

Honorable Barbara Boxer
Environment and Public Works Committee – Chairwoman
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable James Inhofe
Environment and Public Works Committee – Ranking Member
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Sporting and Conservation Groups' Opposition to Import Ban
on Polar Bear Trophies from Canada**

April 2, 2008

Dear Chairwoman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

The undersigned groups strongly oppose any actions that would ban the importation of trophies of polar bears legally taken from healthy populations in Canada, including a listing of the species under the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”). This letter focuses on the impacts of an import ban arising from a listing under the ESA and Marine Mammal Protection Act (“MMPA”). An import ban would harm polar bear conservation and management in Canada and would do nothing to reduce the number of polar bears harvested in Canada. An import ban also would severely harm the economic well-being of the native communities that must live with the polar bear on a day-to-day basis. A ban on polar bear imports from Canada has no foundation in science or good policy.

The central premise of any ban appears to be that because of alleged threats to the polar bear’s survival as a species from global climate change, all other causes of mortality must be reduced to the greatest extent possible. An import ban would remove an incentive for U.S. hunters to hunt the polar bear in Canada. But a ban would *not* decrease polar bear mortality from hunting. The native holders of tags not used by U.S. hunters would simply use them to harvest polar bears for subsistence purposes. In other words, the annual “quota” the Canadian provincial governments create determines the number of polar bears harvested each year, regardless of whether some are sport hunted or all are taken in subsistence hunts. Because these quotas are set at sustainable levels, the U.S. and Canadian governments repeatedly have determined that properly regulated subsistence and sport hunting are not a threat to the polar bear populations.

In addition, sport hunting by U.S. hunters supports polar bear conservation in a number of ways. Under the MMPA, each import permit includes a \$1,000 fee to support polar bear research and conservation in the United States and Russia. This has resulted in close to \$1,000,000 in funds for research and conservation since 1994. The \$30,000-50,000 U.S. hunters pay per hunt benefit the native communities (in the amount of approximately \$2,500,000 per year), encouraging conservation by the local communities and the provincial governments. In fact, the Nunavut government in Canada spends about \$1,000,000 per year on polar bear research and management.

Sport hunting also helps promote sound scientific management of polar bears. Under the MMPA, the U.S. government allows imports of polar bears only from populations scientifically proven to be well-managed and sustainable. The requirement further encourages the Canadian governments to manage (*e.g.*, set harvest quotas for) the polar bear in a sustainable manner. This management scheme has contributed to the rebound of overall population from roughly estimated numbers around 6,000-8,000 in the 1960s and 1970s to estimated numbers around 20,000-25,000 today.

In short, an import ban arising from an ESA/MMPA listing will not reduce polar bear mortality in Canada, will harm current successful polar bear conservation and management, and will harm cash-strapped native communities in Canada. For all these reasons, the undersigned sporting and conservation groups oppose a polar bear import ban.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
Boone & Crockett Club
Bowhunters Preservation Alliance
Campfire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Dallas Safari Club
Houston Safari Club
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Trappers Association
National Wild Turkey Federation

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North American Bear Foundation

Pope & Young Club

Quality Deer Management Association

Ruffed Grouse Society

Safari Club International

The Wild Sheep Foundation

Texas Wildlife Association

U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance

Wildlife Management Institute