



TRUSTEES FOR ALASKA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Feb. 8, 2017

Contacts:

Pat Lavin, Alaska Representative, Defenders of Wildlife
plavin@defenders.org, 907-276-9410

Jim Adams, Alaska Regional Director, National Parks Conservation Association
jadams@npca.org, 907-538-5898, available after 1:30p Alaska time

Fran Mauer, wildlife biologist, board member, Alaska Chapter of Wilderness Watch
fmauer@mosquitonet.com, 907-455-6829

Michelle Sinnott, Staff Attorney, Trustees for Alaska
msinnott@trustees.org, 907-433-2011

Conservation groups join lawsuits on predator control

Over a dozen conservation groups filed a request in federal court today to defend regulations protecting wildlife in National Preserves and National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska.

The motion filed by Trustees for Alaska on behalf of 15 clients is in response to two separate lawsuits filed by the State of Alaska and the Safari Club last month. The two lawsuits challenge National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulations prohibiting aggressive sport hunting methods targeting bears and wolves on Preserves and Refuges.

“The State wants to kill wolves and bears to increase moose and caribou, but that’s not the purpose of these lands,” said Fran Mauer, a former wildlife biologist and board member for the Alaska Chapter of Wilderness Watch. “Alaskans and Americans go to these areas for a lot of different reasons, and we experience them in a lot of different ways. Most people want to see wildlife with its natural dynamics and populations intact. It will profoundly diminish our experiences if these lands are manipulated as game farms.”

The State and the Safari Club’s lawsuits are an attempt to allow sport hunters to shoot brown bears over bait, kill wolves and wolf pups during the denning season, and other practices aimed at dramatically reducing populations of wolves and bears to increase human harvest of moose and caribou. Most Alaskans and Americans oppose these methods.

"Refuge and Preserve lands are managed for biological integrity and diversity," said Pat Lavin, the Alaska representative for Defenders of Wildlife. "The state's extreme methods remove predators wholesale from the landscape and have no place on these lands. Alaskans and Americans treasure our phenomenal wildlife and don't want to see iconic species managed to scarcity."

The National Park Service and the Fish & Wildlife Service manage wildlife on Preserves and Refuges to protect natural diversity of wildlife. These agencies generally allow the State of Alaska to regulate sport hunting, but they do not allow the State to regulate sport hunting in a way aimed at significantly reducing wolf and bear populations.

The lawsuits filed by the state and Safari Club run counter to Alaska's economic interests. "Visitors to Alaska come to see wildlife, particularly bears," said Jim Adams, the Alaska Regional Director of the National Parks Conservation Association. "The 2.6 million park and preserve visitors in 2015 spent an estimated \$1.2 billion in local gateway regions and supported 17.6 thousand jobs."

Trustees for Alaska is a non-profit public interest environmental law firm founded and based in Alaska to defend and protect Alaska lands, waters, wildlife and communities. Trustees filed today's motion to intervene on behalf of 15 conservation groups:

*The Alaska Wildlife Alliance
Alaskans for Wildlife
Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
Denali Citizens Council
Copper Country Alliance
Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
Defenders of Wildlife
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
The Wilderness Society
Wilderness Watch
Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club
Center for Biological Diversity
The Humane Society of the United States*