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JUNEAU

December 18, 2006

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of Interior
Interior Building
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

As you are aware, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will soon be making a decision on whether or not to list the polar bear as a threatened or endangered species. I have reviewed the correspondence to you and others in the Department of Interior from former Governor Frank H. Murkowski and to Mr. Dale Hall, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) from Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) commissioner, McKie Campbell.

I am writing to be sure you know that while occupancy of Alaska's Governor's Office has changed, the importance of this issue to our state has not. It remains true that listing polar bears under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) has the potential to damage Alaska's and the nation's economy without any benefit to polar bear numbers or their habitat.

Polar bear numbers have not been adversely affected by hunting, development, or any other direct human activity that is within our power to regulate. In fact, there has been no decline in polar bear numbers. The driving force in the analysis regarding listing is an entirely legitimate concern over what may happen to polar bears if the decline in pack ice around the North Pole continues.

We share that concern. The decline in pack ice, however, presents a problem that was never contemplated by the framers of the Endangered Species Act. When a species' habitat (in this case, sea ice) is declining due to climate change, but there are no discrete human activities that can be regulated or modified to effect change, what do you do?

We know listing polar bears as endangered or threatened will not impact polar bear numbers or cause sea water to freeze. What we don't know are all the unintended effects of listing. It is highly probable that among them will be third-party law suits,

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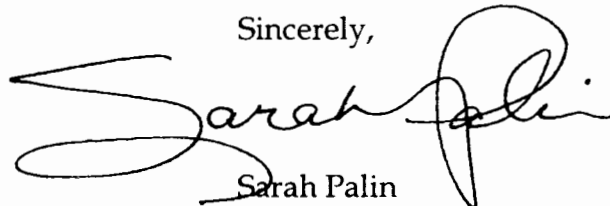
from litigants with a variety of motivations, to list large portions of Alaska's North Slope as Critical Habitat or to limit the emission of greenhouse gases throughout the United States.

Polar bears are abundant and currently well managed by numerous international agreements. Just this month, Congress further protected polar bears with passage of the Senators Stevens' and Murkowski's United States-Russia Polar Bear Conservation and Management Act of 2006. We have previously furnished information that there is no scientific evidence of human activity currently affecting any of the 22 recognized populations of polar bears, or that these polar bear populations are declining.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game commissioner, McKie Campbell, has previously written to Dale Hall, recommending that in lieu of listing, USFWS create a team of scientists to prepare a conservation plan for polar bears focusing on changes in ice conditions in the arctic and analyzing how such changes have or will affect polar bear populations. I endorse such an effort and commit the support of ADF&G and the University of Alaska. Such an effort could have far more benefits for polar bears than a listing under the ESA, with much less chance of unintended consequences and needless damage to our economies.

Thank you for your personal consideration of this issue. I look forward to meeting you in person and working with you on this issue and the wide range of other issues we have in common.

Sincerely,



Sarah Palin
Governor

cc: Lynn Scarlett, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior
David M. Verhey, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior
Todd Willens, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior
Dale Hall, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior
Alaska Congressional Delegation
John Katz, Director State/Federal Relations and Special Counsel, Alaska Office of
the Governor
McKie Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Dave Pearce