



Policy Guidance for the International Association of Bear Research and Management

As a professional organization, the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA) holds a recognized position in the world conservation arena. Because of this position, IBA frequently receives requests to address policy issues relevant to bear conservation or management. However, whereas all IBA members are concerned about conservation of the world's bears, as a professional organization we cannot afford to raise questions about our scientific objectivity. Policy statements that are not firmly founded on the best available science have the potential to undermine that credibility and, ultimately, the strength and uniqueness of IBA. Nevertheless, members of IBA can offer unique scientific perspectives and can synthesize information to help reach solutions to difficult issues to aid in decision making. The role of IBA in communicating this information is perhaps its most important and unique function. Thus, policy guidance for IBA should be based on bringing relevant and timely information to the policy process while maintaining credibility and scientific integrity beyond question.

Therefore, IBA Council involvement in policy issues should be limited to those that meet the following criteria:

1. Compatible with IBA Mission. Policy issues should be evaluated whether the issue itself and the style of approach are consistent with the IBA Mission Statement.

2. Need for Science to Resolve Issue - Many policy issues involve differences in agenda, philosophy or desired outcome on the part of participants and may have little to do with science. When requested to take action on an issue, IBA Council should carefully evaluate whether science is a relevant and necessary part of resolving the issue.

3. Conservation or Management Significance – Policy issues for IBA involvement are deemed significant based on at least one of the following criteria: a) having direct conservation implications for bear populations or subpopulations; b) providing clarification of scientific foundations for specific management or conservation actions; c) pertaining to conservation or management scenarios with broad application across populations or bear species.

4. Catalytic Effect/Value Added - IBA Council should determine whether involvement of the organization will make a difference in the ability to resolve the issue, particularly in catalyzing other interests.

5. Clear Objectives – The issue must have a clearly defined objective or outcome.

6. Council Vote – Developing a policy position requires initial consensus of Council. Official release of a position or policy statement by the IBA requires a 2/3 majority vote of Council.



In summary, IBA's goal should be to create systems and capacity to communicate information about scientific knowledge and experience to the policy process. IBA and its members are most effective as translators between research/scientific information and the decision making process.

Procedure for Handling Requests for IBA Involvement in Policy

1. Any member of Council, including all executive officers, if approached with a request for IBA involvement in a policy issue or endorsement or action of any kind, shall relay that request directly to the entire Council in a timely manner.
2. After receiving a request, Council must first decide whether or not to become involved in the issue, as outlined above. In some cases this will be possible with little discussion. In more complicated cases, a decision may require more information than initially provided. In such cases, Council will appoint 1 or more members to gather and summarize the information necessary for Council to decide.
3. If Council votes down a request, either the IBA president or a designated Council representative will provide a formal written response to the requestor, including an explanation of why the IBA opted not to take on the issue.
4. If Council votes to proceed with an issue, Council will then decide what form of involvement to pursue and will identify members willing to do the necessary work. IBA response may take any of the following forms:
 - Letter from the IBA
 - Publication on the IBA Website
 - Formal Position Statement or White Paper
 - Commissioned, Published Paper
 - Creation of Strategic Initiative
 - Submission of a resolution to the membership for a vote
5. Either the IBA president or a designated Council representative will keep the party making the request informed about Council decisions on the issue, including the form of the response.
6. The resulting actions or inactions will be reported to the membership.