

# Wildlife Act changes challenged

**B.C. | Groups want greater emphasis on protection, rather than more hunters killing more animals**

BY LARRY PYNN  
VANCOUVER SUN

A coalition of conservation groups took aim Friday at the B.C. government for proposed changes to the 25-year-old Wildlife Act that put an emphasis on killing rather than saving animals.

The coalition is angry that the province wants to generate 20,000 new hunters in B.C. by 2014 — with an emphasis on more young hunters — and continue the unpopular grizzly bear hunt.

A submission prepared by Sierra Legal and the University of Victoria Environmental Law Centre says the proposed changes put “wildlife protection in last place.”

Devon Page, a staff lawyer with Sierra Legal, said in an interview the act should place a greater emphasis on endangered species and their habitat, while addressing the effects of global warming.

He also urged a coordinated approach among government ministries to wildlife conservation that considers the cumulative impacts of human activities, including resource extraction.

Page said any major rewrite of the Wildlife Act should also involve public hearings. Among the coalition's other suggestions:

- No further increase in hunting effort without scientific studies proving a sustainable harvest.

- Increased funding for wildlife management, including enforcement against illegal hunting.

- An end to the province's pro-hunting bias and greater emphasis on sustainable wildlife activities such as ecotourism.

- Banning the “inhumane” practice of hunting with dogs, as Washington state has done.

- Stewardship programs that proactively minimize wildlife conflicts on private lands rather

than allowing private hunting on such lands with hunters allowed to keep the game they shoot.

Among the 10 groups in the coalition are the Sierra Club of Canada, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, David Suzuki Foundation, and Raincoast Conservation Society.

A BC Stats study released in 2005 showed the proportion of resident hunters has dropped to two per cent of the population from six per cent in 1981. There were 83,701 registered hunters in B.C. in 2006. For more information on the province's Wildlife Act discussion paper, visit [www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife-actreview/discussion/toc.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife-actreview/discussion/toc.html).

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Continuation of the grizzly bear hunt is one of the points of contention over changes to the B.C. Wildlife Act.