

**From the Office of U.S. Attorney John W. Vaudreuil
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**ONEIDA COUNTY MEN SENTENCED FOR VIOLATING
THE BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT**

Madison, Wis. - John W. Vaudreuil, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Alvin C. Sowinski, 78, and his son Paul A. Sowinski, 46, both of Rhinelander, Wis., were sentenced today by U.S. District Judge James D. Peterson for conduct relating to the possession of an American bald eagle. Alvin Sowinski received a \$30,000 fine, a seven-year ban on his hunting, fishing and trapping privileges, \$100,000 in restitution, and one year of probation and four months of home confinement. Paul Sowinski received a \$10,000 fine, a five-year ban on his hunting, fishing and trapping privileges, \$100,000 in restitution, and one year of probation. Both men pleaded guilty to the charge on May 14, 2014.

Law enforcement discovered that the pesticide, Carbofuran, was being used to kill wildlife on the Sowinski property in Sugar Camp. The use of the chemical killed several species of birds and mammals between May 2007 and March 2010, including a black bear, bobcat and at least two American bald eagles.

Alvin and Paul Sowinski live in separate residences in the Town of Sugar Camp. Their family owns approximately 8,000 acres in Oneida County, with about 4,000 acres consisting of an active farming operation.

In May 2007, a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources warden initiated an investigation into potential poisoning of animals on property owned by Sowinski Real Estate LLC. This property is approximately four miles west of Alvin's homestead property. The DNR warden found dead: a bald eagle, a crow, a gray squirrel, and a bobcat, within one hundred yards of a deer carcass that the warden suspected to contain a poisonous substance.

The deer carcass was tested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Forensic Laboratory and found to contain the insecticide Carbofuran. The bald eagle, crow, gray squirrel, and bobcat were also tested by the lab and lab personnel concluded that the animals died as a result of ingesting Carbofuran.

In the winter of 2010 and continuing through April 13, 2010, Alvin Sowinski placed several bait sites on the Sowinski property near his homestead for the purpose of killing predators, such as fishers, bobcats, coyotes, and gray timber wolves. Law enforcement personnel found at least nine bait sites on the Sowinski property during this time period. These bait sites contained the remains of beavers and white-tailed deer, and processed meats. One of the bait sites found by law enforcement contained antifreeze in a coffee container.

Law enforcement located the following animals which died on or near these bait sites on the Sowinski property: 18 crows and ravens, three chickadees, one nuthatch, one turkey vulture, one blue jay, five coyotes, one bobcat, one skunk, one red squirrel, and three ermine. The bait at certain of these sites was analyzed by the USFWS Forensic Laboratory and found to contain the insecticide Carbofuran.

The USFWS Forensic Laboratory also examined some of the dead wildlife (22 animals), and lab personnel concluded they died as a result of ingesting Carbofuran, except for one of the chickadees, the blue jay, and the ermine. In addition, law enforcement found the remains of two bald eagles and one rough-legged hawk in another area of the property which they believed to be located near a bait site from the previous winter (2009), and in the vicinity of a deer stand used by Paul Sowinski. However, the USFWS lab was unable to confirm the presence of Carbofuran or any other poison in the two eagles, rough legged hawk, or suspected bait site.

Paul Sowinski was aware that his father was placing poison bait sites on the Sowinski property in 2010, but was not aware what chemical Alvin was using to mix with the bait material. In 2009, Paul Sowinski found two dead eagles near his deer stand and threw them in the woods. Two eagles were later recovered by law enforcement. He also admitted that he found another bald eagle, which had been placed on the property by law enforcement as part of its investigation, and burned it in a brush pile because he did not want authorities to find it, and he did not want anyone to get into trouble.

On May 12, 2010, federal search warrants were executed by law enforcement from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Oneida County Sheriff's Department, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on seven different locations on the Sowinski property in Sugar Camp, looking for evidence of wildlife poisoning on the property. Law enforcement located the following additional animals that died on or near bait sites on the Sowinski property: one bald eagle, 21 crows and ravens, four coyotes, one hawk, two songbirds, one weasel and two small unidentified mammals. Several other dead animals were found in another area, but where bait materials were not in the immediate vicinity: two bald eagles, a black bear, two ravens, and a coyote. The animals seized during execution of the search warrants were not tested in the lab, but the circumstances surrounding their deaths and location is similar to those animals found by law enforcement earlier in 2010 which tested positive for Carbofuran poisoning.

United States Attorney Vaudreuil stated, "This sentence is both correct and just. The message to these two defendants and others should be very clear: wildlife in Wisconsin is for all of us to treasure, and indiscriminate, illegal killing will not be tolerated."

"The closure of this complex and lengthy case is the result of the teamwork and working relationships between several law enforcement agencies, including the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Oneida County Sheriff's Department," said Todd Schaller, Chief DNR Warden.

“Indiscriminately targeting wildlife predators with poison to improve hunting opportunities is not only unethical, it is illegal. Such use of systemic poisons kills non-targeted species, such as our national symbol, and causes environmental contamination,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent in Charge Gregory Jackson. “We are pleased with the efforts from our state, local and federal partners.”

Randall K. Ashe, Special Agent in Charge of EPA’s criminal enforcement program in Wisconsin, stated, “Product labels are designed to ensure the safe use and application of pesticides. Using pesticides for purposes other than their registered use is illegal and puts people, animals and the environment at risk of exposure. Today’s action shows that individuals who misuse these products and kill protected wildlife will be prosecuted.”

The charges against Paul and Alvin Sowinski were the result of a joint investigation conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The prosecution of this case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter M. Jarosz.

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