



NEWS RELEASE

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TWO MICHIGAN HUNTERS SENTENCED FOR ILLEGALLY TAKING GRIZZLY BEAR IN CLOSED SEASON ON ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Anchorage, Alaska – U.S. Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that two Michigan residents were sentenced in U. S. District Court in Fairbanks for a 2009 unlawful taking of a grizzly bear during closed season, making false records to conceal the illegal kill, and transporting the bear parts out of Alaska.

Mark A. Peyerk, 40, of Mio, Michigan, and his mother, Charlotte M. Peyerk, 66, of Shelby Township, Michigan, pled guilty in September 2013 to charges of conspiracy to violate federal wildlife laws, taking grizzly bear out of season in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and making a false record of wildlife shipped interstate. Both defendants were sentenced yesterday by U.S. Magistrate Judge Scott A. Oravec, in Fairbanks, Alaska. The court fined each defendant \$20,000, ordered defendants M. Peyerk and C. Peyerk to pay \$10,000 and \$5,000 dollars respectively in community service payments to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, required each defendant to write a public letter of apology to Safari Club International for submitting the fraudulent entry of the illegally taken bear, and ordered forfeiture of the hunting rifle and the bear. The court also prohibited the defendants from hunting during Mark Peyerk's 5-year and Charlotte Peyerk's 4-year terms of probation.

In imposing sentence, Magistrate Judge Oravec commented that besides the illegal taking of wildlife, the more aggravated criminal conduct was the defendants' multiple written false statements to cover up the illegal kill. According to Assistant U. S. Attorney Stephen Cooper, who prosecuted the case, Mark and Charlotte Peyerk admitted in their plea agreements that they and their assistant guides agreed they should take the bear the day before the season opened. The Peyerks' cameras had the date indicator altered to make it appear the bear was killed on opening day. They also falsified the date of kill on a State of Alaska record and on a Safari Club International trophy entry form. Believing the false statements, Safari Club International awarded Charlotte Peyerk the "Diana Award" for "ethics in hunting." The court ordered Ms. Peyerk to offer the return of the award to the Safari Club International.

This hunt was commercially guided by Fair Chase Hunts operated by Registered Guide Christopher Cassidy and Master Guide Joe Hendricks. Investigation of Fair Chase Hunts led to convictions of Cassidy, Hendricks and nearly a dozen other Fair Chase Hunts' employees and clients for conduct described by Stan Pruszenski, Special Agent in Charge, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement in Alaska, as examples of "illegal commercialization of wildlife resources."

Ms. Loeffler commends the United States Fish & Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement for Northern Alaska, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge officials, and the Alaska Wildlife Troopers for the investigation of this case.

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