

# Game and Fish should lead by example

By Tom Mangelsen | Posted: Wednesday, May 28, 2014 4:30 am

I am a longtime and proud resident of this valley. I am also a conservationist who has spent years of my life in the field observing wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and around the world.

In light of Gov. Matt Mead's recent push to expedite delisting of the grizzly bear, I feel it is both timely and appropriate that pertinent questions be posed to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the National Park Service that have vital roles in shaping the future of the bear.

The first questions involve the revelation in the Jackson Hole News&Guide that a grizzly sow and her two yearling cubs somehow received a substantial food reward at a state-operated wetlands in Kelly coupled with the announcement that Grand Teton National Park soon will begin trapping and monitoring bears.

Historical events have indicated the lack of conflict prevention measures in place at the swan propagation facility. What policies were in place to assure that storage of swan food was not only adequate but also exemplary given Game and Fish's close association with the facility in the middle of known bear habitat?

Given the strict regulations aimed at tourists and citizens to be bear-wise and to bear-proof potential food sources, how is it that the state's own wildlife agency fell down on the job?

Much time and expense has gone into the conflict prevention and education programs carried out admirably by the Wildlife Brigade in Grand Teton National Park and the bear management specialists of Game and Fish.

Please clarify what kind of example they are setting when both agencies are planning to bait and trap bears using attractants that would be considered a serious violation if those same foods were left out for bears by park visitors?

It is widely accepted that "trap and handle" can cause unintended traumatic injury to bears, specifically from the use of darts and drugs, leg-hold traps, snares and the affixing of tracking collars. Tooth extraction is unnecessary and painful and can result in infection. Capture myopathy — a muscle disorder believe to be caused by stress — resulting in death is also a well-documented consequence of trapping grizzly bears.

Why would the grizzly bear study team risk injury to any bear, including the beloved 610 and 399, who are responsible for enormous benefits to the state and to the park?

Hundreds of thousands of people have been enthralled by them, inspired to learn about them, and

motivated to advocate for and support the public lands that are set aside to protect them.

Is it not true that trapping could cause trauma for these bear families if either their mothers or cubs are caught and separated from one another?

What possible insight will be gained from risking the well-being of bears and their cubs that cannot be accomplished with noninvasive techniques that allow the examination of DNA from hair traps and scat analysis?

Those responsible for officially stewarding our wildlife held in the public trust and beloved by millions must be diligent in justifying their actions.