



NEWS RELEASE

**KAREN L. LOEFFLER
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
DISTRICT OF ALASKA**

James F. Fitzgerald Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse • 222 W. 7th Avenue • Room 253 •
Anchorage, AK 99513-7567 • (907) 271-5071

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**Contact: Steven E. Skrocki
Assistant U.S. Attorney
907-271-5071**

**HUNTING SHOW HOST IMPRISONED IN NOATAK NATIONAL
PRESERVE POACHING INVESTIGATION**

Anchorage, Alaska – U.S. Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that a cable TV hunting show host was sentenced in Anchorage United States District Court to 16 months imprisonment for his role as a leader and guide in a multi-year poaching operation on the Noatak National Preserve.

On Feb. 11, 2016, Syndicate TV hunting show host Clark Dixon, 41, of Hazlehurst, Mississippi, was sentenced to 16 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Ralph R. Beistline, for two felony violations of the Lacey Act. As part of his plea agreement with the United States, Clark Dixon admitted to large scale violations of federal and state hunting laws including hunting and taking game same day airborne, hunting big game as a nonresident without a guide, hunting without the proper non-resident tags and permits, and the illegal transporting and outfitting of non-resident hunters in the illegal pursuit and take of game on the Noatak Preserve from 2008 through 2013.

As part of the plea agreement and sentence, Judge Beistline ordered that Clark Dixon pay a fine of \$75,000, and forfeit 17 animals killed and turned into trophies while falsely claiming to be a resident of the state of Alaska. These included a grizzly bear, Dall sheep, moose and caribou, along with bows and several rifles used in the illegal take of game.

As part of his plea of guilty, Clark Dixon agreed that in 2010 he assisted Clarence Michael Osborne in the illegal take of a grizzly bear, by hunting same day airborne, without a guide or proper permits. The agreement also states that Clark Dixon falsified a hunt record claiming the bear was killed by his father, Charles Dixon. The plea agreement also covers the allegation that at the time the violations were committed, Clark Dixon illegally claimed Alaska residency status while being a resident of the state of Mississippi. The charges against Clark Dixon reflect that he lied about his residency status in order to take advantage of Alaska resident hunting privileges, thus nullifying all of his Alaska hunts which resulted in the forfeiture of the 17 trophies and firearms. Clark Dixon also agreed to the forfeiture of a STOL Quest SQ-4 aircraft used by his father, Charles Dixon, which was instrumental in assisting Clark Dixon in transporting and outfitting non-resident hunters in the illegal take of game. That aircraft has since been forfeited to the United States.

In November 2015, Charles Dixon, 70, also pleaded guilty to two violations of the Lacey Act for illegally flying a non-resident hunter, Clarence Michael Osborne, into their camp on the Noatak National Preserve to hunt grizzly bear, caribou and moose. During the hunt, Osborne killed a grizzly bear without a guide and without the appropriate non-resident permits. After the hunt, Charles Dixon claimed to have killed Osborne's bear as his own on state hunt records. As part of his plea and

sentence imposed by the court, Charles Dixon was sentenced to pay a fine of \$15,000 and to pay \$10,000 in restitution to the Noatak Preserve with those funds directed toward the removal of their illegal camp materials from the Preserve. In addition, Charles Dixon forfeited his STOL Quest SQ-4 aircraft, valued at \$200,000, as the aircraft served as the primary means of unlawfully transporting hunters, and illegally taken game, in and out of the Preserve.

In other related cases, and on Nov. 13, 2015, Clarence Michael Osborne, 53, of Madison, Mississippi, pleaded guilty to a violation of the Lacey Act for killing a grizzly bear in the Preserve while hunting with Clark Dixon. Osborne killed the grizzly bear without a guide as required by Alaska law, and without the proper permits, or tags, and the same day he was airborne. Osborne also pleaded guilty to killing a bull moose without a permit from the Preserve. As part of his plea and sentence, Osborne was sentenced to five years of probation, with a condition that he not hunt anywhere in the world. Osborne was sentenced by Judge Beistline under a plea agreement and was sentenced to pay a fine of \$65,000, and to pay restitution to the Noatak Preserve for the illegally taken game in the amount of \$19,500. Osborne was also required to forfeit a grizzly bear mount, bull moose mount, three caribou mounts and a .375 H&H rifle and scope used to commit the crimes.

