



July 31, 2019

Statement On Coquitlam Bear Killings and Arrests

The Fur-Bearers believes that a healthy, safe British Columbia includes a well-funded and trained Conservation Officer Service that has appropriate third party oversight and a clear mandate for interacting with wildlife and the public.

Letters sent to and meetings with the Conservation Officer Service and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change staff and leadership through two governments have outlined a growing lack of public trust in the COS, largely due to the propensity for killing wildlife when in the field, a lack of accountability and oversight, and questions about who's responsible for attractant management. The incident of July 30 in Coquitlam ending in three residents arrested was an unfortunate clash – but one that was entirely predictable.

The Fur-Bearers does not endorse interfering with the efforts of armed law enforcement officers, but note the incident should serve as a message to the leadership at the COS and Ministry: residents are growing frustrated and tired of the status quo.

“There is a clear lack of trust between the public and the COS,” says Lesley Fox, Executive Director of The Fur-Bearers, a BC wildlife non-profit that promotes coexistence efforts. “This cannot continue. We and many others have expressed the same concerns year over year, but little to nothing has changed. We have asked for third party oversight – something that's expected in most armed law enforcement agencies; we have asked for greater direction on who's responsible for fines and laws regarding attractants that lead to these conflict situations; and, we have asked for non-lethal methods and funding to municipalities to manage these issues. We have asked for the simplest of common-sense updates for a system that is clearly failing, and we have seen nothing change.”

In this case agents of the Conservation Officer Service wielded firearms in a residential zone and killed three bears, including two cubs, who were actively fleeing the officers. The only entity that will review these actions and whether they were appropriate is the Conservation Officer Service itself.

“That is a problem, and it has to change,” says Fox.

The Fur-Bearers are encouraging residents to contact their MLAs and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change by using their form at TheFurBearers.com/BearChange.

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The Fur-Bearers was formed in British Columbia in 1953 to advocate on behalf of fur-bearing animals in confinement and in the wild. The organization works with communities and municipalities to promote science-based coexistence with wildlife.

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