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# News Release

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## The Safety of Wildlife on Togwotee Pass Starts With Humans

Moran/Dubois, Wyo., August 30, 2019 – This summer, a sow grizzly bear, known as Bear 863, and her cub have been highly visible along U.S. Highway 26/287 on Togwotee Pass, between Moran and Dubois, Wyoming. Over the past three summers, many people have had the opportunity to view Bear 863, and she has developed a large, devoted group of followers. Recently, the behavior of people around these bears has created significant concern for the safety of the bears, the people interacting with them, and traffic on the highway.

As is the case for many human-habituated bears along road corridors, the future of these bears is highly uncertain and largely depends on the behavior of people. All bears have a threshold for human presence that, once exceeded, may cause them to become aggressive towards people. This is especially true of sows that will defend their cubs from a perceived threat.

On several occasions, people have approached these bears very closely, and, in some cases, people have been almost close enough to touch them. Though Bear 863 appears to be more tolerant of people than most bears, there is high potential for her to respond aggressively and injure someone if approached too closely. To ensure your own safety, as well as the safety of Bear 863 and her cub, please do not intentionally approach these, or any other, bears closer than 100 yards.

Additionally, these bears may have already received food from humans and have accessed an unattended stringer of fish at Wind River Lake on the Shoshone National Forest. The old saying “a fed bear is a dead bear” holds true. Bears that have been fed by people quickly learn to associate humans with food and often must be dispatched by managers to prevent them from injuring humans. Regulations on both the Bridger-Teton and Shoshone National Forests prohibit making human foods or garbage accessible to bears.

Highway traffic is also a significant concern for Bear 863 and her cub. She may have already survived one collision with a vehicle, but may not be so lucky if it happens again. Please remember to slow down and watch for wildlife near U.S. Highway 26/287 near Togwotee Pass.

The U. S. Forest Service, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and Wyoming Department of Transportation have varying authorities on Togwotee Pass, but cannot be everywhere at once. We are asking for your help. Please remember to always keep a safe distance from bears, never feed bears or leave food accessible to them, and slow down and watch for wildlife near the highway.

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