

US Polar Bear Ruling Will Affect NWT Residents

YELLOWKNIFE (May 14, 2008) – Today's decision by the United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service to list polar bears as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act will have an affect on Inuvialuit communities.

“It is ironic that, once again, decisions made in other countries are affecting the ability of Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories (NWT) to benefit economically from one of the best managed species in the world,” said Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Minister Michael Miltenberger about the decision. “We are working with the Government of Canada to find a practical solution to the listing that will continue to allow legally harvested polar bears to be imported to the United States.”

Inuvialuit communities were issued 103 polar bear tags in 2007-2008. Thirty-seven of the tags are designated for outfitted polar bear hunts. The majority of the hunters for these outfitted hunts, which generate about \$700,000 for Inuvialuit communities, are U.S. citizens.

“While climate change is affecting parts of the Arctic,” said Miltenberger, “Canadian polar bears, and the NWT population in particular, are not on the verge of extinction”.

Recently, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada recommended polar bears remain a species of special concern, the same status it has had since 1991.

There are 13 populations of polar bears in Canada. Each Canadian population is managed and monitored separately.

Polar bears are co-managed in the NWT. The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT), established through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, is responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Minister of ENR on polar bear management. Any threats to polar bears and their habitat are carefully monitored and considered before making decision on quotas and management actions.

For more information, contact:

Judy McLinton
Manager, Public Affairs and Communications
Environment and Natural Resources
Government of the NWT
Tel: 867-873-7379
Email: judy_mclinton@gov.nt.ca
Website: www.enr.gov.nt.ca