The intent of the IGBC container testing program is to approve products that minimize easy and direct access to attractants by grizzly bears. Our program does not guarantee that these containers are "bear-proof."

In recent years this program has grown a great deal in popularity, scope and complexity as new container designs and materials have been developed and as more jurisdictions recommend or require IGBC-approved containers for compliance with their food/garbage storage regulations. During the same time period, resources allocated for this program have decreased. After considerable re-evaluation of this program, the IGBC's testing protocol was recently revised. Although changes were made in how the program is administered and some preliminary screening tests were discontinued, the standard by which a product is judged to have passed or failed this testing program did not change (i.e., the product is subjected to a live-grizzly bear test with 60 minutes of contact time without being breached). This standard is the same as in the past and is consistently applied to all products tested under this program.



In this context, the Ursack S29 All-White backpacking food storage container was submitted to IGBC's bear-resistant container testing program. A version of this product was submitted and tested during the 2013 testing season. Two were tested; one passed and one failed (ripped seam). Subsequently, the Ursack S29 All-White was modified (additional stitching on the seams) and it was re-submitted for testing and passed on April 11, 2014. Subsequent to this latest test, concerns were raised by Yosemite National Park relative to the IGBC testing program in general and to this product specifically.

A number of Yosemite National Park's concerns may extend to aspects of management that are beyond the intent of IGBC's program. Our program has its measure of "bear-resistancy" as its focus and our testing parameters are consistently applied across this program. In that light, if a product passes our testing protocol, I am inclined to approve it as an IGBC-certified container. I understand that this measure may not provide answers to all the situations and circumstances that managers may face, in which case managers will use their discretion. However, I believe that the IGBC program has been successful in providing a means of evaluating the relative effectiveness of a range of commercially-available products used to secure potential bear attractants.

I hope this information is useful in answering questions and addressing concerns related to the IGBC bear-resistant container testing program. If more information and/or discussion relative to this program are needed, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Scott Jackson  
National Carnivore Program Leader  
IGBC Advisor