



For Immediate Release
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SCI Files Lawsuit to Reverse Ban on Polar Bear Imports

Washington, D.C. -- On May 23, 2008, Safari Club International (SCI) filed a federal lawsuit challenging the ban on the import of polar bear trophies from Canada. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) claims the import ban was required when the Service listed the polar bear as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). SCI's lawsuit asks the Court to confirm the right under current law of U.S. hunters to import polar bear trophies into the United States under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

Sustainable sport-hunting of polar bears and subsequent importation by U.S. citizens advances polar bear conservation and supports remote native communities in the Canadian arctic.

Dennis Anderson, President of SCI, said, "Fourteen years ago Congress determined that permitting the importation of sport-hunted polar bear trophies from Canada promoted conservation. Congress built safeguards into the Marine Mammal Protection Act to protect the species. For an import to be permitted, the animal must have been hunted from an approved population, meaning that the FWS has found that the hunting is sustainable. This finding ensures sound management of polar bear populations. The FWS's recent listing of the species as threatened -- based on reports that attempt to predict speculative impacts 45 years from now -- should not be used to undermine Congress' plan to support polar bear conservation."

SCI's lawsuit explains that the MMPA specifically provides for the import of sport-hunted polar bears from approved populations. The "threatened" listing does not change this authorization. In fact, the ESA itself allows for the continued importation of sport-hunted polar bears, even if they are listed as threatened.

SCI expects to prove to the federal court for the District of Columbia that the Service's position is wrong. The import ban in the MMPA applicable to "depleted" species does not override the specific authorization of polar bear imports. In addition, the Service has not made the requisite findings necessary to even arguably trigger this import ban.

The groups that petitioned the Service to list the polar bear under the ESA have admitted that their ultimate goal is to change U.S. climate policy. SCI President Anderson said, "Sustainable hunting that benefits the conservation of the polar bear, and helps the local people who must live with the polar bears, should not be a casualty of this abuse of the ESA."

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SCI-First For Hunters is the leader in protecting the freedom to hunt and in promoting wildlife conservation worldwide. SCI's 188 Chapters represent all 50 of the United States as well as 13 other countries. SCI's proactive leadership in a host of cooperative wildlife conservation, outdoor education and humanitarian programs, with the SCI Foundation and other conservation groups, research institutions and government agencies, empowers sportsmen to be contributing community members and participants in sound wildlife management and conservation. Visit the home page www.safariclub.org <<http://www.safariclub.org/>> or call (520) 620-1220 for more information.

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