Fulton Wold, 41, of Nashville, Tennessee, pleaded guilty and was sentenced pursuant to a plea agreement on November 13, 2015. As part of this agreement and sentence, Wold agreed to plead guilty to the illegal take of a caribou on a hunt orchestrated by Clark Dixon in September 2009 in which Wold did not have the proper permits or non-resident tags. As part of his sentence, Wold was placed on two years of probation, paid a fine of \$7,500, and was ordered to pay \$1,000 in restitution to the Noatak Preserve. Wold was also required to forfeit a bull moose and caribou mount as both were killed illegally.

On Nov. 6, 2015, Terry Goza, 71, of Hazlehurst, Mississippi, pleaded guilty to taking a Dall sheep ram, same day airborne, in the Noatak preserve while hunting with Clark Dixon and others. Goza was sentenced to a term of probation and the payment of a \$5,000 fine. Footage from Osborne, Wold's and Goza's hunts were shown on Clark Dixon's cable TV hunting show "*The Syndicate*."

Defendant Shannon Dale Hooks, 54, of Mendenhall, Mississippi, and Lance David Walker, 37, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, plead guilty and were sentenced by Judge Beistline on Dec. 3, 2015. Hooks was sentenced to three years probation and Walker was sentenced to four years probation, both with a worldwide hunting prohibition. Hooks and Walker were also ordered to pay a fine of \$5,000 and restitution in the amount of \$10,000 for the unlawfully taken wildlife

Defendant Randolph Goza, 48, of Wasilla, Alaska, pleaded guilty to assisting in the same day airborne take of a Dall sheep. Goza was sentenced on Dec. 28, 2015, by Judge Beistline. As part of his plea agreement, Goza was sentenced to a term of five years probation that carried a worldwide hunting prohibition as a condition. Goza was ordered to pay a fine of \$25,000 and restitution in the amount of \$12,000 for the unlawfully taken Dall sheep.

Robert Viner, 49, of Ridgeland, Mississippi, was cited by investigators for the illegal transport of an unlawfully taken brown bear. Viner has admitted guilt in connection with the charges, and has paid a \$3,250 fine.

The National Park Service cited The Outdoor Syndicate, LLC, in Reno, Nevada, its owner Michael P. Dianda, and a production company, Zap Lab, Ltd, in Reno, Nevada, for commercial filming on the Preserve without a permit. Clark Dixon and another professional videographer acquired footage of hunts which were aired on The Syndicate. These groups have all paid their fines in connection with this case.

In summary, the joint U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office of Law Enforcement and National Park Service's *Operation Syndicate* resulted in nine federal convictions, with total fines imposed in the amount of \$208,250.00. Restitution to the Noatak Preserve for the animals illegally killed by Clark Dixon and his

associates was ordered by the court in the amount of \$62,500.00. Charles Dixon's STOL Quest SQ-4 aircraft, valued at \$200,000, was forfeited to the United States under the Lacey Act, and 28 illegally killed wildlife trophies along with various firearms used in the offense were also forfeited to the government.

"You were leading some of these people you hunted with in the wrong direction," said Judge Beistline. "You were a skilled hunter, who knew the rules and regulations and you violated the law on television; you've been hunting illegally for eight years and claimed to be an Alaska resident when you weren't."

Ms. Loeffler commends the work of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement and the National Park Service who jointly investigated this case in Alaska and elsewhere.

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Prepared by: Chloe Martin, 907-271-5071, USAAK.PressRelease@usdoj.gov