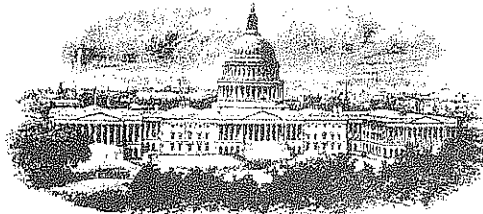


DON YOUNG
CONGRESSMAN FOR ALL ALASKA
WASHINGTON OFFICE
2111 RAYBURN BUILDING
TELEPHONE 202/225-5765
WWW.HOUSE.GOV/DONYOUNG/



COMMITTEE ON
RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2009

Dear Member of the Sportsmen's Caucus:

Last Congress I introduced H.R. 6936, a bill that would amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to issue import permits to hunters with legally taken polar bear trophies from Canada that were prohibited entry into the U.S. after the polar bear was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. I have reintroduced this legislation this Congress as well as another bill that would also amend the MMPA to authorize the continued importation of legally taken polar bears from Canada. I urge you to read the following background information on the issue and cosponsor these bills.

In April, U.S. hunters will have been able, for the past 15 years, to travel to Canada and hunt polar bears from an approved population and import their trophy into the U.S. after paying an import permit fee. These hunts have been conducted in a sustainable manner and followed every management measure established by U.S. and Canadian law.

The MMPA was amended in 1994 to authorize the importation of these trophies and outlined the measures the Secretary of the Interior should take to ensure that Canadian management regime was sustainable. The Act requires the Secretary to certify that populations are healthy and allows the Secretary to issue import permits for trophies taken from an approved population. The Secretary is also authorized to charge an importation fee. The fee goes into a fund to support conservation activities for the shared U.S.-Russia polar bear population. To date, the fund has raised over \$950,000 for conservation activities for the U.S.-Russia polar bear population.

There are 19 polar bear populations recognized world-wide. Of these, the Canadian management regime has recognized 14 polar bear populations within its jurisdiction. The Secretary of the Interior considers 6 out of the 14 populations as approved populations. The Canadian government issues subsistence quotas to Native Canadian villages based on the size of the regional polar bear population and the ability of the population to sustain hunting. These Native villages can use the entire quota for subsistence hunts or it can allocate a portion of the quota for sport hunts. For those villages that do allow sport hunts, the hunters pay \$30,000 or more to the community

510 L STREET
SUITE 580
ANCHORAGE, AK 99501
907-271-5978

101 12TH AVENUE
Box 10
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99701
907-456-0210

971 FEDERAL BUILDING
P.O. Box 21247
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99802
907-586-7400

110 TRADING BAY ROAD
SUITE 105
KENAI, ALASKA 99611
907-283-5808

540 WATER STREET
SUITE 101
KETCHIKAN, ALASKA 99901
907-225-6880

851 EAST WESTPOINT DRIVE
SUITE 307
WASILLA, ALASKA 99654
907-376-7665

and the village retains the meat from the bear. The local Native communities have relied on these hunts to provide much needed economic stimulus and food.

On May 15, 2008, the Secretary of the Interior listed the world-wide polar bear population as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This listing automatically makes the polar bear a depleted species under the MMPA. Section 102 of the MMPA prohibits the importation of a depleted species. This prohibition ends the authorization under section 104(c)(5) to import polar bear trophies from Canada. Hunters that made it through the public comment process and paid for an import permit prior to May 15, 2008, listing were able to import their polar bear trophy. However, there are between 38 and 41 hunters that legally hunted a polar bear that now cannot import their trophy due to the ESA listing.

I introduced H.R. 1054 which will amend the MMPA to authorize the Secretary to issue import permits to these hunters for their legally taken polar bear trophies. These dead bears provide no conservation value sitting in a cold-storage warehouse in Canada. By allowing these bears into the U.S., up to \$41,000 could be raised to help support conservation activities for the U.S.-Russia polar bear population.

I also introduced H.R. 1055, the Restoration of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Conservation Fund Act of 2009, which would amend the MMPA to allow for the continued importation of legally taken polar bear trophies under section 104(c)(5). This bill would not change the requirement that only those polar bear trophies taken from approved populations could be imported into the U.S. The importation of legally taken trophies under this bill would continue the funding source for the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Conservation Fund which supports conservation efforts for the shared U.S.-Russia polar bear population.

As a member of the Sportsmen's Caucus, I urge you support our sport hunting constituents and cosponsor H.R. 1054 and H.R. 1055. If you would like to cosponsor these bills or if you have any questions, please contact Erik Elam in my office at 5-5765 or by email at erik.elam@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DON YOUNG
Congressman for All of Alaska