

## IGBC POSITION STATEMENT ON UNSAFE BEAR VIEWING PRACTICES

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) is the consortium of state, federal, tribal, and Canadian resource management agencies charged with recovery of grizzly bears in the United States south of Canada. The IGBC believes that bear viewing, and photography are important human activities with regards to bears and can increase public support for bear conservation when these activities are properly conducted and portrayed. Close proximity to bears, however, may lead to the injury or death of viewers as well as bears. These outcomes are harmful to bear conservation and management. The IGBC is concerned about instances where individuals approaching bears too closely have been widely publicized and portrayed on television, film, and accounts in other media. Individuals portrayed in some of these instances have suggested directly or through their behavior that it is appropriate and safe for people to closely approach or interact with bears.

Bears should always be treated with respect and caution. Bears are large and powerful carnivores that can injure or kill people. The IGBC believes that bear viewers, photographers, and advocates should follow guidelines established by natural resource management agencies for safe behavior around bears and in bear habitat.

Few people are harmed even when they approach bears too closely because most bears are fairly tolerant. However, films, videos, photographs, and observations of viewers behaving inappropriately around bears leave a misleading impression that these highly risky activities constitute safe behavior and that these human actions have no detrimental impacts on bears. The IGBC believes that these mistaken impressions pose a risk to people and to bears.

Responsible behavior around bears will vary between bear species, among different areas for the same species, among individual bears at the same location, and even at different times for the same individual bear. When popular media (TV programs, radio shows, movies, magazines, newspapers, etc.) offer stories or images of human behavior around bears, IGBC recommends that the media emphasize the importance of proper human behavior and that trying to approach bears is not appropriate human behavior. IGBC recommends that the media clearly differentiate between the inappropriate behaviors and practices recommended by natural resource management agencies.