

Grizzly Bear Hearings Held At Glacier NP

The grizzly bear program at Glacier NP received "the kind of support that any manager could only dream about" at the Aug. 14, 1981 field hearing at the park, according to Ro Wauer, chief of the NPS Division of Natural Resources Management.

The session was called by U.S. Reps. John Seiberling, Pat Williams and Beverly Byron (of Ohio, Montana and Maryland, respectively) and was attended by 150 persons, 37 of whom presented verbal testimony.

Suggestions for dealing with grizzly/people problems were mostly positive, and ranged from "aversive conditioning" (dealt with at length in an article in the August 1981 Smithsonian Magazine, by Montana writer Robert Gildart who also works summers as a back-country ranger in Glacier NP) to a proposal that bears be removed from the park and used to stock other areas. The latter idea was presented by Charles Jonkel of the University of Montana, head of the Border Grizzly Project.

Some negative notes lent contrast to the chorus.

Joe Cutter of the Yellowstone Foundation warned that poaching is becoming a serious threat to grizzlies, citing out-of-sight prices on these contraband items: \$100 to \$175 each for a single grizzly bear claw and up to \$2,500 for a hide and claws. The present law governing possession of hides and claws Cutter called "unenforceable" – he estimated that 20 to 40 grizzlies are being poached annually. He noted at least 12 "flagrant violations" within the past 30 days. The Montana representative, Jim Challinor of Libby, opposed inclusion of the grizzly on the threatened species list and expressed hope that a regular hunting season for grizzlies could be reinstituted.

The profusely illustrated Gildart article in the Smithsonian Magazine, discusses historic management of grizzlies, describes current methods for tracking the bears, and delves into the concept of aversive conditioning – designed to reinstill fear of humans in bears that have been "habituated" to people.