

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY REED SAYS GRANTING OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS EXEMPTION TO HUNT POLAR BEAR OR WALRUS UNLIKELY

With polar bear and walrus hunting in Alaska ending December 21, as the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 becomes law, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it does not expect to grant any exceptions under the "undue economic hardship" clause.

The act states that no marine mammal may be taken or imported by a U.S. citizen or organization, with certain exceptions including Alaska natives, or by anyone within U.S. waters or lands, without a permit from the Secretary of the Interior or Commerce. But it also provides that the Secretary may except someone from the provisions of the act for no more than one year if that person can demonstrate he would suffer an "undue economic hardship."

Nathaniel Reed, Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, said that: "In the case of hunters and outfitters who have already contracted to hunt polar bears or walrus it is unlikely that the economic hardship would be so severe as to justify the issuance of a special permit for either the killing or importing of these species."

Mr. Reed stressed that the act will be strictly enforced, by close cooperation between Alaska's Department of Fish and Game and FWS's Law Enforcement division. He warned both hunters and guides in Alaska to take note of the December 21 cutoff date.