



NEWS RELEASE

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TOGIAK MAN BANNED FROM WALRUS HUNTING FOR FIVE YEARS, FINED \$5,000

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced that on March 26, 2009, Roy D. Petersen, Jr., a resident of Togiak, Alaska, was sentenced to a term of five years probation, twenty-eight days of community confinement and fined \$5,000 for illegally selling walrus ivory for alcohol, in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. He is also prohibited from marine mammal subsistence hunting and assisting others hunting marine mammals. Petersen was also required to forfeit nine pieces of walrus ivory including whole tusks and headmounts and is prohibited from possessing any firearms. He pled guilty in December 2008.

Petersen, age 27, was sentenced by United States District Court Judge Timothy M. Burgess.

During the sentencing hearing, Assistant United States Attorney Steven E. Skrocki, who prosecuted the case, advised the court that an undercover investigation revealed that Petersen was actively hunting marine mammals and then selling the ivory for alcohol. According to Skrocki, Petersen abused his privilege to subsistence hunt by selling raw marine mammal parts for large quantities of alcohol in Togiak, a declared dry village. Evidence also showed that Petersen was very adept at smuggling alcohol into Togiak, and during undercover contacts, he provided officers with detailed information about how he avoided getting caught.

Upon sentencing Petersen, Judge Burgess commented on the seriousness of both illegally selling ivory to non-Alaskan Natives, and selling ivory for alcohol in a community that had pledged to fight alcohol abuse by restricting its importation into the community. In addition to his federal conviction and sentence, Petersen was previously convicted by the State of Alaska of the felony crime of importing alcohol into a dry village and was sentenced to two months imprisonment.

The case against Petersen is related to the guilty plea and sentencing in February 2009, of James Schneider, whose case also resulted from the same undercover operation conducted by state and federal investigators in Togiak. Schneider, who acted as a retail seller of illegal walrus ivory, sold ivory to undercover agents in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibits non-Alaskan Natives from possessing raw, unhandcrafted walrus ivory. Schneider planned to sell the ivory in Oregon, however his plan was thwarted by the undercover investigation.

(more)

Schneider was sentenced in February to three years probation and to pay a \$10,000 fine within the three-year probationary term, as well as abandoning other walrus ivory he illegally possessed. During the proceedings, it was noted that Schneider was importing alcohol into a Togiak, a dry village, and later using some of that alcohol, as well as other cash, to illegally purchase walrus ivory. Schneider, like Petersen, was convicted of a felony by the State of Alaska for the illegal importation of alcohol into Togiak.

“This case is an excellent example where state and federal law enforcement agencies, working together, were able to stop actions that threatened the health and welfare of the citizens of Alaska and federally protected wildlife,” said Stan Pruszenski, Special Agent in Charge of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. “In Mr. Petersen’s case, his actions are all the more severe due to hunting walrus and trading the ivory for alcohol, facts the court obviously considered.”

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Alaska State Troopers Western Alaska Alcohol and Narcotics Team and Division of Wildlife Troopers, conducted the investigation that led to the prosecutions of Petersen and Schneider.

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