

Friends of Animals Urges Canada to Support Increased Polar Bear Protections

Calls decision to oppose the proposal “reckless”

08 February 2010

Contact:

Anai Rhoads, Director of Media Relations, Friends of Animals

(703) 969-8560

anai@friendsofanimals.org

Dave Shishkoff, Canadian Correspondent: (250) 588-0482

dave@friendsofanimals.org

Website: www.friendsofanimals.org

Darien, CT; Victoria, BC – The international animal advocacy group Friends of Animals today urged the Canadian government to reverse its decision to oppose greater international protections for polar bears.

“The reckless decision by Canadian Minister of Environment Jim Prentice to oppose increased protections for polar bears flies in the face of the overwhelming scientific consensus that these highly visible arctic animals are in trouble,” said Friends of Animals President Priscilla Feral. “That a polar bear appears on Canada’s two dollar coin speaks volumes about the government’s view of these free-living beings.”

This past October, the United States submitted a proposal to move polar bears to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) agreement. Currently, polar bears are on Appendix II. This means they can be hunted and killed, and their body parts sold for profit.

Canada is home to half the world's polar bear population. According to Professor Rick Steiner, a marine conservation specialist in Anchorage, Alaska, the bears now face a reduction in access to prey, nutritional stress, reduced reproductive success and cannibalism.

Polar bears are completely dependent on Arctic ice and ice floes, which comprise the majority of their habitat. Most experts have concluded that the loss of Arctic sea ice – resulting from climate change, as well as oil and gas drilling, have put polar bears at risk of extinction.

“It is disgraceful that Canada still allows trophy hunters to fly in and kill polar bears for ‘sport,’ and supports the slaughter and selling off of their body parts,” added Feral. “Scientists say that even the smallest stress on their population could push polar bears into extinction. Canada should get on board with the rest of the world and protect these animals.”

The upcoming CITES meeting will be held 13-25 March 2010 in Doha, Qatar. The 175 member states will be voting on the U.S. proposal at that time. The U.S. declared the polar bear as a “threatened” species in 2008.

Dave Shishkoff, FoA Canadian Correspondent and Friends of Animals are encouraging people to send letters to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and Minister of Environment Jim Prentice urging them to support greater protections. Canadian citizens should also contact their Members of Parliament.

The Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa
K1A 0A2
pm@pm.gc.ca
Fax: 613-941-6900

The Honourable Jim Prentice
Minister of the Environment
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H3
Jim.Prentice@ec.gc.ca
Tel.: 819-997-1441
Fax: 819-953-0279

Friends of Animals is a non-profit, international animal advocacy organization, incorporated in the state of New York since 1957. Friends of Animals works to cultivate a respectful view of nonhuman animals, free-living and domestic. Our goal is to free animals from cruelty and institutionalized exploitation around the world.